

## *Part 2*

Arangaon and Tours (April 1923—Jan. 1925)



## Ramjoo and Doctor at Lonavla

April 1, 1923

Good-bye to the Manzil

AFTER leaving the Manzil and the remaining very few members there with Baba last night, I arrived at Lonavla early this morning with Doctor to stay here for about a month. Save for a few stray visits, mostly on duty, this was the first time since joining Baba in May last (eleven months) that I felt at home, as if on a long vacation after finishing the term in a college. Rightly so, now that it has long since been decided by Baba to leave the Manzil for good in a few days, and after Rustom's marriage which is to take place in the next month, to stay at Arangaon near Ahmednagar under quite changed conditions, with a limited number of members only, who will be willing to undergo the more difficult next term. Whatever be the future programme, the strict disciplinary period of staying in the Manzil under almost a strict routine, quite aloof from the external world, was at an end, with the prospect of a very active and lively future. So much so that already, as per Doctor's pun on the name Arangaon, it is generally referred to as "Hyrangaon" by the *mandali* on account of hardships and difficulties that are predicted by Baba to fall to the lot of those who will be with him at the time. Hereafter members sent to their respective homes or out of Bombay are to observe the following:

Special Orders:

1, 2, 3, 4 (to avoid fish, flesh and eggs) and 7,

and General Orders:

1, 9 (eating less than full satisfaction prohibited), 13, 14, 18, 19, and 25.

April 5, 1923

### Shivapur Festival

Myself, with Doctor, left Lonavla by the Madras Express for the Shivapur festival to which we had been invited by Munshi with Baba's consent. After joining the party at Poona we reached Shivapur by a big motor lorry and put up in the tents pitched there for the purpose. The meeting together of one-time-oldfriends since a very long time, especially that of myself and Doctor with Usman and Asar, presented an unusual and unexpected scene, considering the very wide gulf of difference of opinion between us and our quite opposite ideas regarding Baba. In spite of Munshi's link presence encouraging tolerance between the two parties, the atmosphere was unmistakably foreign for such a gathering. As usual good foods and music arrangements were made.

April 6, 1923

### Changed Outlook

Being Friday we all had a nice, cold bath under the natural spring water falls nearby, and performed the prayers in the special canopy which is put up for the purpose near the shrine. As usual, the huge canopy proved too small to hold the thousands of people who were there for prayers. This gaily clad crowd, in and around the canopy observing the prayers in the most dignified and orderly manner, presented the most imposing sight of this greatest festival near Poona.

After that, we paid our respects at the court of Kamarali Shah Darvesh, on whose anniversary the festival takes place, attracting thousands of people from Poona and the surrounding country. The festival affords a jolly good time every year for an annual enjoyment, and I simply used to look forward to this occasion in the past; but this time, the excellent singing and the general holiday surroundings did not quite make me feel real enjoyment in the situation, on account of change in the diet of real enjoyment brought about by Baba's company. Not that my tongue did not feel the taste of the food, or my ears did not relish the singing, as well as the general surrounding of enjoyment did

not attract me: no, there was no end to the desires of the seldom satisfied mind as usual; but the feeling of vacancy ever reminded the incompleteness of the show.

After the prayers, people began to return to their respective places, and consequently the throng in the bazaar was considerably thin by the evening. Again singing took place, but came to an end very early because of poor light arrangement.

April 12, 1923

#### Visit to Haji Malang Shah

According to his letter, I joined Khak with Doctor at Lonavla en route to Kalyan under Baba's instructions, as Baba and a few members were going to Haji Malang Shah's shrine the following day. We arrived at Kalyan at about 6:30 P.M. where Slamson met us as he had come in advance to arrange for carriages, etc.

There was news from Slamson about the preparations afoot for leaving the Manzil soon, such as clearing away the partitions forming separate rooms and turning back the bungalow as it was before with huge halls and big bedrooms. Subject to the order of not eating anything outside, we had to satisfy ourselves with milk, etc., for supper, after which we rested at the station awaiting Baba's arrival, who came with the party from Bombay at midnight, when we all went to sleep.

April 13, 1923

#### Meals without Water

We could hardly manage a good nap in the din on the station by 3 A.M., when we all got up and began to prepare to start for Haji Malang Shah's shrine as per our vow which Baba had made us take the last time we had returned back from only going halfway (see Oct. 30, 1922). After half an hour, we started by the carriages, reaching the foot of the hill by dawn where Baba waited in company of Sadashiv, while the rest were ordered to go to the shrine as fast as possible and, after paying respects and putting flowers, to return in the same way. We began to climb the hill as fast as our legs would carry, reaching the shrine in an hour or so.

Perched on those majestic heights is the beautiful tomb of one of the greatest Perfect Masters in and around Bombay, to which we paid our respects and laid the pretty flower sheets

on the grave that we had brought with us. After finishing the Muslim prayers, we started back racing through the descent, taking a hurried glance at the towering point called Bala Hanzar, the highest peak of the hill which has a small tank and a few trees there. As per Baba's instructions, we joined him at the foot of the hill within two and a half hours of our departure at the cost of parched lips and a terribly acute thirst. Baba distributed the sweets, bread, etc., to the party, but prohibited us all from taking water, as he said the water available was not good. Hence, it made a novel meal without water, gulped down the dry throat with an effort. Soon after the meals, we took to the carriages to return to Kalyan. The rough surface of the road and the rickety carriages going under the blazing hot sun, added fuel to the fire of thirst that was raging hot within. It was with the greatest sigh of relief that our carriage journey of 14 miles came to an end at about 2 P.M. near the station. Baba took us all in the restaurant nearby, and allowed us to take a soda or two for drink. On the pleasure of sipping that bubbling water, the first gulp proved like water poured on a red hot piece of iron. In addition to this, a good many watermelons were also distributed. But all this could only do partial justice to the great thirst which in my case kept on till late in the evening.

Baba and party left for Bombay by a local train, while myself and Doctor returned to Lonavla by the evening express.

April 20, 1923

#### Baba Left Bombay

Having come to know of Baba's passing Poona en route to Ahmednagar today, I had come to Poona the previous evening to manage the morning duty, and as soon as it was completed, I came to the station. After half an hour, the train steamed in. All the Kasba party, Baba's friends and relatives flocked to the carriage containing the distinguished passenger and party. Baba was profusely garlanded and tea was served to the *mandali*. An interesting hour passed in exchanging and discussing the topics of the day. The important event since our leaving the Manzil was the disposal of the mill which, as a strange coincidence, was sold off a few hours before Baba and *mandali* left Bombay last night. The compartment was full with luggage as everything had been removed from the Manzil, and the bungalow had been handed over in charge of the owner. Of course, the small outbuilding behind the bungalow is retained for the book work as the Circle & Co.'s office. At about 7:30 A.M. the

train started and we all parted. I returned to Lonavla the same evening.

May 5, 1923

### Stay at Home

Subject to Baba's final instructions received by post, myself and Doctor have decided to start for Ahmednagar tomorrow by the morning train; but as the departure time of the train from Lonavla coincided with that of my prayers, I left Lonavla this evening to pass the night at Poona. My stay for a month was passed very nicely as Lonavla season was in full swing. After a year of complete aloofness from the ordinary work-a-day life, the change of coming in contact with familiar sights and sounds put more life in it.

Specially the last few days were passed more interestedly in selling the Marathi edition of Shri Maharaj's Life which was just out. On the whole, my long stay and the full discharge of my household and social duties at home and in society allayed the anxiety of friends and relatives for the immediate present, as to my duty towards family life. People misunderstood at times, and it is no fault of theirs, as generally the man of the world misunderstands the reason of its existence, or to be more correct, deceives himself, in order to satisfy his temporary desires, as to the real duty towards family life, religion and God, and misunderstands the words and actions of those striving for spiritual end. For example, some time ago, the Gujarati weekly paper warned the Parsis against going to Shri Upasni Maharaj. As far as I remember correctly, in the course of his remarks on this article, Baba said, "To be rid of *sanskritic* bonds (impressions which determine one's desires and actions in the present lifetime) and freed of the illusions of ignorance are the first essentials of true spiritual awakening. Likewise, renunciation was the watchword of all the greatest teachers of the world, Muhammad and Zoroaster, Christ and Krishna alike, though in different wordings. But people take it only literally; the real spirit of the word is not understood. It is the mind, the real innermost man, that must renounce; that is the root from where all desires spring; the mind must become poor, empty, and renunciation of the highest order is attained. When the mind is spiritually enlightened and is fortunate enough to retain the ordinary consciousness, the performing of the *sanskritic* duties is renunciation too; as in that state, whatever actions are taken, they are for the benefit and advancement of others."

## First Stay at Arangaon

May 6, 1923

The New Era

HAVING finished the prayers, I came to the station and joined Doctor, with bag and baggage in accordance with Baba's orders. The train steamed out of the Poona station at about 7:30 reaching Ahmednagar at 12:30. We took carriages and went direct to Rustom's house, finding the same buzzing with the marriage preparations. We came to know that since Baba's arrival, he has been *on the move*; from the depot—the old, military depot buildings purchased by Khan Saheb in 'Nagar—where he and party put up for a few days, Baba suddenly walked away with the party to Happy Valley, a distance of nearly 14 miles, on April 1st, where he stayed till the 3rd. Here, Shri Maharaj's birthday was observed (on the 3rd) when the *mandali* had to keep a fast for 24 hours while hundreds of people were fed on the day. After a special *arti* Baba and party started from Happy Valley at 11:30 P.M. at breakneck speed, returning to the depot at 2 A.M. in the night! Again under the *excuse* that a certain number of Rustom's family did not properly follow his instructions, Baba has since day before yesterday gone to Arangaon. No wonder, that in face of this hide-and-seek movement of Baba, together with the marriage arrangements, Rustom seemed very much perturbed.

Within a quarter of an hour, a carriage was procured and we started towards Arangaon after taking some refreshment. Arangaon is a small village six miles from Ahmednagar, at a higher altitude, with the best climate in the whole district. For this reason a big military camp was established here in wartime over extensive grounds for miles, which has been purchased



by Khan Saheb (Adi and Rustom's father, Gulmai's husband) from the government.

As we neared the camp, Baba and party came to our view washing clothes and bathing at a well by the road a little further on. We got down and dismissed the carriage; but we could not approach further, as word came from Baba that we were to go and wait in the building further on the right, which was the post office of the military camp in those days. It is a hall about 20 x 12 feet with strong stone walls without plaster, half a dozen windows, and a plain deal wood door; the front side is adorned with a verandah. In spite of it all, it is the best building among the lot of dilapidated mud huts adjoining the same. Here we found the beddings of Baba and *mandali* spread side by side in a line; the latter also having a glass and a plate near their respective beddings together with their clothes. We passed the time conversing with Munshi who was here to see Baba, till the time the *mandali* returned from finishing the general wash-up.

I was no longer under the impression that "Hyrangaon *hyrani*" were to commence after the marriage; the signs were only too visible to be missed that the new era had dawned long since, in right earnest. Most of the *mandali* had blistered feet and bruised hands, the former being the result of the midnight racing from Happy Valley to the depot, and the latter as the result of removing some hundreds of big Shahabad stone slabs from the mess building the previous day. They greeted us with a smile, as if enjoying the change, though a very rough one, from the monotonous Manzil life.

After supper, at the usual time of going to bed, Baba ordered us to go and sleep near the well, as was done by him and the *mandali* the first night of their arrival when a snake was killed on that spot. Myself, Doctor and Vajifdar (also a newcomer) spread our beddings near the wall of the well for protection from the great wind storm common to Arangaon. Baba's presence in the near vicinity allayed the snake fear; but the wind blowing like the very devil troubled us too much. However, somehow sleep reigned supreme.

May 7, 1923

Arangaon

Since some time past, almost every day witnesses a change in the daily programme. By now, daily baths and prayers have

ceased. Everyone is to wash his clothes himself, instead of giving it to the washerman as heretofore. All have been given a plate and glass each for meals and other necessities, to be cleaned and kept in charge individually. Only three shirts, three pants, and some necessary garments such as coat, towel, etc., have been deposited in a room in the depot in the respective trunks.

Further, Baba discussed finally the future plan of action with myself and Doctor, that in addition to the above changes, the surrounding grounds will be cultivated and all shall have to work as common labourers, or to do some service at 'Nagar with the prospect of going and returning about 12 miles daily on cycle if we remained with him. Otherwise, Baba offered a second choice of staying at Bombay, Poona or Lonavla, and following his instructions there, same as is the case with almost three-fourths of the *mandali* including the chief important members of the Circle like Sadashiv and Khak. Baba said that to be externally far away or to be nearby does not make any change in the spiritual working. So long as one followed and remained under his instructions, he was with him. I decided to stay with Baba as I preferred it under the circumstances; though I believe the mind of a Perfect Master to be universal and thus omnipresent.

May 8, 1923

Amateur Cook

Baba and ourselves—the whole party—came to 'Nagar to attend the marriage this morning. Baba put up in the solitary room on the top floor of Sarosh Manzil, the residence of Rustom; while we were ordered to go to the depot, recently named Khushru Quarters, and give whatever assistance required in the arrangements under Behramji's instructions. The freshly whitewashed fine compound wall recently built round the newly painted buildings in the well-kept spacious grounds of Khushru Quarters with the gaily decorated giant canopy where the marriage ceremony is to take place, just nearing completion on one side, gave the old and rustic depot a magical change of colour. Sometime after our arrival, Behramji found some work for us—that of helping the cooks in trimming and cutting the vegetables. God knows how the worthy got the idea of extending our help in such a fashion! Save that the Old Man might be pulling the strings from the Sarosh Manzil to have us learn a practical lesson in self-humiliation. Otherwise, we could have helped in a hun-

dred other ways befitting our positions. It was with an effort that I took to the work, and allayed the strong feeling of revolt against this order of being taught the task of humiliation in the presence of hundreds of guests. Besides the mental pinch, the work proved very unhealthy for my hands and fingers unaccustomed to such rough work, leaving the tell-tale marks and cuts. Most of the *mandali* shared the same fate, while Jal topped the list by cutting his finger when cutting a potato on a machine—snuff was afterwards applied to the cut by Kaikhushru (Sarosh's father).

May 9, 1923

Neither Hosts nor Guests

Today being the marriage day, the guests were pouring in from all quarters. Almost all of our *mandali*—the Kasba party, Khak, etc.—had arrived to witness the wedding of one of the important members of the *mandali* serving as manager of the Circle & Co. Since leaving the Manzil, this was the first time that most of the *mandali* had come together, and save for this engagement of exchanging news and views, the marriage on the whole proved a very tiring and awkward business for most of us. Considering us to be Baba's *mandali*, the family members did not pay attention to us as regards the formalities to be observed with guests. Further, the family members had good reasons not to interfere much in what we did and did not: and this was the reason that, though being shocked at seeing us mixed with the cooks, Khan Saheb did not stop us from so doing the other day, save for the remark that there was really no need for us to help the cooks. Our work-a-day dress, the sea of foreign faces around us and the Parsi customs (new to us) did not encourage us in feeling like hosts. Hence, as far as it did not concern us personally, the marriage was a very successful affair.

In the evening, the marriage ceremony took place on the elevated platform in the centre of the tent packed full with distinguished guests—Europeans and Indians both. A European band provided fitting music for the occasion, while excellent refreshment arrangements were made. The happy event, as far as it concerned the public, terminated after a group photo was taken of the guests with the new couple. After supper, *ghazal* singing by Yassin, who had been specially brought from Bombay, took place before Baba, the *mandali* and a few members of the family privately in the Sarosh Manzil. The singing continued

till late in the night affording a few hours of divine entertainment, making up to a certain extent for the feeling of being at sea for the last two days. Baba had, of course, all the time kept himself in the Sarosh Manzil, the *mandali's* presence reminding the people who knew of his presence nearby.

May 10, 1923  
The Remaining Few

Again *ghazal* singing took place this afternoon, of course privately as before. In the evening, Khak and Kasba party left for Bombay and Poona respectively. The latter had a separate interview with Baba before their departure. Apparently, Kasba party seems to have preferred to stay at Poona. While as for Khak, it has since long been decided for him to stay in Bombay with Munshi and Syedsahib. Doctor, too, seems to be a guest for a day or two more. In the same way, the question for Rustom is also for some time now to be dropped. Thus, as foretold by Baba in the Manzil, only a limited number of members remain to take direct part in the external movements of Baba for the present, viz., Messrs. Gustadji, Behramji, Adi, myself, Slamson, Barsoap, Babu, Baidul, Pendu,<sup>36</sup> Nervous, Masaji, Padri and Jal.

May 11, 1923  
Nowhere

Some dispute arose in the family, and under this excuse Baba suddenly asked us to join him going away just after we had finished breakfast. We started walking aimlessly towards the station. A little further on, we took to a footpath and after a laborious tramping across a dry sandy bed of the Sinha river we came upon an old graveyard, quite a solitary spot. But the plan had hardly settled, when we were again on the move further on, unintentionally reaching the station's shelter for travellers maintained by the Local Board. Here it was finally decided to put up until a plan was formed for future settlement, as Baba said he was no longer going to stay at Arangaon. Some vegetable was made to be prepared and bread procured from the small hotel nearby for dinner.

After the meals, Behramji went to Arangaon, and brought back a cartful of things including firewood from there by the evening, which was all deposited in the rooms that we had rented. Behramji and Gustadji have been ordered to take food

once about 11 A.M. and drink water only between 11 A.M. and 1 P.M. daily. Baba decided finally for Doctor to stay at Bombay. He left after supper with Barsoap who has also been allowed to go to Poona for a few days—according to Barsoap's words, to improve his weak health.

May 12, 1923

### Coolies

Only the clothes, beddings, and a few of the most necessary things having been retained, the rest of the cartload of goods brought back from Arangaon yesterday was made into about half a dozen bundles, and we were ordered by Baba to carry the same to the depot about one or two miles distance from the travellers' shelter to be deposited there with our trunks, etc. Adding fuel to the fire of resentment, one of the heaviest bundles chanced to fall to my lot, which made me stagger with weight at the first lift. I felt very awkward mentally because of the big gunny bag on my shoulders, trudging along the main station road towards the city in company with the rest of the party. The top weight handicap began to tell tale before we had hardly crossed the city gate, making me take the sack on my head. The pain further made me indifferent now towards what people would think about us (as we were too well dressed to be taken for coolies, and this accounted for the attention that we seemed to receive from the passers-by), so much so that I passed through Cursetji Street and Nalbund's Khut as it was the shortest route, but which I had first intended to avoid on account of a few friends and acquaintances of mine staying near there.

May 13, 1923

### Settled Again

After many entreaties by Khan Saheb who had come to see Baba in the travellers' shelter, it was after all decided to put up at Arangaon as per the first plan. Consequently, we again found ourselves in the rural area of Arangaon by the evening, and took shelter in the post office. All the bag and baggage was brought back too. It has now been fixed to repair and bring round the mess building on the whole to its best and then to put up there. This building is the second best after the post office, but far bigger, among the lot of remaining mud huts.

In the camp days, it was the officer's mess quarters. In appearance, it is a neat, fine bungalow with two big spacious halls with bedrooms attached with bathrooms on both the wings and verandahs on all sides, fitted with Shahabad stones as flooring and Mangalore tiles on the roof. But in fact, it is a mere excuse for a building, being built in mud by the wartime contractors and lying uncared for since long, requiring complete overhauling. The big farms all round the mess have been settled to be cultivated by the well water, after fixing a pump there in place of the old pump which is already fixed, but is quite out of order. For the time being, we have to take out water with a bucket, and carry the same ourselves to the post office, as the well is situated by the main public road about 50 yards from the mess and post office both. Thus we had, for the time being, again settled at a place, busy with the thoughts of the prospect of a new experience of working as labourers on the fields from morn to eve!

May 17, 1923

#### Hard Labour

For the last four days, we have been working in right earnest in cleansing, plastering and doing the other necessary repairs to the mess quarters. No sooner is the breakfast of just tea and bread finished at 7 o'clock, we get at the respective duties allotted to each by turns: that of drawing water from the well, supplying the same to the mess, providing mud near the works from a distance, preparing mud, plastering the walls, and assisting the amateur mason—of course, one of us—in his work till late in the evening, with an hour recess for meals in the afternoon. The meals consist of usual *dal*-rice in the afternoon and bread and potatoes in the evening, while Baba is taking only some liquid food since long.

Last came the whitewashing of the building, and what a mess we made by applying, or to be more exact, sprinkling, stamping and painting the walls white with lime and hand-made brushes. The work proved very painful to ourselves, as the lime had worked havoc with the same, turning the palms and fingers as if boiled in tea. In spite of applying oil and drying the same on fire, they remained raw and bore signs of the havoc for days. However, we turned the dirty, dilapidated buildings full of cobwebs into a snow-white place, clean as a new pin at, of course, a dear price. In addition to the usual plain food, plain living,

and being quite cut off from the world at large, this work, like a regular labourer, looked as if a certain period of simple imprisonment was changed into that of hard labour!

May 18, 1923

Ramzan Festival

I passed this gay festival in the Arangaon way too, as after a cold bath and change of hand-washed linen, I started walking from Arangaon to 'Nagar for attending the festival prayers there. After seeing some friends, and having the usual sweets, I performed the prayers at about 9 A.M. after which, according to instructions, I went to Bapu Saheb's tomb for prayers and placed a flower sheet on the grave. Being Friday, I had to wait till late in the afternoon for Friday prayers, after which I returned to Arangaon at about 3 P.M. with an acute thirst, having walked about 12 miles in all, the last six miles in the blazing hot sun of May. Thus, the festival proved a very warm time for me.

May 22, 1923

Baba Scared by a Snake

The mess quarters were quite ready for occupation today, Shri Maharaj's photos placed, and incense burned in the small room on the right wing which is to be occupied by Baba in the morning. After supper, we removed into the new premises and made ourselves at home by spreading the respective beddings on the allotted places in the hall. With a feeling of relief and satisfaction, we were preparing for sleep at the successful termination of the troublesome task of fixing up for good when the tide turned! Gustadji felt some piece of stone lying under his bedding; so he turned the same for extricating it, when it was found to be a small snake snugly coiled, enjoying the warmth of the bedding!

How it came to be there is a mystery because, at the time of cleansing the premises which were in the most dilapidated state, no such thing ever came to our view, while now, when not only the whole building is spic and span, but the surrounding land is also clean to an extent, crowned with the fact that the bedding has just been spread after sweeping the room with the respective members sitting over them, a snake is found coiled right in the centre of the bedding. Baba ordered us all to remove to the post office, as if really scared of the snake, and to such

a great extent that he there and then decided to bid good-bye to Arangaon, and not only to leave the Ahmednagar district or the whole presidency, but the whole of India for Persia. Just because of snakes. (I wonder what he meant by snakes.) Thus, the much talked of stay at Arangaon seemed to end very soon now.



## First Tour, North India

May 23, 1923

### Preparing for the Tour

IT being decided to tour the north of India and visit Karachi before leaving for Persia, the whole day was passed in discussions and preparations. Quick steps were taken to stop the purchase of the bullocks for the proposed farming programme and the delivery of another pump from the depot. In spite of that, the pump was found to be on the way towards Arangaon, and, under orders, I made the pump-laden cart return to the depot from the midway. The pains that Rustom had taken in loading the pump in the cart after overhauling the same (in order to put it into working order) had apparently been wasted to the humorous chagrin of that worthy.

May 25, 1923

### The Tour

Everything was cleared from Arangaon, save for the necessary articles required on the journey and the respective beddings. All articles were despatched to our present headquarters in our room in the depot. After that we all went to the station walking along the railway lines at about 10:30 A.M.

With a hearty send-off by the throng of Baba's followers present at the station, we<sup>37</sup> left Ahmednagar at 12:30 in the afternoon reaching Manmad by the evening. At Ankai, the last station before Manmad, where for some distance the Nizam's metre-guage railway runs along that of G.I.P., an interesting sight came to view. The Hyderabad Mail, a beautiful toy of a train, was

trying its utmost to keep pace with ours, which provided engaging amusement.

May 27, 1923

Agra

The whole day yesterday was passed in the train, the only important sight coming to our view was that of the famous Sanchi Stupa, one of the most ancient and interesting Buddhist relics in India. The huge dome-like form of the actual shrine, with the giant carved massive stone rail surrounding the same, could be clearly seen from the train, as it is situated on the ridge of a small hill, about half a mile from the Sanchi station.

Early this morning, we got down at Agra. Being quite new to the place, we underwent considerable inconvenience. The quaint way of our handling our luggage ourselves, in spite of presenting an appearance of a well-off touring party, incensed the station coolies. Consequently, we had to carry the luggage round about and over the station overbridge to the opposite platform, because the station master stopped us from crossing the lines at the instance of the enraged coolies. This considerably increased the already awkward, as well as painful, task of handling the heavy luggage which, besides our own belongings, comprised about three or four steel trunks, big holdalls and beddings of Sarosh, Gulmai, Pilamai, Masaji and children who also accompany us. Again the conveyance question occupied about an hour in coming to a settlement with the carriage drivers. Last, but not least, was the pair of rival hotel agents buzzing with the repetition of the advantages and disadvantages of each other's hotels, with the persistence of a fly that once resolves to occupy the tip of the nose. But Baba soon put an end to the dispute by putting up in the Empress Hotel situated between the city and the station. After taking tea we started in the hired carriages sightseeing the city which is thick with beautiful buildings, the narrow but finely paved streets, and the bazaars buzzing with business, while the tall Friday Mosque of exquisite design and other public buildings added to the grandeur of this great city.

About a mile from the city is the Taj Mahal, the beautiful blossom in marble and precious stones, at the farther side of which the Jumna is flowing by. The fine ornamentation meant seventeen years of patient labour of the cleverest workmen of the age in India carving the marble into patterns as perfect as those of rare old lace and embroidery, and setting in bits of

semi-precious stones as a jeweller might set them in a casket. The whole snow-white flowerlike building is as perfect in detail as if it were a toy; and yet, it is really a building of noble proportions. It stands one hundred and eighty-six feet square; the graceful dome is fifty-eight feet in diameter, and the slender minarets at the four corners of the platform are each one hundred and thirty-three feet high. (Most of the above has been extracted from a descriptive card.) This dream in marble is too good to be a tomb of a queen; such has never been witnessed over the remains of the greatest saints, kings and warriors the world over; but it is more—a monument of a great *love* which is far greater than this white bubble of a dome.

After inspecting this wonderful piece of Indian architecture, rightly considered as one of the seven wonders of the world, we came to the Agra Fort for which permission had already been obtained, hardly expecting to be met with the grandeur of art, beauty and romance that awaited us. We passed a very interesting day. There was however a slight hitch in the programme by way of a breeze between myself and Slamson in the morning regarding the luggage handling; upon which all were asked by Baba whether we were willing to *work*, and if so, we shall have to do the necessary work, whether that of a coolie or a sweeper under Behramji's instructions; otherwise those who do not want to work should declare it there and then, so that no work of any kind will be entrusted to them throughout the journey. But all were found ready to be of some service, and hence the matter ended.

This part of the country is a perfect hell in these days, it being so very hot. In spite of sleeping in the garden in the open, we felt as if packed in a small room.

May 28, 1923

Muttra

We left Agra at 6 this morning, and at about 8 A.M. reached Muttra station. Slamson who had been sent in advance had arranged for our stay at a Hindu sanatorium to which we drove in the hired carriages. A few miles' rough drive brought us to the city proper at the splendid Harding Gate with a clock in the entrance. Unhappily, the house where we had to put up was far away in the interior of the thickly clustered buildings, quite aloof from the road, access to which could be had by the fine and clean, stone-paved passages, but not wide enough for any kind of vehicle to pass through. As regards heat, Muttra

seemed to be hotter. Hence the actual coolie work of taking the things from the carriages to the rooms allotted to us on the second floor was most trying to the extreme. This was specially because dozens of watermelons have increased the luggage of late, being required for Gustadji, Behramji and Baba in particular, because of their still observing the fast begun since the 11th instant; moreover Baba is still on liquids.

The most unusual sight was the hundreds of monkeys jumping here, there and everywhere. The monkeys are, on religious grounds, immune from any attack, however serious a mischief be committed by them. This had made them very bold; so much so that almost every house is carefully protected with iron bars fixed over every window, door, and ventilation, however big or small; even the courtyards have iron mesh work all round. Consequently, most of the houses look like prison cells.

After taking the meals, we all repaired to the Jumna, sacred river of this sacred city. We all had a bath and a general wash-up by the side of the well-built steps along the river full of tortoises, and in spite of so much precautions, a monkey managed to help himself to Masaji's trousers, which were regained, however, after difficulties. In the afternoon, we went round all the principal temples where Baba did the necessary ceremonies. The most important was the house where Lord Krishna, one of the greatest *teachers* of the world, took birth. Baba asked us all to pay respects here. In the evening, we passed an hour or so in a boat going along the bathing steps which extend about a mile. Excellent view of the bathing steps and the temples along the river with the city in the background was witnessed in the calm and cool of the evening on the river.

The city is considerably large and thickly populated to the extent of about 60,000 souls in the city proper. It has also a nice bazaar but very few roads wide enough for any vehicle to pass through, and almost the whole city is interwoven with narrow lanes. There are many places of pilgrimage and mythological interest in the near vicinity. Under some excuse, Baba gave a ringing slap on the ears of Adi, and some time after the storm, he nursed the same himself.

May 29, 1923

Passing by Delhi

We left Muttra this morning for Karachi, as the visit to Delhi and Amritsar has been cancelled. At about 5:30 P.M. the train

approached the capital of India, affording a few hurried glimpses of the old and new cities, the Kutub Minar, and the giant Friday Mosque. The station, though not very attractive, is a very commodious building having about seventeen platforms, being the junction of about half a dozen railways. In spite of the present long, roundabout route of going to Karachi via Delhi, Bhatinda and Samasatta, in place of the short metre-gauge route from Agra, we did not make a halt at Delhi, the city of cities pregnant with world-famous relics of religion, history, and architecture, showing truly that the present tour of Baba is not merely for the sake of sight-seeing.

Excellent arrangements by way of an underground passage under the platforms worked by electric lifts for the easy and quick transportation of luggage is present at Delhi. In spite of it, we had to undergo the tedious task of removing the things over the bridge to the platform by which the N. W. Ry. Mail leaves for Bhatinda. In order to be assured of sufficient room in the train, we occupied a compartment with the help of a railway employee while the train was in the siding, which made us again remove the things from the platform to the siding. Baba seemed to be very ill and uneasy since this evening.

May 30, 1923

#### The Frequent Changes

In the early hours of the morning we got down at Bhatinda junction, and save for the trouble with the ticket examiners regarding the booking of the luggage, it was an easy task of removing in the other train ready alongside the platform. In spite of it being an important junction, we could not get bread; I tried in the bazaar of the town too, but after difficulties procured a few of a very poor quality which made our scanty breakfast. We reached Samasatta in the afternoon, and again left this train, awaiting the Karachi Mail from Lahore. Again the railway authorities troubled us for the luggage, the Bhatinda people having wired them. The Karachi Mail arrived by evening, quite packed like sardines in a tin with passengers; and as the train stops here for a few minutes only, the great hustle and bustle can well be imagined by the fact that in spite of the best efforts, we all got divided in several carriages, the same being the case with the luggage. Afterwards, it was decided to occupy the interclass compartment where, too, we had to fight our way in and occupy a whole bench. By and by all of us got into this compart-

ment with the luggage at several stoppings, and after about an hour or so felt clear of the storm once again. Of course, we had to pay the difference for the inter-class to the ticket inspector in the train. There is no change in the terrible heat.

May 31, 1923

### Karachi Camp

Nearing Karachi this morning, the aerodrome came to view just a couple of stations in advance. The novel sight that caught my eye was a boat-shaped car moving on wheels by the wind! It had an actual big mast, that of a ship, which gave it a very quaint appearance. After a few minutes, Karachi cantonment station was reached. We all got down here. Pilamai's husband, Hormasji, and other family members together with Baily, were present at the station to receive Baba, who was garlanded. And then we all drove in victorias to Hormasji's place. A bath, shave, change of linen and a wholesome meal was simply exhilarating, while the drive in the evening towards the sea face called Clifton was very refreshing, after the journey of nearly 2,000 miles on wheels. The recently completed Kothare Parade, Pier-Promenade, and the fine Pavilion built in stones (over reinforced concrete foundations) with a very beautiful bandstand (in stone) perched on a high pedestal with terraces, presents a lovely scene of the finest seashore in India.

But half the beauty of this bright picturesque Promenade is marred by the lack of sufficient visitors and spectators like that of a gay crowd which comes together on Chowpatty sands and Apollo every day in Bombay. This might be due to the fact of Clifton being situated in an isolated locality about a couple of miles from the city and camp both, without tramway facilities. The tramway line runs over a limited area of the camp and city. It consists of a poor service of cars run on petrol engine and mostly of the type open all along the sides with running footboard, though between Kemari, the docks and camp section, cars of a more modern type run. The cantonment occupies a very large area with very wide roads well kept and electrically illuminated along the fine residences, big buildings, the Empress market, cinemas and a host of finely decorated large shops of different commodities. The general situation leaves an impression of being in a modern city on a very wide and grand scale.

June 1, 1923

Karachi City

After ascertaining that I would finish with the Friday prayers by 2 o'clock, Baba decided to take us all for sight-seeing the principal places of interest at 2 P.M. Myself and Barsoap came to the Friday Mosque in the camp at about 12:30, the usual time of getting to the mosques at our side (Bombay); but unhappily I overlooked the fact that there was exactly the difference of an hour with the result that it was as late as 2:45 that we got out of the mosque and walked towards our places as fast as our legs would carry. We found Baily waiting for us in one of the taxi cars hired for the purpose, and informed us in reply to our breathless enquiries that Baba and the rest had gone to his (Baily's) sister's and Baba's aunt's house, awaiting us there. With the heart throbbing to the accompaniment of the motor engine we reached the place just in time as Baba and the *mandali* came out of the house.

The event I dreaded actually took place. Baba feigned great annoyance and anger, showering choice adjectives and storming my little citadel of temper with volleys of abuses and uncalled for criticism in the presence of all. The matter reached such a point that the programme was all abandoned and the taxis were dismissed. The afternoon seemed very dull and unusually gloomy at the sudden upsetting of the plan of enjoyment, but it did not keep long. After an hour or so, new life was infused in the atmosphere by taking to the first plan. Baba again decided under some excuse to go out. All the taxis were called back again, and we started towards Soldier Bazaar. After a few minutes' comfortable drive in the commodious Buicks, we came to the government botanical and zoological gardens combined, with an interesting collection of birds and beasts. The lake amidst the pretty shrubbery with swans gracefully gliding in together with the other water fowl, ducks and herons, presented a charming picture of natural beauty.

Having finished going round this place, we took to the motors and started towards the city proper by the principal roads and through important localities. We had been to the local museum but could not get in, and on Friday it is reserved for ladies only, so we had to be content with looking at the building from the outside, which is a good specimen of fine architecture and one of the important public buildings of Karachi. Almost all

cinema theatres were visited for choosing a programme for to-night. The most prominent road, and I think the only one of its kind, Bunder Road also came to our view from end to end, as starting from camp we went to Kemari, the docks, the extreme end of Karachi. Bunder Road is amply wide enough befitting a great city running straight for miles from camp to Kemari through the heart of the city, with a good traffic of trams and other conveyances. The camp side of the road is rather isolated because of the spare buildings thinly scattered along the road. The Khalikdina Hall is a plain but fine imposing building where the trial of the Ali brothers and other heroes of the nation had taken place. The locality called Fadi Hata is thickly populated and looks like city proper, while a little further on, palatial mercantile and public buildings on both sides of the road give the appearance of a miniature Bombay. We also had a passing glance at the Boulton Market of the city.

The most imposing and the largest building that came to view was the huge and giant premises of the Karachi Port Trust near Kemari. The docks don't appear imposing enough for this important port, being without any buildings of size, save for the insignificant sheds and offices there, as well as occupying a very limited area on the whole. We had a short cruise in one of the ferryboats towards the island opposite to the docks called Manors having a fine beach for an evening out, and save for a few houses of Hindus and Muslims with a small temple and mosque, it is mainly occupied by the military. The elevated portion is fortified and the surrounding area is prohibited to the public. There is also a lighthouse on the island. After supper, we all went to a cinema and thus late in the night the day of amusement ended.

June 4, 1923

#### Karachi Suburbs

The last two days were quite uneventful save for some of us having gone out for a walk. But this morning we were again on the move. Leaving the house as early as 6:30 A.M., we came to the station by the tramway and started for Malir by the 8:15 local train. Malir is the second or third station after the cantonment, being a small village where some of the city people have got their country seats. We put up in the compound of a bungalow a few minutes' walk from the station where we ourselves carried the things, consisting of the utensils for the ready and hot meals, bundles of bread and ice and the confounded water-



melons. The scarcity of water made us shift to another place, and with the bag and baggage we came to a small hotel which looked as if very seldom visited by customers. This too did not answer the purpose of our visit which was passing an "Arangaoning" day, that of washing the clothes and ourselves both by a well or river, and side by side enjoying a picnic.

Well, we again moved in the hot sun towards a garden about a couple of miles away where we found ample water pumped out of a well by an oil engine for the adjoining fields. We had a nice bath and washed the clothes too to our satisfaction. The excellent food brought with us made a good picnic under the shade of the tall trees; but unfortunately the monster watermelon that had fallen to my lot for transportation still occupied my shoulders while returning home, being the only one of the lot that was not eaten! It was bumped to the ground, through slipping from my back. I felt relieved and enjoyed the situation.

June 7, 1923

Starting for Quetta

According to the change made in the plan on the 5th, we left Karachi for Quetta at 9:30 this morning. We had passed a nice time at Karachi for the week, the climate being very moderate and fine, together with the excellent hospitality of our hosts. No sooner the train passed a few stations, than it began to get hot, gradually increasing to the level of Agra and Muttra. In addition to the heat, the sand dust added to the inconvenience of third-class travelling; a train going through a barren sandy country proved a very dull time. The cool water—thanks to the bundle of ice that was with us—however made for some consolation.

June 8, 1923

Through the Bolan Pass

At about 5:45 in the morning the train reached Sibi junction. It stops here for about an hour, because all passengers are examined medically as well as by the police on account of the frontiers in the near vicinity. The police enquiries are made very strictly, so much so that each and every third-class passenger of the train is obliged to get out and stand on the platform in a line, where the enquiring party examines them one by one. Happily, we escaped that fate as the officer was satisfied after taking down

the names of each and every member of our party in the carriage, together with the other formal particulars as to occupation, etc., which we afterwards came to know was due to the wire our host had sent from Quetta to the enquiring authorities at Sibi about us. The train started at 6:30. Barsoap, who had been sent to ask about milk, missed it and got left behind, bare-footed and bare-headed. The exciting as well as humorous sight of Barsoap making frantic efforts in getting hold of the last carriage of the guard, by running as fast as his heavy body would allow after the quickly disappearing train along the platform, showed that he did not spare a single breath in the attempt. No doubt Barsoap was asked to enquire about milk at the eleventh hour, but that worthy, instead of doing so on the platform alongside of the train, went so far as beyond the last carriage of the guard and thus missed it. Since I volunteered to get down at the next station, Baba asked me to do so at Naribank with two tickets, biscuits and some money, to bring Barsoap by the next train.

The station master was good enough to arrange to get Barsoap over the phone whom I informed that I was coming by foot. I walked back to Sibi along the railway lines, a distance of five miles. I found a bridge rather of a novel type. Besides the railway lines, it also carried the general traffic, as the public road became one with the railway road over the river. However the bridge could only be used by the public *after* informing the station master of Sibi or Naribank. By eight o'clock I joined Barsoap. We both had tea with the biscuits that I had brought with me. The heat was simply terrible. I had to take ice in the early hours of the morning, but in spite of the ice, the soda tasted warm. We both left Sibi at 9 o'clock by a passenger train. At the third station—Mushkaf—Padri joined us. He had also been made to get down at this station to accompany us. I got a severe headache on account of the heat. We reached Mach, a big station, by noon. According to instructions, we despatched a wire to Baba informing the time of our arrival at Quetta. We also had our meals at this station. An extra engine got attached to the train as the mountains begin from here. We began to pass through the Bolan Pass, one of the only two accesses to India by land (the other being the Khyber). The mountain pass is very poor in point of scenery, as the hills are barren like a desert without a single tree or a small patch of green, because of the ice that covers it in the winter. However, it is interesting enough on account of the scores of tunnels and bridges of various size, mostly fortified, and the sombre watch-towers on strategic points

along the railway lines and the road, which is mostly running nearby. Some of the tunnels even have steel doors, while the number of the bridges amount to more than two score on account of a big river winding through the hills and every now and then crossing the road and the railway. At every station, an armed police was seen to be present, parading along the train.

We reached Quetta, the principal city of Baluchistan, by 5:30 in the evening. Through the presence of Mr. Pirozshah who had come to receive us, we managed to pass through the cordon of plainclothesmen very eager, alert and active to enquire about us. A few minutes' drive in the hired carriage brought us to the house of our new hosts, Messrs. Rustom and Sorab. A separate suite of rooms had been engaged for Baba and party on the first floor next to their house by Rusi. The building is situated at the corner of Bruce Road, an important commercial street between the Chhavni and the city. Quetta, being nearly five thousand feet above the level of the sea, was so very cold in these days of summer, that it surpassed the winter of Bombay side. We found all the rest of the *mandali* fresh with a bath, shave and change of linen, and consequently, we three were also ordered to undergo the same change. So far as it concerned a shave and change of clothes, it was all very well. But the question of taking a bath with cold water furnished a very uncomfortable prospect, because the water was intensely cold, exactly like ice water. But the order was an order after all. With clenched teeth and shivering limbs I got beneath the water pipe and with a final effort let open the same. The first shock almost took my breath away, but I however finished with the bath very soon. The hot meal served soon after was never more welcome than at the present moment.

June 9, 1923

#### A Fruit Garden of Quetta

Having gone to bed early last night, we felt no hesitation in getting up of it by dawn. After taking tea, Rusi took us round a part of the town for sight-seeing, as it has been arranged to go for a walk every morning for about an hour. A brisk walk brought us in one of the scores of fruit gardens for which Quetta is so very famous. The garden with an extensive area thick with various fruit trees and shrubberies, all rich and heavily laden with tempting fruits like grapes, apricots and peaches blooming

with colour and freshness, presented an unusually fine and pleasant atmosphere. A few fresh apricots were presented to Baba, who, still taking liquids only, passed them on to me and some others. The exhilarating taste cannot be described by pen.

June 10, 1923

#### Markets of Quetta

The fateful tenth! The one-time long awaited day came at last, but passed away without any extraordinary event taking place. Again after breakfast, we went for a walk in the city proper, and inspected the finely built vegetable, mutton and the Kabari markets. The last quaintly named market was something new to look at, as it is a plain building having two rows of shops with a wide, open road between the opposite shops, exclusively meant for second-hand things only. The ample display of all kinds of second-hand matter such as clothes, furniture, books, leather goods, ironware, etc., bore a respectable appearance, in spite of being old, on account of the fine neat shops that contained them.

June 11, 1923

#### Public Buildings of Quetta

Baba did not accompany us today while going for a walk. We had a look at the Sandham Hall and statue erected in memory of a military celebrity of that name. It is a beautiful building amidst well-kept grounds. The local museum is also nearby but was closed on account of the early hours. The next public building of size that came to our view was the town hall, a big and enormous, though plain, mosque-like building where important meetings, etc., take place. But the palatial rest house or travellers' shelter is the most beautiful building, being built in the most charming style of Indian architecture.

June 12, 1923

#### A New Plan

We had the usual walk this morning along the road popularly known as the Thandi Sadak, on account of the giant trees providing as complete a shade over the road as a roof. Save for the travelling inconveniences, we were passing an easy, and to a certain extent, pleasant time since leaving Arangaon. The latter

could be particularly said of our stay at Quetta. As besides the fine walk every morning, we passed equally interesting evenings in witnessing the amazing sleight of hand tricks and other magical performances by Rusi, who, besides being an expert confectioner and shrewd businessman, proved himself to be a good professional conjurer and magician too. There was ample engaging occupation in the day in watching the buzzing aeroplanes flying (sometimes dozens of them were seen hovering at a time over Quetta) and the Scotch Highlanders marching past our place twice a day with full dress and playing the sweet music of the bagpipe (while going to form the guard of the bank, etc.), also in playing cards, hearing the gramophone and listening to explanations given by Baba sometimes. But the atmosphere got a little changed when Baba brought forth a new plan, that of passing six months more in India before going to Persia by undertaking a tour of walking from Kashmir to Bombay!! with an interval of about a month's stay at a suitable place en route. This meant serious business. Most of us got a new occupation in the discussions about the proposed tour.

June 13, 1923

#### The Sudden Race Towards a Hill

We did not go for a walk today in the morning, but at about 6 P.M. Baba suddenly declared his intention of going on the hill which is standing grimly nearby, overlooking the house. In a few minutes, the party headed by Baba began to race through the busy streets and lanes towards the outskirts of the city where the huge hill is situated. In addition to our party bearing distinctly foreign appearance, the speed of our walk, which almost amounted to running, caught the eye of almost each and every person that we passed along. A couple of miles' brisk walk brought us quite breathless to the foot of the hill. The idea of climbing over the highest point was, however, abandoned, though we went up to the point affording a bird's eye view of the city as well as the camp.

The latter looked like a picturesque little English town with the tiny but fine bungalows having smoke chimneys which are quite common even to the smallest house here. In spite of strong representations, we suspected that we were watched by spies; but today our belief was confirmed by the fact that a plainclothesman was noticed to have followed us on bicycle up to the foot of the hill and kept an eye on us while we were moving about

the hill. Quetta being an important frontier city, it is said to have a special spy service and every stranger and newcomer is carefully marked by them.

June 14, 1923

### The Summer at Quetta

A very welcome change took place today in the daily routine, that of taking the morning bath with hot water. Though the cold baths were no longer shocking now, like the first day, yet they were uncomfortable enough even in the summer days of Quetta, which are so cold as to make us use blankets in the night. Contemplations took place today by Baba and party over the different points affected by Munshi's letter asking permission whether he can apply for the storekeeper's post in the Sukkur-Barrage scheme. Munshi was allowed by Baba to try for the post, and was further informed that he would be allowed to pass about a month in Baba's company at the time of the interval en route from Kashmir to Bombay on foot.

June 16, 1923

### Artesian Well

According to the arrangements made the previous day, we all got up at 4 A.M. and started on foot towards Mr. Ardeshir Golwala's fruit garden, about three miles from our place. This garden is very much bigger than the one we had seen before, but equally rich with heavily laden fruit trees. The water is provided through an artesian well—an expensive method of driving pipes underground to a considerable depth, and if the project *is* successful (as was the case with this well) you have a continuous supply of water from the pipe for 24 hours without break, which if once stopped, will stop forever! We passed a jolly good day, playing *gili-danda*, etc. The excellent food arrangements, together with the abundant fruits, did not play a small part in the programme.

June 17, 1923

### Would-be Holy Men

The plan of walking from Kashmir to Bombay is almost a fixed programme now, as the day passed chiefly in fixing up the details today. It is now arranged to leave Quetta for Kashmir

as the preparations are made with *just enough* money to cover the railway fares to Kashmir, and for food, etc., up to the time we reach the starting point. After reaching Kashmir, all are to go begging for the daily food! and be satisfied with whatever is thus procured. Not a single piece of money is to be kept with any of us or spent by us up to the time of the interval. All are to wear a plain long rough cotton robe over the shirt and trouser covering the body from neck to foot and no other garments are to be worn or kept by us except one shirt and one trouser as spares. No one is to keep a cap on head but everyone is to cover the head with kerchief or any kind of cloth-piece and only sandals are to be used for footwear. As to bedding, only one blanket is to be kept by each for covering, the robe being proposed to serve the purpose of a bedspread. Everyone will be given a rough cotton bag to keep spare clothes, a piece of soap and a water bottle which is all to be carried along with the blankets, etc., by the respective members themselves! In short, all are to become for some time, wandering holy men, externally at least.

Of course, all have been asked by Baba to consider the grave subject very carefully and to come to a decision after giving attention to the individual points by each as regards their health, their mental readiness to bear the burden, as well as jeers, taunts, and abuses by others and the social circumstances, etc. Otherwise, he said, all those who did not *find* themselves quite up to the point of following the programme fully and thoroughly will have to keep at certain places for the period without being considered to be disconnected from his following.

Baba was photographed by Asthma while dressed in a fur coat presented to him by our host, and the snapshot proved very successful, affording a beautiful portrait of Baba in quite a novel dress.

June 18, 1923

### Intolerable *Intolerance*

The touring programme has been commenced towards bringing into practice by the purchase of sandals and cloth for the robes. Baba and ourselves went this evening to the Opera House, a fine looking big building with electric illuminations, situated just opposite to our place. The much talked-of film *Intolerance* formed the programme; but unfortunately a slight mishap in the projecting machine really turned the show very intolerable

by showing the picture upside down every now and then. We left the picture house very soon without going through the full programme, and found the evening more inviting at home than witnessing that wild display of the movie.

June 19, 1923

#### Seven Tiles

In honour of Sorab's birthday, the evening was fixed for outdoor sport, and accordingly Baba and party came to the open grounds nearby. We all got divided in two parties, Messrs. Rusi, Sorab and Pirozshah also participating in the game of seven tiles. A very interesting and exciting game was played for two hours from 6 to 8 P.M. with equal goals on both sides, providing the sight of a novel game to the many spectators that had gathered together there. Baba as usual took a keen and lively part in the game in spite of having kept on scanty drinks of tea, fruit juice, etc., for more than a month.

June 20, 1923

#### The First Long Robe

Today the first long robe was ready made to Gustadji's measurements. After a general approval thereof by all, Baba and the rest of the *mandali* got measured for our respective robes. Two extra robes were ordered for Sadashiv and Vajifdar who are also going to join the touring party at Kashmir under Baba's instructions. In the same way sandals, water bottles and bags have also been arranged for the two absentees. Along with these grim preparations, arrangements are on foot for sight-seeing the waterworks situated at a distance of about 14 miles from here and enjoying there a day out on picnic.

June 21, 1923

#### Valley of Urak

According to the elaborate arrangements made by our enthusiastic hosts, about three Ford cars headed by one more Ford lorry presented themselves in a line along our place in the early morning. Utensils, food, and other things almost occupied the whole lorry; yet myself and Barsoap along with Miyankhan squeezed in, and we started, while Baba and the rest were to follow by the other cars.



The first part of the journey through the Chhavni and the brown barren part of the valley was not quite interesting. But as we approached nearer to Urak (where the waterworks are situated) we passed along a few miles of the beautiful and charming part of the valley, rich with green patches here and there, amidst clusters of big trees. There seemed to be an abundance of water here which ran in many rivulets amongst the trees, hills and dales, being the overflow of water from the Urak. At some places the water was so collected between the trees as to appear like a huge piece of mirror set in there.

About 14 miles of refreshing motor spin brought us to the visitors' bungalow just near the works; within one hour all the rest joined us. Miyankhan and the ladies—as all the family members of our hosts and Gulmai had come too—got busy preparing the food, while we divided into two parties and had an interesting game of seven tiles, *dhuppa-dhuppi*, etc. The thorough exercise and the extremely beautiful surroundings produced a good appetite which was amply satisfied with the exceedingly fine food freshly prepared.

#### Quetta Waterworks

After the meals, Baba sat for a picture under a tree along a stream passing nearby and it proved a successful snapshot. The party was also photographed twice, but only one picture developed well, the other went wrong, and with it the pains of scrambling over a huge ball-shaped stone upon which we stood for the snapshot. In the afternoon we all went for the close inspection of the waterworks supplying the whole of Quetta with water. It consists of very little artificial work, and is mostly a natural affair. Though there are no greens, shrubberies, or trees nearby, yet the golden-brown hill, broken into several huge boulders and rocks with the clear crystal water running and dancing through the many streams winding and encircling the rocks from upwards, presented an exceptionally charming picture, specially in contrast with the clear blue sky above. We went up the hill for a little distance scampering and jumping across the water from one boulder to another. Baba scaled a very steep point on a higher level than most of us had reached and looked very strikingly and divinely pretty. At the foot of the hill, there was a small pond which contained the same crystal water coming down the hills, but here it appeared extraordinarily bluish. I guessed hard, but could not account for the shade of colour as it was extremely bright and light blue in contrast with the very dark colour of the sky overhead. We were back home by sunset.

## Second Foot Journey, Ahmedabad to Navsari

June 22, 1923

### Final Meeting

A DISCUSSION took place this afternoon between Baba and the *mandali* when all were present. The following points were agreed to by all after careful consideration and mature deliberations:

1. That those who accompany Baba for touring on foot do so under any circumstances by their own free will and on their own responsibility. Further, as a proof of this, all have agreed to sign on a stamped paper to the effect.
2. All are agreed not to leave Baba under any circumstances before the tour ends, but have also agreed that whenever and wherever any one or more is ordered to do so, they should leave for whatever place ordered to.
3. As Asthma persists to join the party, in spite of the repeated preference given to him by Baba, at his own responsibility and at any cost or risk, it is decided after a lengthy discussion that Asthma should accompany the *mandali*.
4. None of the *mandali* expect any supernatural acts from Baba as help under any circumstances, even in case of passing away of one or more of the *mandali* as has been said by Baba to happen in the future. After noting Baba's explanation that while touring he will be in such a spiritual stage that he will be quite helpless and might have to suffer even at the hands of mere yogis and advanced souls both internally and externally as has been the case with Shri Maharaj, Swami Vivekananda and Ghaus-Ali-Shah.

June 23, 1923

## Preparations Completed

Robes and other touring necessities were ready by now. Baba and party put on the full dress and got photographed twice. The group photos, however, did not develop well. But Baba was well caught by the camera when he sat for the picture all alone both times. Asthma is sent to Ahmedabad to get permission of his parents to join in the proposed tour.

Baba and a few of us went to the Empire Cinema in the Chhavni and passed an interesting evening in witnessing a fine film, *Heliotrope*. Gustadji and Behramji, who have been taking food only once in 24 hours and water only between certain hours since leaving 'Nagar, are observing complete fasts for 24 hours and 32 hours before commencing to eat regularly.

June 24, 1923

## Agreement Signed

The touring programme is changed a little after a lengthy discussion at the sudden instigation of Baba. It is decided now to go to Calcutta instead of to Kashmir and to start on foot from there to Bombay; thus, however, the main programme is unchanged. Messrs. Sadashiv and Vajifdar have been wired to meet us at Calcutta instead of Kashmir. The most important event of the day was the signing of the agreement on duly stamped paper by all of us.

All are busy packing our things, as we are leaving Quetta tomorrow. Save for two shirts, two pants, a blanket, robe, bag, water bottle and a stick with each, everything else is packed in separate bundles to be forwarded to depot.

June 25, 1923

## Starting from Quetta

Amidst the hustle and bustle of starting from Quetta, more excitement was added to the atmosphere by a sudden proposal of a change in the programme by Baba. After many proposals and counterproposals, it was finally decided to go to Ahmedabad instead of Calcutta and to start from there on foot. Most of us decided in favour of Gujarat, but very hesitatingly, as Calcutta appealed to us more; save for Gustadji and Slamson, who were simply bubbling with enthusiasm and praise about Gujarat. Be-

sides the change in the starting point, the question of begging, too, was dropped in favour of taking gram and parched rice for eating and water for drinking, but nothing else at all. We packed our things in a cart and walked to the station with Baba. The train steamed out at 4:55 A.M. with a hearty send-off by Messrs. Rusi, Sorab, Pirozshah and Ada who had accompanied us to the station to see Baba off. Rusi almost got tears in his eyes while parting with Baba. Soon after, Baba distributed the food for the evening meals, but Gustadji and Behramji were given only bread to be taken along with water, while he himself took some drink only, as usual.

June 27, 1923

### Dispute about Luggage

The whole day yesterday was passed in the train with a break at Hyderabad (Sind) where we took to the Ahmedabad-Hyderabad direct carriage on the J.B. Railway. Again this morning our carriage was attached to the metre-gauge Delhi Mail of the B. B. & C. Railway at Marwar. Some trouble arose at this station about our luggage, when an obstinate ticket inspector wanted to weigh it. Entreaties, requests, and arguments were of no avail. The dutiful inspector asked us to bring out all our things there and then on the platform scale. When the inspector refused our last suggestion to wire to our destination instead of troubling us en route, we too refused to move even a single thing from the carriage. The dispute reached such a point that the police were called in, but we remained firm about our decision; so at last, the station master was called for. He proved to be a very reasonable and polite man and brought about a compromise by way of instructing the inspector to weigh our things, excluding the beddings which the inspector wanted to weigh too, in the carriage with a hand scale. The station master spoke Urdu so well that we all took him to be a Muslim, but upon enquiry he said he was a Brahmin. He too enquired about us, when Gustadji told him, pointing towards Baba, that he was our leader and we followed him, Baba, regarding spirituality, upon which the station master seemed to have understood leader (*pandit*) in quite the literal sense of the word as priest. Gustadji said that by leader he did not mean parrot of a priest but a Realized man.

By now the train was about to move, so the station master got down, and the inspector who had been so long gone to get

the scale and an assistant returned to our compartment. Baba suddenly asked us to give the Urdu copy of Shri Maharaj's Life that was with us to the station master as a present. When the station master chanced to look at Baba's photo near the title page in the book I gave him, he ordered the inspector to clear way of our compartment and leave us undisturbed, just as the train had started. So after all, we reached Ahmedabad at 9:30 in the night without any further trouble. According to the wires sent from Quetta, Vajifdar and Sadashiv were present at the station along with Asthma, Gulmai and Sarosh who departed from us and left for Bombay by 10 P.M. together with all our things and clothes, excepting those to be kept with us on the walking tour.

Baba, who was not quite looking up to the mark today, sat on the platform ground talking with the newcomers. After about half an hour's conference it was declared that Sadashiv was returning back to Poona and not coming with us. Accordingly, he is to leave by the 10 P.M. mail tomorrow taking with him the robe, etc., brought for him from Quetta together with the suit, boots and hat of Vajifdar to be given at Vajifdar's house at Bombay, because according to the programme, we already were without coats and with sandals as footgear, while the caps were soon to be disposed of. Therefore Vajifdar, who had come with full dress on, has to send it away with Sadashiv, though he gets the touring suit in return kept ready for him.

By this time, Slamson had arranged for us to stay in the local Parsi travellers' house, to which we went by one of the numerous motor lorries on hire here. About a mile of motor ride through the busy and electrically illuminated roads brought us to the commodious and neat travellers' shelter building situated in the thick of the town. The presence of myself, Barsoap and Baburao was objected to, as the institution is exclusively meant for Parsis, but we were, however, passed in as servants. We soon retired for the much needed sleep.

June 28, 1923

Gustadji's Fast with Behramji

Gustadji and Behramji, who were taking meals once every 24 hours at 11 A.M. and water up till 1 P.M. since 'Nagar until Karachi, were there asked to eat once in the morning, only taking water up to 11 A.M. The last two fasts before leaving Quetta were complete fasts of 24 and 32 hours; all have come

to an end and both have been ordered to eat and drink like the rest of the *mandali* since this morning. In the journey from Quetta to Ahmedabad, too, they were ordered to take only bread and water throughout. Asthma, who so persisted in joining the tour in spite of Baba's advice otherwise, failed after all to get permission from his parents. According to Asthma's words, his parents were willing to allow him to join the party; but the sudden appearance of his uncle, who is highly prejudiced against Baba, at Ahmedabad spoilt the poor chap's plans at the eleventh hour by prejudicing his parents too. After having tea supplied by the innkeeper (as it has been arranged with him to supply ready meals by the time we start on foot), we started sightseeing this great historic city of Gujarat in a hired motor lorry. The first thing that we visited was the Jain temple, a big stone building with as fine carving work as on fine lace. From here, we went to a match factory affording wonderful mechanical sights. We also passed by the Kakadia Lake which is situated amidst fine surroundings. While going to Sabarmati, about a couple miles from Ahmedabad across the Sabarmati river, we passed along Mahatma Gandhi's *ashram*. We tried to get permission to have a look round the well-known Sabarmati Jail, but the superintendent refused to let so many persons like our party come in under present political circumstances. From Sabarmati, we had a general view of the city with the scores of mill chimneys protruding prominently from the thick cluster of other buildings and houses. Late in the afternoon, we finished with sight-seeing, quite stiff and tired, after an uncomfortable ride in the motor under the blazing hot sun of summer.

Sadashiv left for Poona in the night as prearranged.

June 29, 1923

#### Friday Mosque

Myself and Barsoap came to the Friday Mosque for Friday prayers. The palatial and exceptionally fine mosque built in stones on a graceful style of splendour with pillars placed in a line very near each other and with pretty carved brackets and huge carved arches in the front has a very big ground which, according to Barsoap who has been to Delhi, is bigger than that of the Friday Mosque of Delhi. This great house of prayer is situated along the chief road of the city, the Reachy Road, and the busiest locality about the Three Gates; yet it is a pity that it is almost concealed behind the shabby shops in front. After

prayers we went to the tomb of Sultan Ahmed, the founder of this mosque, situated nearby.

June 30, 1923

Baidul versus Barsoap

Subject to the final programme settled on the 25th, a bag of parched rice and a bag of gram was brought to the inn this evening. In spite of it being prepared at special orders, they proved to be of very poor quality. Further, the bulk of the stuff showed it to be very inconvenient in practical handling, so it was again after some discussion decided to return it, and take *dal*-rice instead. Some trouble arose between Baidul and Barsoap about carrying the sacks. The latter wanted to carry the gram sack, it being a bit handy, and asked the former to carry the fat parched rice bag, on the grounds of his (Baidul's) body being very much like the bag of rice itself. But according to Barsoap, Baidul took the gram bag and left the rice bag for Barsoap by way of mischief. The result was that a coolie was engaged to bring the forsaken bag on account of Barsoap's refusal to handle it; and this gave rise to an enquiry by Baba himself in the matter. Baidul was severely criticized by Baba, while Barsoap was also taken to task by way of being ordered to take the same rice bag on his back and go round the building. On account of the gram and parched rice plan, we had sent away all utensils. Therefore again a couple of vessels, etc., were bought together with the necessary grains. Baba issued final instructions to all to repeat the name of the Almighty, in their respective terms, in a low voice while walking throughout the journey. We retired early after being completely prepared for the journey in the morrow.

July 1, 1923

Starting on Tramp

We got up as early as 2:30 A.M. and all of us took bath. Besides the respective kits, the extra luggage was divided amongst the stronger members of the party. At about 4 A.M. we left the inn, walking through the dimly lighted city with the dogs barking after us. A few minutes' grim and silent walk brought us to the city gates. Baba passed word to commence repeating the Almighty's name, and soon the silence was changed into a quaint buzzing with the repetitions of "Ram, Ram," "Ya Allah" and "Yazdan" by all the respective members of the party. The dawn

presented us with a clear view of ourselves. There was Baba at the head of the party carrying his kit himself like the rest, while the rest of the party followed him without any coats with the respective blanket, bag, etc., put across and over the shoulders. Because of the begging question being dropped, we had not put the long robe on, yet our appearance was nonetheless extraordinary. By the fifth mile, the extra luggage of the bundle of fur that I was carrying proved too much for me and I could not keep pace with the rest, when Barsoap was asked to relieve me.

At 7:45 A.M. we reached Jetalpur, a small village 10 miles from Ahmedabad, and put up under a tree by the village tank. Though we had walked but a small distance, yet the luggage carrying had fairly taken the wind out of us. It took us about three hours in preparing the *dal*-rice after procuring the necessary firewood, water, etc., which made our joint breakfast and dinner at 11:30. The spot where we put up had quite romantic surroundings, having the beautiful village lake nearby amidst green trees and shrubberies with peacocks flying and dancing in there. We all slept between 1 and 3 P.M. In the afternoon, Baba further instructed us to form into pairs and walk in that manner in a fixed order while tramping, and also to keep watch at night for one hour by turns.

While taking out water from the well, our bucket slipped in. Our vain attempts to regain it evoked the sympathy of the villagers who had gathered together nearby for holiday making. Someone advised us to go and get the *biladi* (cat) from the village temple. I was quite at a loss to understand how a cat can perform such tricks, but to my surprise, I found Slamson return with a hook-like contrivance which I afterwards came to know was called a *billadi*. However, we got back our much needed bucket, thanks to the hospitable and kind village folk. It was already decided to take rest there for the whole day and then to start for Kaira tomorrow morning as usual by the main road. But confound my inquisitiveness! I came across a bit of news that there was a short cut to Kaira which branches off from the main road at Bareja, just four miles from this place and which would save us a score of miles tramping. Baba soon accepted the plan, with the characteristic abruptness whenever someone makes a mistake of suggesting new plans in face of a fixed programme. Accordingly, after again taking the plain *dal*-rice, which made our afternoon tea and supper together, we started from the romantic Jetalpur at 5:30 P.M.

We reached Bareja by sunset, and through the courtesy of



the vice-president of the Local Board (whom we met en route) got the travellers' shelter at our disposal. In spite of so many beautiful peacocks gaily flying and playing around us, the atmosphere was simply heavy, chiefly because of the dust flying like a sand storm. The unusual exertion of the day began to tell upon the eyelids, but we were not allowed to close our drooping lids before 10 P.M. After going to sleep, getting up from sound sleep for keeping watch for an hour was more painful, and trying to the extreme.

*after first day—14 miles*

July 2, 1923

Memorable Kaira

We again got up or, to be correct, were made to get up by 4 A.M. Within half an hour we started on this memorable tramp. The day promises to be extremely hot, as it is already warm at this early hour. Adding fuel to the fire, I am feeling feverish and thirsty by now. This short cut had already at the first few miles proved a very bad business, as we had in vain been looking forward to finding a good path with a hard surface in place of the one we were tramping on with almost a foot deep layer of loose dry mud. We took rest under a tree which had not a single leaf or twig moving, so heavy and warm was the atmosphere. In spite of many enquiries, there was no sign of this short cut coming to an early end. Besides the luggage and kit carrying, the continuous muddy surface of the path made walking a very laborious affair, specially with the rough and heavy Pathani sandals on the feet. Consequently, at the second halt, we all were almost done for with thirst and exhaustion—Vajifdar getting a further handicap of a couple of blisters on his feet.

Again for the third time we started and began to trudge along the same muddy path. In such a critical position, Nervous supplied the reason why he is so nicknamed by finding a quarrel with me, which resulted in both of us being severely criticized by Baba. Baba further made a long lecture in a very loud and clear voice in this connection, while trudging along at the head of the *mandali*. This was a fresh evidence of Baba's supernatural energy: that when most of us could hardly utter a single word in a loud voice, in spite of taking solid food twice a day at this juncture, Baba talked as if he were merely out for a stroll in the Victoria Gardens in spite of his taking only some drink of tea or fruit juice twice or thrice a day for the last four or five

months. Every step that we took was taken with the greatest effort and for me the order of repeating "Ya Allah" while walking did not matter to be an order as every step voluntarily brought out "Ya Allah" from my lips. Baba had told us before starting on the tramps that the caps that we were putting on shall have to be thrown at a suitable spot. Now we felt so very tired that more than twice Behramji reminded Baba to relieve us from the burden on the head. As a bit of consolation we at last came to the river, beyond which lay our destination—Kaira. The sight of the water from a distance was enough to make our mouths water; but Baba issued instructions that no one should drink water unless ordered to do so. Hence, we merely had to console our burning bodies with external washing of hands, feet and face. The *mandali* were quite done up by now, but as the destination was now fairly in sight it made us move our limbs once again. Behramji again reminded Baba about the caps, upon which he ordered us all to throw them in the river while crossing the same. Almost all looked very pleased to get rid of the burden from the head in the two feet deep waters of the river. About a mile of more painful walk at last brought us in the city. But to my utter dismay, Baba did not seem to like any spot in the near vicinity to put up for the day. We began to wander along the bazaar and stopped before a tea shop. Baba took tea, while we all squatted down near the shop, attracting a large crowd of spectators around us. Some pitied our haggard and shabby appearances, while some advised us as to how to get quick help, probably taking us for beggars. In the same way there were many who began to bombard us with searching questions, as well as laugh and jeer at us. The terrible thirst and the utterly broken-down condition made us quite indifferent to what was going on around us; the only thought that prominently loomed before us was of water and lying down!

After Baba had tea, we again moved on. I could hardly walk straight. At every step I felt as if I would fall down. With the greatest sigh of relief, we at last settled under a tree near the collector's bungalow; but save for a well nearby, the place was very inconvenient. The tree was quite inadequate to shelter us from the sun while the ground itself was quite uneven. Almost all were quite broken down and strange to say, the strongest of us fared the worst. For instance, Vajifdar, on account of the blisters, could hardly walk. There were Masaji and Baidul lying almost on the stomach and puffing like bellows; while Pendu and myself were thoroughly shaken up. I felt as if something

had actually taken fire in my body, so much so that I could hardly keep myself in one position for a few minutes; as well, tears began to flow for some time. Slamson, who was not so badly hit, brought the necessary things while Gustadji cooked the food. At 11:45 we all took the usual *dal*-rice but with the greatest difficulty, as only 1½ glass of water was allowed to be taken by each, strictly by measure, with the meals, while the thirst was so keen that half a dozen glasses would not have sufficiently quenched the same. Baba further ordered us all not to take a drop of water more until further order.

Baba enquired of me whether I wanted to return home, to which I replied in the negative, but said I did not expect that I would be able to pull through the whole journey. In the same way, Padri too, in reply to Baba's enquiries, declared himself quite hopeless for further action. Baba asked us not to be disheartened, but have confidence. In the afternoon all were allowed to sleep; but the feeling of restlessness made me go to the shallow river nearby and sprinkle the dirty and muddy water all over my head, hands and feet for a long time. Same was the case with Pendu, who would frequently come before Baba with a protruding tongue as a silent appeal for water, in spite of getting an extra glass of water like myself. Upon this Baba made him take half a cup of clarified butter. The reason for the general breakdown of the *mandali's* spirit could not be due to tramping, as we had walked only about 15 miles from Bareja to Kaira, but to the restriction from taking water whenever one felt thirsty, and the kit carrying, and the plain *dal*-rice taken twice in 24 hours, which almost amounted to fasting.

About 3 P.M., a police sergeant came for enquiries and took down the names of all of us, with which he looked to be satisfied. The sergeant, however, gave alarming reports of the atrocities committed by the infuriated mob of late in this district, on account of the child-stealing scare, which prevailed strongly here like some other parts of the country at present. He further advised us to be very careful or, better, to clear away as soon as possible.

#### Tramp Postponed

As already rumours were current in city about us being the child stealers, Baba asked Vajifdar to go and see the local superintendent of police, a Parsi gentleman, to get his advice and help. But the superintendent could not take the bare-headed, long

robe and sandal clad figure of Vajifdar to be really that of the famous Parsi cricketer, and I think for the same reason, Vajifdar's vague explanations about the reason of our tour too did not strike him to be the virgin truth. Consequently Vajifdar returned without any encouraging news from the superintendent. A council of war was convened by 4:30 P.M. Baba put before us the question of taking to railway to reach Bharuch and from there to continue the tramp, after sending away Pendu, Masaji and Vajifdar to Bombay. It did not take us long to come to a decision, as the prospect of getting substantial rest under the present run-down condition was too tempting. Four carriages were hired by which we drove to the nearest railway station of Memnabad about seven miles from Kaira, reaching there by 7:15 P.M. Through the help of an obliging Muslim, we made ourselves comfortable in a travellers' shelter nearby till the time we left by the 11 P.M. train for Bharuch. Although each and every member of the party felt the pinch to some extent of the never-to-be-forgotten warm time that we had today, Baba did not at all look affected, though he too walked the same distance and carried the same kit.

*after second day—29 miles*

July 3, 1923

Bharuch

Early at 3:30 A.M. we got down at Bharuch and awaited in the shelter compound near the station till dawn. By that time Baba, Slamson, and Vajifdar went in carriages, and through the latter's relation, arranged for our stay in the local Parsi inn. After Baba and party returned we all walked to Jamshed Baug, about one and a half miles from the station. As usual, myself, Barsoap and Baburao were passed as servants. Considerable inconvenience was experienced on account of lack of suitable site for cooking and the scarcity of drinking water in the city. After taking the usual *dal*-rice at 11 A.M., we repaired to the Narmada river passing nearby, for bath, etc. The bath and the washing of the clothes did not prove a pleasant job on account of the saltish and muddy waters of the river. Afterwards we rested in the inn till 4 P.M., when the time was well passed in listening to the feckology of a bombastic Parsi gentleman puffing with self-praise and eulogy for his whole community. The point of humour was that poor Mr. Jalnawala was seething with drastic

condemnation of Hindus in general and Muslims in particular without suspecting myself and Barsoap to be Muslims.

Same as Kaira, we could not have a look round the principal sights of the city—for instance, the famous giant tree Kabir-Vad—as at 4 P.M. we again started direct from Jamshed Baug for Ankleshawar on foot. We again came to the river and hired a boat to reach the opposite shore as the shortest route to Ankleshawar. After a touching good-bye to Vajifdar, Masaji and Pendu, the rest of us were hustled in and the boat was pushed on. The strong breeze blowing at the time gave a lot of trouble in putting up the sails, and Nervous very nearly missed losing his eye as one of the thick strong ropes came swirling through space and with a thud knocked his wrist on which he was resting his head.

Perhaps this was the forerunner of the coming trouble. The boat, on account of a strong breeze and rough waters, progressed very unsteadily, yet it amply made up the deficiency by presenting a picturesque view of Bharuch. Behind the old romantic stone wall which is running all along the coast were the small and big houses of various shape and colour, with the clock-tower and the temple prominently looming in the background. At the right across the river was the gigantic railway bridge, one of the greatest of its kind in India. We had hardly been enjoying the fine scenery for ten minutes when with a great shock and noise the boat came to a standstill. Because of no rains, the river was very shallow at many places and thus the boat had run aground! The boatmen began swearing and howling and after a great hustle-bustle, the boat once again took motion. Just a few minutes' sailing, and the boat again got jammed in the sands below the surface of the water. This time, at the repeated requests and pleadings of the boatmen, some of us got down in the water to help them, of course after making sure that the water was knee-deep only.

The mud made us sometimes cling to the boat, instead of pushing it on, to save us from going down. However, we were successful with our joint efforts to move the boat for a good distance; yet the opposite shore still stood far away when the boat stopped for the third time. In spite of our best efforts now the boat would not budge an inch; therefore another empty boat was brought from the opposite shore as near to ours as the waters would allow, still leaving a good 25 yards' gap of shallow water between the two boats. Now, everyone of us had to plunge down in the water to reach the other boat as well

as transship all the luggage too. So after folding the pants kneewise and rolling up the sleeves, we all, including Baba, went in the water one after the other with the respective and extra kit carried by each. On the whole, the water was knee-deep, but the soft mud made most of us go down below the level of the waist, thus creating a very humorous situation which made us quite forget the inconvenience. It was some sight! Everyone was struggling, not only with the treacherous bottom of the river, but also balancing the respective blanket, bag, sandals, etc., on the head to save them being drenched with water. Where there was a chance of losing one's breath, how could the things remain dry and intact? By the time we gained the other boat, we had the regular ducking of our life and so were our belongings, too, all wet and covered with water and mud.

Our hardships did not end here, as this second boat, too, after moving for some distance, got stuck in the mud before reaching the shore proper, and after similar difficulties, we were at last once again on dry land. Baba asked us all to dry ourselves as best we could under the circumstances, and wherever possible, change the wet clothing for dry ones, which we did by the shelter of a hedge. Soon after, we began our tramp towards Ankleshawar, and after a laborious walk of six miles, reached the station by 8:30 P.M. We made ourselves at home on the platform and felt very much relieved at the freedom given by Baba to all of us to drink water to our satisfaction. As the train for Surat was due at 4 A.M. all were allowed to sleep till time, of course a pair keeping watch for one hour by turns.

*after third day—38 miles*

July 4, 1923

Surat

Starting by the 4 A.M. train we reached Surat at 6 A.M. To get an easy access in the local Parsi inn with our extraordinary dress on, we drove in carriages straight from the station to the travellers' shelter, and luckily found the whole two-storied commodious building all to ourselves. After meals, all took bath and washed the clothes, etc., that had been spoiled in the Narmada. Today we took food thrice, of course the same plain *dal*-rice, though in the evening, Masaji made some change and prepared shied *dal* and brown rice. Baba sent a wire to Rustom to come

to Navsari on the 6th and see us there. Save for the purpose of making purchases, all of us kept indoors and took rest, sleeping at 9:30 P.M.

*after fourth day—38 miles*

July 5, 1923

24 Miles' Walk

Having got up at 3:15 A.M. we were ready by 4 A.M. and started walking towards the railway lines, as it has been settled to reach Navsari walking along the railway. We left the public road near the station and began walking by the railway lines, reaching Sachin at 9 A.M. We halted here by the porter's hut in advance of the station and prepared the usual *dal*-rice. After taking food and rest for a couple of hours, we again started along the railway lines. With one more halt for rest, we ultimately reached Navsari at 5:30 P.M. Having walked a record distance of 24 miles from Surat to Navsari, we were all naturally very tired, but strange to say, in the best of spirits, quite in contrast to the Kaira walk.

Very strange that at Kaira when the *mandali* were quite broken down to the extreme limit, Baba did not look affected at all, and when the *mandali* are in the best of spirits in spite of walking 24 miles, Baba does not look quite up to the mark. Another uncommon fact is about myself having walked this distance so easily, because, at the time of starting in the morning, I had felt so run down that I had never hoped to traverse one-eighth of the distance. We engaged carriages at the station and drove to the local Parsi inn called Sorab Baug. This garden is situated in the thick of Parsi population and we were frequently jeered and laughed at by the ladies and children while going to take water from the well. As usual, *dal*-rice was prepared and eaten to the bewilderment of those around us and particularly of the innkeeper. In the evening a Parsi gentleman, having somehow got wind of Baba's arrival, came to take Baba's blessing. Baba sent word that he is to be let alone today, being very tired, but the gentleman persisted with his request, upon which Baba asked Gustadji to appear before him as Baba. The Parsi gentleman, never having before seen Baba, really took Gustadji for him, paid due respects and departed.

*after fifth day—62 miles*

July 6, 1923

## Over-Zealous Policeman

Rustom came early this morning as per the wire. We came to know the lot of fresh rumours that were current about Baba and party through mischievous agencies. After a private interview with Baba, Rustom went to see Mr. Desai. In the meantime a local police subinspector, or something of the sort, came for enquiries, and in spite of his insolent manners, we gave him our names and certain information of and about ourselves. But the worthy, taking stock of our uncommon dress, took seat and, with crossed legs and the air of a high court judge, began to ask impertinent questions at which, with Baba's permission, I began to retort in a like manner. The low-natured officer began threatening and puffing with rage, while the innkeeper observed neutrality. Suddenly Rustom appeared on the scene. His smartly dressed person and his dried and cut answers rather embarrassed the policeman, especially when Rustom was followed by Mr. Desai, a well-known author (joint author of *Maharaj's Life in Gujarati*) and a distinguished resident of Navsari. This settled the matter, as a few words of Mr. Desai made the guardian of the law beat a quick retreat. After an interview, Baba accompanied Mr. Desai to his house.

In the afternoon, the whole tramping programme was changed for that of staying at Nasik for three months. Accordingly, Gustadji left for Andheri along with Rustom, who was also going to Bombay by the afternoon train, to settle with his relation there for the relation's bungalow at Nasik. Thus the tramp came to an unexpected end, after walking only 62 miles for five days. But on account of the Kaira episode, the present tour will always remain green in memory. After finishing with the evening meals, we all walked to the station at 8 P.M. As the train was due after a couple of hours, we all made ourselves comfortable on the platform grounds. Mr. Desai and a large number of his friends and acquaintances who had come to see Baba off, sat surrounding him, when Baba gave some interesting explanations on spirituality. At 10 P.M. we left Navsari for Nasik. Another remarkable fact about the tramp was that almost all places that we visited never came to our view fully, leaving aside the question of sight-seeing, because of our always entering and leaving the cities in the dark hours.



July 7, 1923

## Dadar En Route

After a very long time, Baba and the *mandali* once again reached good old Dadar at 5:30 A.M. Gustadji and Burjorji were present on the platform. We soon repaired directly to the G.I.P. station from where the Nasik train was to leave at 7:25. As word about Baba's coming had already been passed, Burjorji, Vajifdar, and Navrozji and their respective family members began to pour on the station, followed by the Charni Road party, and within an hour quite a lot of familiar faces got together. A very busy and engaging hour followed in exchanging news, etc. *Dal*-rice was kept ready at Burjorji's place and brought to the station to be taken along in the train. At 7:24 we left for Nasik with Masaji, who again joined us, and after some time Baba distributed the *dal*-rice to the party, while he had, as usual, taken only coffee at Dadar. A Parsi gentleman who had all along been watching Baba, at the first opportunity, fell on his feet with an ardent outburst of devotion and very hesitatingly withdrew after being caressed by Baba.

At 2:45 P.M. we alighted at Nasik and found Syedsahib on the station to receive us. We took to carriages and reached No-manbhai's bungalow where Syedsahib had arranged for our stay. It is a fine, airy and newly built building with well-kept grounds near the city and about six miles from the railway station. Syedsahib soon brought *dal*-rice and a dish of vegetables, but according to the programme in force, Baba returned the latter, while the former made a hearty supper for all of us. It was after a long time that we had a decently prepared meal.

## Arangaon Briefly; Second Stay at Bombay

July 8, 1923

### Arangaon Again

WE had exceedingly fine weather today. Baba, Gustadji, Behramji and Munshi, who had come last night, went to select a spot for our permanent stay. They returned after selecting a spot at Gangapur near the river. Late in the day, Baba again seemed to change the idea of staying at Nasik, and under the excuse of the child scare, it was ultimately settled to go and stay at Arangaon! We all had bath. When the tramping as well as the staying at Nasik programme was set aside, the food plan remained unchanged, and accordingly *dal*-rice is taken twice a day by the *mandali*, and in the same way Baba is also taking liquids only for food, which comprises mostly a couple of cups of coffee in the day.

July 9, 1923

### Baba Takes Food

We again got up as early as 4:30 A.M., and within a couple of hours, all of us reached the station by Mr. Aziz Ahmed's car in three trips. Leaving Nasik at 7:30, we reached Manmad at 10:30. Masaji as usual prepared the *dal*-rice outside the third-class waiting shed with some of us assisting him. After having meals, we boarded the Dhond train which left Manmad at 12:15, reaching Ahmednagar at 5:30 P.M. As soon as the train stopped on the platform, we started walking towards Arangaon without

## 231 ARANGAON BRIEFLY; SECOND STAY AT BOMBAY

even waiting to surrender our tickets. Once again, we made ourselves at home at Arangaon, but quite unannounced and unexpectedly. Today could well be termed a very auspicious and important day as Baba joined us in taking *dal*-rice this evening, after about four or five months.

July 10, 1923

Settled in the "Post Office"

We got up at 5:45 this morning, and after some time, all were engaged in some work or other of making ourselves at home for a long time here in the good old "post office." Slamson, Masaji and Padri brought fresh supply of necessities as well as some of the things from the depot, thus providing a surprise packet to Rustom's family. While Baidul and Nervous fixed and adjusted tiles and glasses on the roof and windows respectively, and the rest of us cooked food, etc., Baba first took a little *dal*-rice and after ten minutes distributed the same to the rest of us at 10 A.M. After meals we again took to our respective jobs till 1 P.M. Rustom, who was supposed to be in Bombay, suddenly appeared at the post office just as I had finished writing a letter to him on behalf of Baba, as on account of a relation's death wire Rustom has soon come back from Bombay.

In the afternoon Baba drafted out a programme hereafter to be observed as regards work, recreation, getting up in the morning as well as retiring for sleep, etc. This was mounted on cardboard and hung in the room when all were ordered to read and understand the same. The programme on the whole was very inviting, specially as the recreation subject consisted of some fixed time daily in which Baba would speak and explain different subjects and points so very interesting to us.

July 11, 1923

Unsettled Again

After getting up at 6 A.M. we again took to our respective jobs of repairing, cooking, etc. At 8 A.M. we had our first breakfast since starting on the tramp, but of the usual *dal*-rice to eat and water to drink. After that, as a bolt from the blue came Baba's suggestion that instead of putting up at Arangaon and creating some work for our occupation, we should go to Bombay as we all could be more usefully occupied there. Baba could also help

and advise Vajifdar in his book duty. The two chief points that Baba asked us to consider particularly before coming to a decision were the inconvenience of putting up in our office premises at Dadar, which would be too small for so many of us, and the other of finding some sort of a job by each of us. The jobs are of course to be for a few months only, as long as Baba stopped at Bombay, just to leave him alone and keep ourselves occupied in the daytime. Further, there was no binding as to the nature of the work, which was to be found out according to our respective likings. But work all *must*, and find it within a fixed period of our arrival at Bombay. Even if someone fails to get a suitable job, he should engage himself as an ordinary coolie somewhere. Thus if we all were willing to accept both points, only then, Baba said, he would leave Arangaon. Although the matter was not finally settled, yet some of us were sent to the depot to bring our clothes, etc. Baba has declared to take fried pulse cake today for his meals and tomorrow for the whole day he will remain on water only; while after that Baba will be taking only coffee for his meals.

July 12, 1923

#### On the Move Again

No sooner were we up and about at 5:30 this morning than Baba asked us to decide about going to Bombay after a mutual exchange of opinions amongst ourselves. Immediately a conference was convened under Behramji's supervision in the small dilapidated mud hut nearby. After discussing the pros and cons of staying in the office at Dadar, and the question of finding out a job, it was agreed by all to go to Bombay. Baba was informed of the *mandali's* decision, upon which he again said all shall have to work by the time he (Baba) was in Bombay and that any one of us could, if he liked, go and stay home for that period. All remained firm in their decision, so an order for packing was given, and the atmosphere was once again lively. A slight breeze took place between Baba and Gustadji on account of Slamson trying to take undue advantage in the matter of packing the things, and Gustadji's encouragement to him. After packing our things in a bullock cart, we walked to the station, and left Ahmednagar at 12:45 reaching Manmad at 5:30 in the evening. The usual *dal*-rice was prepared and eaten by all of us in the waiting shed, just as we did it the last time. After waiting for some time, we left Manmad by the 7:30 train, on the way to the one-

## 233 ARANGAON BRIEFLY; SECOND STAY AT BOMBAY

time Manzil at Dadar, the cradle of the close union of Baba with the Circle as well as the *mandali* at large.

July 13, 1923

Back at Bombay

In the dark hours of the early morning at 4:30 A.M. we alighted at Dadar and immediately repaired to our office rooms. On account of the repair and extension works going on at the Manzil, we found the compound in a very inconvenient condition—specially the rains have turned the surroundings into a complete nuisance. In addition to the dirty surroundings, the interior of the office rooms was very damp too, because of the middle room having excessive leakage in the roof. We somehow fixed ourselves in the short space of the rooms that remained dry and clear of the office furniture. Some of us got shaved and had a change of linen. The first member who got engaged was Aga Baidul. He got the same job that he had left at the time of leaving the Manzil, that of assisting in hotel work. The other member who had also been out for a job was Nervous, who returned in the evening in a sorry plight because his wonderful dreams of simply walking into the post of a chief cinema operator as soon as he reached Bombay, fell down like a house of cards. There was really no need of being so very downhearted and out of temper; but it was the bragging to which Nervous had committed himself at Arangaon that made him have a fit of the blues, because at that time, Nervous was not only sure about himself, but repeatedly made unsolicited offers of getting a couple of us engaged as his assistants, etc. Besides the above, the visits of the Bombay *mandali*, including the Charni Road party, to Baba provided a buzzing engagement throughout the day.

July 14, 1923

Job Hunting

Today Baburao and Masaji followed Baidul in respect of getting employed, at B.D.D. works and an Irani tea shop respectively, while Barsoap, Slamson and Nervous were out for the whole day unsuccessfully hunting after a suitable job for each. Consequently, in the absence of half a dozen members, the office premises did not have the overcrowded atmosphere like yesterday, thus making up a bit for the gloomy, cloudy and wet day outside. In spite of all the changes, the daily "ration" remains

the same which is *dal*-rice at breakfast, dinner and supper throughout, with of course as much water to drink as required!

July 15, 1923  
Myself Fixed Up

The heavy rains last night caused much inconvenience to some of us on account of the leaking roof. We got up at 6 A.M. Soon after, according to the prearranged plan with Munshi, I went to Charni Road, where I had my first regular breakfast with tea, etc., since the 1st, because Baba has allowed all of us to eat and drink according to pre-tramp days after we get employed. After breakfast I was nominally employed as a coolie or something of the sort under Munshi, with whom it has been settled that I should take my food and keep myself throughout the day, and like others (employed) to return to Baba in the evening and pass the night with him and the *mandali*.

July 17, 1923  
Routine Again

By now almost all those of the *mandali* who were expected to work outside either actually got the respective jobs or in some cases, certain jobs have been promised on a later date, and thus again a period of a fixed routine has begun. Baba has again begun taking vegetables. The characteristic narrow-mindedness of our landlord has again led to some dispute between him and Navrozji because of the former's failures to get the repairs done to the awful leakage in the office premises in time.

July 24, 1923  
Hindu Fasting Day

Today being the Hindu fasting day falling 10 days after the full moon, those who were all-time stayers at the office, in addition to Baburao, observed complete fast for 20 hours. In the afternoon Baburao and Barsoap had been to the Vithalwari Temple (at Dadar) to sell the Marathi edition of Shri Maharaj's Life, but returned from there unsuccessfully.

July 25, 1923  
Festival

The auspicious day commenced under easy circumstances in comparison with the last Ramzan festival passed at Arangaon.

After prayers, late in the morning, however, trouble arose. Baba seemed to be in an irritable mood and suddenly he declared that Doctor, myself and Khak were to begin taking meat as we were hereafter free from the binding under Special Order IV in this connection! This freedom would have been very welcome under normal conditions, but in the present instance I did not quite feel comfortable, as I felt that the freedom was not quite offered by Baba of his own accord. However, after some time myself and Doctor were called in Baba's presence. Baba asked us whether we *really wanted* to start meat eating; if so, he said, today was the most suited for the purpose and he would willingly permit us to do so. But as we assured Baba that we were not in a hurry so as to go back on our decision of remaining strict vegetarians for that certain period, he cancelled the order in the case of both of us, while Khak broke his fast today. The rest of the day passed uneventfully.

August 10, 1923

#### Folding Work

Since coming to the office, nothing eventful has happened beyond the few facts already chronicled in the foregone pages. In fact, this is the first period of about a month since leaving the Manzil during which Baba has kept at one place under a fixed routine. The chief occupation of most of us during this period was the folding, sorting and mixing the pages of the Gujarati edition of Shri Maharaj's Life as they came by parcel ready-printed from the press at Navsari. But as news came from Navsari that the remaining pages will take time, resulting in leisure for all-the-time stayers in the office, Baba decided to come to Lonavla for a few days. Consequently myself and Doctor left Dadar this afternoon and came to Lonavla in the evening to arrange for Baba's proposed visit here.

August 16, 1923

#### Baba at Lonavla

According to the original plan, Baba and party were to come here early, but the subsequent changes brought Baba and party consisting of Gustadji, Behramji, Barsoap, Adi and Rustom to Lonavla this evening by the Express. The party was motored in Mr. Abdul Tayeb's car to Mr. Madni's bungalow kindly lent by both the gentlemen respectively free for the purpose. Besides leaving his car at the party's entire disposal, Mr. Abdul Tayeb

did not play a small part in making the general arrangements to make Baba and party's stay here as comfortable as possible in the present monsoon climate. In the same way, Mr. Madni was obliging enough to extend the kindness of allowing the use of his bungalow for a prolonged period. To our great satisfaction Baba liked the bungalow and surroundings as well as the general arrangements very much.

August 21, 1923

#### Baba Visits My House

In spite of the wet, dark and dull monsoon days, we passed the last four days very interestingly. The time was well passed in discussion, playing cards and hearing the gramophone as well as going out to Khandala, Walwan and Bhushi lakes in the car. Sadashiv and Vajifdar also paid visits. The most important event of the present visit concerning myself was Baba's gracious kindness in paying a visit with the party at mine and Doctor's house this afternoon, and taking tea at the former place.

August 22, 1923

#### Departure from Lonavla

Baba and party left for Poona at 5 P.M. by car. He is expected to put up at Sadashiv's place according to the present programme. Myself and Doctor are to follow the party tomorrow, and therefore we have already cleared away the things from the bungalow, and I have dropped a letter to Mr. Madni too about our vacating the bungalow this evening.

August 23, 1923

#### Sudden Return to Lonavla

Much as I am accustomed to Baba's unexpected and sudden movements, it was something like a shock to be informed early this morning that Baba had returned back from Poona here in the very early hours of the morning. I repaired post-haste to the bungalow and tried best for the necessary arrangements possible under the circumstances. The so-called reason for this sudden return from Poona was, Baba said, the indifference showed by Sadashiv towards him and party which made him beat a retreat at midnight! After lengthy deliberation, it was, however, again decided that Baba and party were to go to Poona



and stay at Abdullabhai's place in the camp; and to save disappointment to Sadashiv and the Kasba party, the latter were to arrange for the *mandali's* food. Consequently, I left by the afternoon Express under orders for arrangements. Of course, Abdullabhai was only too pleased to place his commodious house at our disposal. Hence the furniture in the same was readjusted to suit the requirements, and after that I went and saw Sadashiv who agreed to make the necessary arrangements.

Late in the afternoon, however, Sadashiv wrote me that he was sorry he could not arrange about the food and that I should look after the matter myself. It was not hard for me to guess the reason of this sudden change of heart on the part of Sadashiv, as he no doubt, took ill of the fact that Baba should come and stay at Abdullabhai's place instead of his own, in spite of Baba's promise that he would stay at his place. Baba and party came by the evening Express. The evening was very engaging in witnessing the festival night procession of tomb-shaped coloured papers representing the tombs of Hasan and Husein, today being the 9th of Mohurram. Baba also watched the demonstration from Dr. Mody's dispensary where Abdullabhai had previously arranged for his and the party's seats.

August 24, 1923

#### Reconciliation

The whole of the morning was passed through a sort of a storm on account of Sadashiv and the Kasba party. However, the afternoon witnessed normal atmosphere re-established when Baba, followed later on by all of us, went to Arjun's place in the Kasba where Sadashiv came to see Baba and thus peace was declared. Afterwards, we all went to Sadashiv's place and witnessed the paper tomb procession on its way to the river junction. After taking meals in the evening, Baba and party came back to Abdullabhai's place, but this time with the willing concurrence of the Kasba party. It has now again been agreed by the Kasba party to make the food arrangements for the party.

August 27, 1923

#### Easy Times

Since the Kasba party was reconciled to Baba's stay in the camp on the 24th, the atmosphere has remained harmonious without any further trouble. The Hindu party has been carefully

and punctually arranging for Baba and party's meals. As it is proposed to go to Saswad tomorrow by Baba with all the members of the Bombay, Poona and Kasba parties in the early morning, Baba and party came to Sadashiv's place to stay for the night. After having supper, we retired for sleep rather early, but the myriads of blood-thirsty bugs that came out of the nooks and corners made our sleep a very scanty affair.

### *Gili-Danda*

As soon as we had tea, we started by car to Saswad about seven miles from Poona, and reached the site where a small tent had already been pitched. Two or three more trips by car brought all of the *mandali* to the spot. Soon we were divided into two parties, and started the game of *gili-danda*. The contesting nature of the play on both sides provided interesting sport the whole day, as, excepting the interval for meals, the game continued till late in the evening. Same as in the morning, the car brought us back to our destination in a few trips very conveniently. Of course, Baba and party came direct to Abdullabhai's place while the Kasha party was directly taken to Kasha Peth in the car.

August 30, 1923

### Bombay Again

It is now settled to leave for Bombay this afternoon. But as Baba wants to stop at Kirkee at Mr. Muluk's place en route, we started from Poona by car and reached Kirkee at 10 A.M. Mr. Muluk took us sightseeing the bazaar and his brick works, etc., situated near his shop and house. After paying full justice to the nice food provided at Mr. Muluk's place, we came to the station by car which was despatched to Lonavla from here. At about 7 P.M. we reached Dadar by the Poona Express and once again made ourselves at home in the office quarters.

September 2, 1923

### Office Stay Ends

The last two days, since our return from Poona, were passed under the same routine adopted since our stay in the office. But this evening again witnessed a change. Of course, for the last two days, Baba has been complaining about the many incon-

veniences of staying in the office as well as the grudging of the landlord about our stay, but this was not enough to keep us prepared for so sudden a change as that of inspecting, approving and deciding to stay in a room in the new building just completed in the big square at Parel, which Baba did in the short space of the late hours of this evening. Accordingly, Baba and some of us have already removed our beddings, while the rest will follow tomorrow in the morning.

September 3, 1923

### Three Changes a Day

Preparations were just on foot for removing everything from the office this morning, when again Baba left the newly rented rooms at Parel on the grounds of inconvenient situation, and came to the new building opposite the Kohinoor Mills near Dadar tramway station. This building, too, is not quite completed; still, certain rooms were selected by Baba, and we began to remove our things from the office to this new quarter under orders, even before the formal settlement with the landlord was arrived at. Just after an hour, this latest change of site also began to be disfavoured; hence, Baba sent Behramji and Vajifdar to find out a more suitable place in the near vicinity of Dadar. They returned with the report of some places which can be had to our purpose, at which Baba personally started to have a look at them. Before going there, however, we looked up the quarters to let in the different buildings near the G.I.P. station and finally the second floor in the Irani Mansions No. 6 was liked very much by all. It has three small rooms, one big hall, one verandah, one kitchen, two bathrooms, etc., and so conveniently situated that it could be divided into two distinctly separate parts. Hence, according to the previous arrangements, Vajifdar is to remove to the western part forming two rooms, one kitchen and one bathroom, with his family from the Banoo Mansion where he is at present putting up, while we have occupied the other part, where it has been decided to keep the office and our residence in the verandah, hall, and one small room respectively. Under orders Behramji and Vajifdar, through the influence of another gentleman, settled formally with the landlord and brought his written permission for us to occupy the house this very evening! Though we could not remove everything from the office, yet some of the things that were already shifted in the new building opposite the Kohinoor Mills were

reshifted in the Irani Mansion together with the respective beddings of all of us; while we all retired for the rest of the night in the Irani Mansion, bringing our stay in the old office quarters to an end.

September 8, 1923

#### Irani Mansions No. 6

The last four days were passed very actively in removing the things to the Irani Mansion, as well as making other arrangements. The huge wooden cupboards gave special trouble in hauling them up from the verandah with stout ropes, as the stairs proved too small for them. The office furniture is arranged on the verandah, excepting the cupboards which have been kept on one side of the hall, leaving the rest of the space for the *mandali's* sitting and workroom in the day, and sleeping room at night, while the small room adjoining the hall is used by Baba. Vajifdar has also removed to the other part of the premises now rendered quite separate by the huge cupboards blocking the communicating doors. Since the completion of the arrangements, the work about the Gujarati edition is carried on vehemently, as Baba wants to see the first volume bound and ready to be out before he starts with the *mandali* to Sakori on foot as has been declared since a long time.

October 18, 1923

#### One and Half Months' Stay

Almost the whole of the last month and a half passed here in the Irani Mansion was subject to a fixed routine of working on the Gujarati first volume by the all-time stayers in the Mansion, while those who had had jobs worked, as well took their meals at their respective places outside. The all-time stayers were served with the usual *dal*-rice in the afternoon and a dish of vegetables together with the loaves procured from the bazaar same as for breakfast, made the supper. The former three dishes were always provided by Vajifdar's family members ready to the *mandali*. The clothes were also washed by the respective members themselves throughout the period.

Save for some evenings enjoyed out by the *mandali* at the cinema shows and the Zoroastrian festival afternoon passed in witnessing a drama, there were no more unusual events to warrant a regular daily narration for the last one and a half months.

In fact, since the good old Manzil days, this is the longest of the only two periods when Baba stopped at one place and circumstances for a long time. However, the book-preparing work is finished, as already the first lot of the Gujarati first volume has been received from the binder ready for publication. In the same way, preparations are also quite complete for the journey on foot from Bombay to Sakori which is to be undertaken tomorrow morning. The only item that had been overlooked in this connection was a small bullock cart to carry the beddings, etc., of the *mandali*. But it was well remedied, though arranged at the eleventh hour, because, as a strange coincidence, the bullock of the cart bought this evening proved to be the same that was with us while coming from Poona to Bombay on foot.

The other important fact worth recording is the formal dissolution of the office of the Circle & Co. as almost all the books have been disposed of; even the lot of about 1000 copies presented for free distribution by various ladies and gentlemen have been kindly undertaken by the Director of Public Instruction for disposal amongst worthy students free of charge. The Gujarati edition is expected to be sold off as soon as it gets ready by the binder. Therefore, on the whole, the step is amply justified. The remaining few hundred copies of the various editions have been deposited at Vajifdar's place, thus sparing the big cupboards, enabling their immediate disposal which has already been effected, together with the rest of the office furniture. Kaikhushru Masa is to rent the half of the flat which will be vacated tomorrow, and thus his family will provide an excellent neighbor to Vajifdar's family, enabling the latter to freely accompany Baba at the time of going to Persia. In fact this is the chief reason of Baba's frequent changes for selecting suitable places, and consequently bringing the office and Vajifdar's residence in the Irani Mansion, because it is long since a decided fact by Baba that Vajifdar is to accompany him to Persia. Though passports for many more in addition to Baba have already been issued so quickly through the unique endeavours of Navrozji in this connection, yet the number of those who will be going to Persia cannot be guessed or considered as a decided fact.

By the first week of October Baba began one meal and tea in 24 hours.

## Third Foot Journey, Bombay to Sakori

October 19, 1923

### Journey Starts

THE early hours of this morning witnessed an unusual hustle and bustle in the Irani Mansion. It was at about 3 o'clock that we all were out of bed, and after attending to the necessities and completing the final preparations, Baba and ourselves bid good-bye to the Mansion and started on foot for Sakori. This is the third important journey on foot of Baba accompanied by the *mandali*, the first and second being the walk from Poona to Bombay and the never-to-be-forgotten tramping in the Gujarat. This time the following members from the party besides Baba are: 1) Gustadji, 2) Behramji, 3) Adi, 4) Doctor, 5) Rustom, 6) Baburao, 7) Slamson, 8) Nervous, 9) myself, 10) Aga Baidul and 11) Sadashiv, who is expected to join us at Thana, while Messrs. Vajifdar, Sarosh and Burjorji are accompanying us up to Ghatkopar, and Raghunath up to an uncertain distance.

All our kit and luggage being carried in the bullock cart enabled us to walk very easily in comparison with the self-carrying tramp in Gujarat. As we covered the distance of seven miles at a very easy pace, we reached Ghatkopar after two or three hours in the best of spirits. In the absence of any fixed idea of where to put up for the rest of the day, we had to undergo considerable inconvenience in drifting from one place to another in search of a suitable shelter, when Mr. Kaiky Irani suddenly appeared on the scene with the offer of placing his house at our entire disposal. This was accepted by Baba only after Mr.

Kaiky repeated the same with eager entreaties for several times at the first refusal of Baba to go to his house, and soon we made ourselves comfortable for the rest of the day at Mr. Kaiky's place, where we were met with the best of hospitality by our young, obliging host and his considerate old mother. In the afternoon, Baba allowed Mr. Kaiky to take his photos thrice, as well as sat for a picture with all of us. Even in this journey, Baba is continuing the system of taking a little *dal*-rice and one cup of tea once in 24 hours which he has adopted of late.

October 20, 1923

Thana

Again this morning saw us all up very early and busy with the preparations to start for Thana. We left Ghatkopar at about 4 A.M. with the necessary lights, as it was quite dark then. After a brisk walk for a couple of hours the dawn smiled on us near Muland village, gradually presenting the surrounding scenery in gold and green. We arrived at Thana which is about 10 miles from Ghatkopar and put up in the local travellers' bungalow which is situated at a very convenient and beautiful locality. Our stay here for the day proved to be a very pleasant time. Good food arrangement was made by the Traveller's Bar opposite the bungalow, while the evening was well spent in flying kites, etc., in which Baba too participated wholeheartedly. As prearranged, Sadashiv came to Thana from Poona by the evening Express and joined us. About an hour or so was devoted to the discussion of abandoning the present tramp on account of Baba's weak health, but however, for the present, the programme remains unchanged. Burjorji, who had again come to see Baba this afternoon, returned back to Bombay in the evening.

October 21, 1923

Crossing the Creek

Today we started at about five in the morning from Thana for Bhiwandi. After walking for about four miles, we had to cross the creek near Kolshet village in a boat. In spite of the fine morning, the boat business was more a nuisance than affording any rest, as the boats available there are of a poor type with scanty accommodation for seats. The cart was left behind with Aga Baidul and Raghunath to be brought on the big boat

which sails only at high tide. After crossing to the other side of the shore, we continued to walk toward Bhiwandi, a distance of something like six miles from this place, by the Old Agra Road, which, though having a very poor surface, provides an excellent shade on account of the big trees on both sides of the road forming a complete avenue.

It was arranged for us to stay at Mr. Nasir Ahmed's place. But we missed them awaiting us at a further junction because we cut across by the first side road to Bhiwandi from the main road, so we were put to much inconvenience and annoyance in finding out the residence of our would-be host. Being a party of persons of mixed faiths and sects with different kinds of dress, some shabbily clad, a few ordinarily dressed, one bare-footed, the other in khaki and so on, headed by Baba—a distinguished personality with curly golden hair, but having the hem of his trouser torn into strips—we really presented a very strange sight. Thus we provided the people a good sample of curiosity and guesswork, as hundreds of enquiring eyes were turned on us when we reached the bazaar proper. Here we hired carriages and came to the government inspection bungalow after a few minutes' journey from the bazaar. Previous permission from the authorities concerned is necessary for occupying the bungalow; yet after some difficulty, we managed to get in, and remained here till the evening. Soon after, Mr. Nasir Ahmed's people found us out and tried much to take Baba and party to the house; but Baba preferred to stay here, though he allowed them to arrange for our food which was done for both the times satisfactorily.

Hardly we had settled in the bungalow, when amongst the turmoil, Baba created a great row by asking to be provided his usual *dal*-rice there and then, causing a great hustle-bustle and providing a fresh example of that distinct peculiarity which is manifested every now and then in Baba's words and actions, which are otherwise quite normal in every aspect of a general man of the world. Mr. Nasir Ahmed, who had just returned from Bombay, came to see Baba in the evening just in the nick of time when preparations were on foot for leaving the place. He much regretted his going to Bombay a day previous to our arrival, specially when according to his own words he had been foretold of Baba's coming to Bhiwandi through two sources: the first, through a recent dream of a friend of Mr. Nasir Ahmed—a train is coming from Bombay to Bhiwandi, but instead of rolling on the rails, it is walking; the train is composed of about seven



or eight carriages headed by a light engine all of yellow colour with yellow flowers; the second being the words of a local saint, whom Mr. Nasir Ahmed visits every now and then, to the effect that he, Mr. Ahmed, should not leave Bhiwandi as an angel is to visit his place; and when Mr. Nasir Ahmed insisted upon going to Bombay, he was advised to return back the same evening! Of course, for the man of the world, there is nothing definite about these foretellings, but for the people of Mr. Nasir Ahmed's type, who have devoted a part of their life after spiritual research, these suggestive hints carry volumes of meaning.

Raghunath was sent to Sakori this afternoon, he being unable to keep pace with the rest of the *mandali* as well as overlooking Baba's instructions. The food not being ready, myself in company of Aga Baidul and the cart were left behind to bring the same when ready, while Baba and the rest left Bhiwandi at 5 P.M. for Padga, a village ten miles off. After an hour or so, we too started with the food. This portion of our journey proved both fascinating and fatiguing to the extreme limit. The former because it was very nearly sunset when we left Bhiwandi, and a few miles' walk alongside the cart brought me amongst the green-clad hills and dales, with the silvery disc of the moon in a setting of pale blue sky on the one side of the horizon; while the opposite side presented a fine study of the setting sun with all the glory of red and gold lavishly spread thereon. Last but not the least was the soft and gentle breeze that added to the charm of the charming atmosphere. The latter because having already walked ten miles in the morning, and in the absence of substantial rest in the afternoon, this scamper of ten miles more this very evening proved a thorough joint stiffener, so much so that the last mile was traversed by me with stiff joints causing acute pain at every step.

Here again at Padga we put up in the local inspection bungalow or rest house for the night.

October 22, 1923

Padga

We got up late today as well as had full rest before starting again for the journey. Padga is a good quiet town, boasting of a post office and school combined, and a small bazaar having a dozen or two shops of necessary commodities of daily life, while the chief industry looks to be that of cart-wheels manufacturing. Here we did not experience any difficulty in having shelter in

the rest house, a similar building like the one at Bhiwandi but with more picturesque surroundings.

After taking our meals both in the morning and in the afternoon, we started from Padga for Shahapur, a distance of nearly 11 miles, at 4 P.M. The sun was at this time right at our back, its rays warmly kissing our necks. Consequently a few miles' walk produced a keen thirst while the poor surface of the road was very trying for the bare-footed. Hence a very slow pace was adopted. Excepting for the pleasant walk of about a mile or two where the road is cut through the heart of a hill among rich foliage and refreshing shade like that of a garden avenue, this journey on the whole proved very tiring. Even the bullock was every now and then halting too, on account of a sharp incline of about a mile indicating the close proximity of the Thal Ghat. By the time we reached Asangaon, we were on the whole done up with thirst and fatigue; so much so that every furlong seemed a mile. Hence it was after all decided to stop here instead of proceeding to Shahapur at this late hour of 8 P.M.

Thus we made ourselves at home on the Asangaon railway station platform, leaving the bullock and the cart in the station compound, after walking only a bare distance of eight miles today. On account of the continuous din of the incoming and outgoing trains and the consequent hustle-bustle, we passed the night very uncomfortably, almost all of us getting a very scanty and constantly interrupted sleep.

October 23, 1923

Shahapur

Early this morning, we started from Asangaon and within half an hour we reached the rest house at Shahapur. Here we halted for the morning. A very dull time it was, because of the *mandali's* tired condition. For this reason, those who were unable to walk briskly formed one party under Gustadji and left for Khardi, a distance of nearly ten miles from Shahapur, at 2:30 P.M., while the other party accompanied by Baba, started after more than an hour at about 3:35. A very brisk pace was kept up by the latter throughout the journey to the average speed of four miles an hour. Consequently in spite of the former party having got a start of an hour, Baba's party passed ahead of Gustadji's company at the ninth mile like a mail train rushing along by a goods train and reached near Khardi at 6:40 P.M. This part of the road passes through many hills and dales; hence, the whole jour-

ney was one of regular ascents and descents. At Khardi we again utilized the railway station platform for passing the night, as it was not convenient enough to occupy the rest house situated near Khardi village. After taking supper of the remaining food that was with us, and getting loaves from the local bazaar for breakfast tomorrow, we went to sleep.

October 24, 1923

### The Thal Ghat

Having as usual got up early and after taking light tea, we left Khardi at four this morning for Kasara. In spite of the same sort of traffic on this station as it was last night at Asangaon, we managed to get good sleep, probably on account of the commodious platform here. Though Thal Ghat assumes a more decided regularity in ascent at Kasara, yet after a few minutes' walk after leaving Khardi, we began ascending the hills, with a few sharp descents here and there. Today the consequences of the journey began to tell upon the majority of the party, most of us having blisters, sore feet, stiffness and cramps respectively. In addition as fuel to the fire, there was the trouble of pushing the cart when the bullock refused to manage some steep inclines single handed. As a result it was a miserable state for many of the *mandali* when we reached the village of Kasara, which is about 1028 ft. above sea level, and where we got a suitable shelter in the rest house maintained by the Local Board. As already noted, the morning was very dull on account of the *mandali* being in a very tired condition, most of us lying here and there in the travellers' shelter, when suddenly the atmosphere began to buzz with excitement.

Just at the moment Gustadji (who can fairly be said to be in the worst condition externally on account of his illness) was about to step in, quite done up with fatigue—he being the last comer—Baba asked Adi to enquire of Gustadji whether he was going to prepare Baba's food, and if so when, as it was getting late, etc. Upon this, Gustadji asked Adi not to meddle in this affair; and he was justified in retorting to the dried and cut enquiries for the making of which there was no reason visible. But upon this slight point, Baba (who has more than once proved himself supernaturally able to control his temper) began to work up an apparently ugly temper by passing remarks, now abusing, then pleading, here getting angry at the *mandali* in general and Gustadji in particular; and, again changing his mood and

almost crying on his own condition and so on, at last to such a point that Gustadji, the most important and experienced one of the Circle, was touched so hard that he went away from the travellers' shelter to the station with the intention of leaving Baba and the *mandali* for good.

Upon this, of course, Baba changed his own mood as suddenly as he had started the storm and sent Behramji after Gustadji to bring the latter back. It did not take long for Baba to pacify Gustadji and restore the normal atmosphere as it was done even in less time than it took for him to start it. Such occasional creations of events by Baba, specially when the *mandali* are quite at their worst, may perhaps be to test as well as teach forbearance to the *mandali*; or God knows what else it is, as it is difficult to interpret his words and actions both. But this much is quite evident that when teasing and troubling the *mandali*, Baba himself is in no way suffering less, but on the contrary, a hundred times more, considering a bare handful or two of *dal*-rice and not even a full cup of tea which he takes once in 24 hours.

Baba allowed us to sleep for about an hour before meals, which made us feel a bit refreshed. After taking our food in the afternoon, we went to a small streamlet just a mile off from the travellers' shelter, where we had a general wash-up of the clothes as well as a much needed bath, which brought us round to our old self. However, the blisters, etc., remained on the feet to make walking a long distance very difficult, to which Baba made us apply oil and then warm them beside the fire. Thus on the whole, we passed a quite restful evening. At five in the evening, Rustom went to Igatpuri by train and returned after a couple of hours after making arrangements for the *mandali* and Baba's meals tomorrow there, to save us a repetition of the scene enacted this morning.

October 25, 1923

Weird

It was as early as 2:30 A.M. that we got up and began putting things in order. We had very scanty sleep, particularly those who had to keep watch every hour, turn by turn. Nearly at 3:30 A.M. we started from Kasara for Igatpuri at a steady but slow pace, because the whole distance was one of steep incline as Igatpuri is about a thousand feet higher than Kasara. The treatment of the blisters and sore feet with oil and warming beside the fire, proved very efficacious as we could easily walk

today. The first part of the journey through the road in the mountain pass proper, surrounded by hills thick with trees bore a very weird atmosphere in the pale moonlight. The bullock, in spite of our pushing the cart now and then, found the continuous incline too hard to move at a steady pace; hence for about a couple of miles, we carried our respective beddings, etc., ourselves. At the seventh mile, the road encircles a huge horseshoelike hill with a big valley thick and rich with different kinds of trees and foliage in the middle. Thus a picturesque scene presented to our eyes while walking round this portion of the road, affording different views of the valley with the giant railway bridge crossing across it from end to end.

Another striking picture of nature came to our view near Igatpuri of two huge but plain barren hills, both of almost equal size and shape, slanting in opposite directions with clockwork regularity, forming a quaint, narrow valley in the exact middle with a small streamlet passing through it. In spite of the engaging surroundings, the walk to Igatpuri proved very tiresome, specially when we came to know through the milestones that Igatpuri was 13 miles from Kasara, instead of our fond hopes, based on misinformation, that we had to walk only ten miles today. The prospect of a wholesome breakfast waiting for us at Igatpuri made us keep up a brisk pace as soon as the pass proper came to an end. It was at about 8:45 that we came to the hotel at Igatpuri where Rustom had previously arranged for Baba's and the *mandali's* food; but it was a thunderbolt from the blue to hear the hotelkeeper placidly declare that as he was not sure of our coming, he had not kept the *dal*-rice ready! It was specially to provide Baba with the meal as soon as we reached Igatpuri that Rustom had expressly come here yesterday; as for the *mandali's* breakfast, there was not any need for previous arrangement. In spite of this (instead of being angry as could be expected) Baba got us to bring fresh sweets and asked the *mandali* to take the same with tea, providing an excellent breakfast. But the upsetting of the plan resulting in disappointment completely cooled our enthusiasm, and proper justice could not be done to the breakfast. After taking tea, we went to the local rest house and made ourselves at home there. The bungalow, being perched on a hill, commands the most beautiful scenery at Igatpuri. We had the long-needed shave here, while save for the delay, good food arrangement was made by that Irani hotelkeeper. In addition to all this, we were allowed to sleep for an hour in the afternoon, a rare luxury nowadays!

But trouble arose through an unforeseen source when we woke up after an hour or so at 4 P.M. and were asked by Baba to get ready for going out for sightseeing the lake situated nearby. We were soon ready according to the order, yet hesitation to go out so early in the sun was clearly apparent on the faces of many, upon which Baba enquired of us as to who *felt pleasure* in coming with him to the lake. Well, none came forward. So then he proposed that we should play cards. This too proved futile in arousing any interest therein. Thereupon Baba seemed to be much annoyed, and after some time declared that nobody should talk with him and in the same way he will also observe silence with us. After all, on such a frail ground and lame excuse, Baba really acted upon his threat and did not speak with anyone except Behramji, creating a very uncomfortable atmosphere the rest of the evening. The moonlight presented the lake opposite to the bungalow like a huge mirror set among the hills in the night.

October 26, 1923

#### Rest

Having gone to bed early last night, yet we got up at about six in the morning, and this was the first time since we started from Bombay that we had full sound sleep. Baba kept his vow of silence, and any instructions necessary were communicated through Behramji who for the present has become the mouth-piece for the *mandali* and Baba both to exchange words, and this the worthy seems to be enjoying to the full. Late in the morning, a shoe repairer was called at the bungalow and almost all the members got their footgear attended to for further journey. After myself and Doctor returned from the mosque where we had been for the usual Friday prayers, we started from Igatpuri at four in the morning and reached Ghoti, a distance of five miles, and waited at the outskirts of the village for Baba who was coming separately with the favourite of the day, Behramji. Meanwhile Doctor and Sadashiv went to the village to search for a travellers' shelter, and they found one, but already occupied by some police officers. Hence when Baba arrived here, it was decided to pass the night once again at the railway station; so we left the main road and came to the Ghoti station, and as usual, made ourselves comfortable on the platform.

After having our meals, the much talked and discussed question of whether to go to Bhandardara Lake situated at a distance

of about five miles from Bari, a village about 14 miles from Ghoti en route to Sakori, or proceed direct to our destination, again came before all for final settlement. Most of us were found very eager to sightsee the great lake works, but unless Baba ended, according to Rustom, the play, we all refused to go there. Thereupon Baba spoke, addressing Behramji, that the real reason of his silence was that the *mandali* did not like him to talk in his own way; so not wishing to hurt our feelings, he has observed silence!!! But we said, if it was so, this was the first reason that a stop be put to this awkward situation, as the silence hurt our feelings more than Baba's constant grumblings. Upon this, Baba said if that is the case, he will be his old self again, and so, as unexpectedly as the trouble had started it ended also, and with it the question of going to Bhandardara was also settled. Mr. Aziz Ahmed, a devotee of Baba who is an assistant engineer at the works, was wired to by me under orders that "Baba and party will be arriving Bari tomorrow morning so conveyance arrangement be made to take the party from Bari to Bhandardara."

Soon after all went to sleep excepting myself as it was my turn to keep watch in the first hour tonight. After half an hour, Mr. Aziz Ahmed acknowledged receipt of our message and said he was delighted. I conveyed this to Baba who was lying awake. Ten minutes more and another message from Mr. Aziz Ahmed was received by Mr. Kothare, an officer of the Bhandardara works residing just near the station, to see the party well provided with food and place, which Mr. Kothare forwarded to us with the enquiry whether we wanted anything. But as we had already had our meals, and under the circumstances found the station platform more safe and suitable, Baba asked me to inform Mr. Kothare in reply through his servant that we did not require anything with thanks. Again, after a quarter of an hour, a message from Mr. Aziz Ahmed came to us direct that if Baba wished, conveyance arrangement can be made to take the *mandali* from Ghoti station, etc. The downpour of messages no doubt showed the enthusiasm and eagerness of Mr. Aziz Ahmed to see Baba at his place; but it also disturbed us as we have to get up very early tomorrow. Hence when I wrote out a lengthy reply according to Baba's instructions, Baba further asked me to add in the end, "Exhausted, preparing for sleep." This settled the matter, and the private telegraph office that had kept buzzing till this late hour became silent to our relief and satisfaction.

October 27, 1923

## Hills Again

It was with a great effort that we could shake the sleep off ourselves at such an early hour as 2:30 A.M. when we were up and preparing for the journey. For the first time since starting from Dadar, today we left the Agra Road and took the side road to Sakori. Nearly at 3 A.M. we started for Bari, a small village 14 miles from Ghoti, having an inspection bungalow nearby. This part of our journey passes mostly through hills, so much so that we had to cross three hills in a distance of 11 miles, while the rest of three miles to Bari was through a pass proper. Baba and party stopped for a rest at the beginning of the pass, while Baba asked me to proceed on in advance to settle our programme with Mr. Aziz Ahmed. Having walked at a stretch this long distance of nearly 14 miles, it was with a sigh of relief that Bari came to view; but according to a villager of whom I enquired, I came to know with a bit of disappointment that the junction of the road to Bhandardara with the main road was near the inspection bungalow, about a mile from the village. The path leading to the bungalow from the main road not having a board to indicate its existence amidst the thick shrubbery and trees, caused me the further trouble of walking additional distance besides the mile in searching the same, but at last I found it, and to my utter amazement I did not find either Mr. Aziz Ahmed or his car there!

The watchman told me that the Bhandardara road branched off not here but a mile off! Much tired and fagged out as I had been, the prospect of walking another mile was not a very comfortable one. But the expectation of finding the car there, as it was likely that Mr. Aziz Ahmed might have misunderstood our message and might be waiting for us at the junction, made me drag myself on. It was another mile of painful walking that at last brought me at the junction of the two roads at a total distance of 16 miles from Ghoti. My disappointment knew no bounds when with horror I found nobody there! I simply found myself at a loss to understand the situation. Considering the enthusiasm shown by Mr. Aziz Ahmed last night through telegrams, I could not think him to have forgotten about us. While there was no mistaking of roads on account of the clear indicators, I was about to sit down with fatigue when I remembered the party following me, so with a last effort I again started back to convey the queer state of affairs.



I had hardly trudged on for a few minutes when a ray of hope suddenly flashed on the road in the shape of a carriage coming from the Bhandardara side. Within a few more minutes, a car came to view rushing along a bend towards me, completely changing my disappointment into great relief. In a few moments Mr. Aziz Ahmed was beside me. I hurriedly explained him the purpose of my solitary presence, upon which he again started the car and we were off towards Bari at full speed. Mr. Aziz Ahmed never expected us so early, hence he was late. In spite of taking the two miles to Bari at breakneck speed, we found Baba and party already there and in search of ourselves and the bungalow. Our zealous host having brought everything necessary for breakfast in the car, Baba decided to go to the rest house before starting for Bhandardara. Baba had his tea in the bungalow. After that we were served with breakfast, and thus after getting considerably refreshed, Baba with six others started by car, and the rest by carriage towards the lake works. Aga Baidul, who has all along been driving our bullock cart, got the promotion of taking the reins of the carriage in hand, while our bullock cart was left in charge of Mr. Aziz Ahmed's driver to be brought along following us. After half an hour of exciting racing along the sharp ascents and descents of the hilly road, the old but sturdy car brought us to Mr. Aziz Ahmed's place situated within a stone's throw from the actual works. Our host rather made a mistake in selecting the big tin shed of a building (near his own house) without even a single separate room for our stay. Further it was situated in such a position that people would almost come in unannounced to see Baba. Thus Baba could not make himself comfortable; in the absence of a separate room, the *mandali* also could not rest as we had also to keep up in a conversational position. Consequently, in spite of Mr. Aziz Ahmed's best efforts and great hospitality we found the Bhandardara excursion on the whole very tiring.

Meals were served to the *mandali* at 1:30 in the afternoon, and after that, we went for sightseeing the works. The dam is under construction since the last 15 years and is very near to completion. The giant masonry wall has already reached the towering height of 263 feet. Now only the final finishing portion of seven feet of more work remains to complete the work, to gain for the dam the claim of being one of the only two such works of its kind in the world! The other lake with such a high wall is somewhere in America. The foundation of the Bhandardara dam is 233 feet in breadth at the foundation, while at the

top the wall will remain only 20 feet wide on account of the sharp tapering when completed. Thus a huge valley of about an average breadth of 200 feet and 12 miles long has been turned into a lake for irrigation purposes in the surrounding country. The short cruise in the steam launch on the lake was very refreshing and pleasant, particularly since we have been tramping for the last nine days. The towering hills on both the sides of the blue, ribbon-like strip of crystal water shimmering under the afternoon sun presented a rare scene of beauty while sailing in the tiny launch.

As soon as we finished with the sight-seeing, we hurriedly left Bhandardara because Baba had not yet taken his meal, which he said he would take in the rest house at Bari, where Baba has decided to pass the rest of the day and night, apparently due to the inconvenience of the place and the frequent intrusion of outsiders to see him here. We returned to the bungalow and made ourselves comfortable there by four o'clock in the evening. This bungalow is also well surrounded by hills, the most notable amongst them being the one facing the front of the bungalow, called Kalsubai Peak and which is said to be the highest point in the Deccan, being 5500 feet above sea level. In the evening, Baba asked me to apply tincture iodine on the eczema on my groin which I did, and never shall I forget the terrible ordeal that I passed through afterwards. So much so that I was almost out of my senses with the horrible burning and cutting sensation, tossing here and there like a fish out of water until I drifted away in the dreamland after about a couple of hours.

October 28, 1923

Starting from Bari

As usual we were up early, and having gone to bed the previous evening without supper, our empty stomachs paid good attention to the *dal*-rice which Mr. Aziz Ahmed had brought with him last night, when he had come after all of us had gone to sleep to bid Baba and the *mandali* a final good-bye. Only Doctor, who was awake at the time, received the food as well as the salaams on behalf of all. Today we packed our things in Mr. Aziz Ahmed's carriage placed at our disposal. Our bullock, being very tired, was left in care of our transport officer Aga Baidul at Bhandardara yesterday to bring it with the empty cart today direct from Bhandardara to Rajur as the distance is almost the same, i.e., Rajur is 14 miles both from Bhandardara as well as Bari.

After being ready we left Bari for Rajur. Today was the first time that we took to short cuts, now and then leaving the main road specially amongst the hills. In the beginning, we found to be gaining steadily; hence the idea of going along by the foot paths wherever possible began to appeal to all very strongly. But as everything in excess is bad, so this system proved too. We misjudged the last short cut, and found ourselves very far from the main road in the hills proper, going along sharp ascents and descents, now passing over the brink of a yawning precipice, then diving in a valley, again scaling a steep hill and so on. We at last reached Rajur, but we landed clean in the village proper; hence we had to back a few furlongs to reach the rest house situated as usual at the outskirts of the village. On the whole, the tramp today proved both interesting and pleasant. As arranged, Aga Baidul had arrived at the bungalow followed by the carriage an hour before we reached the same. We all had ample rest this afternoon and were allowed to sleep for a couple hours too. The carriage was also returned to Mr. Aziz Ahmed after all had meals.

In view of our tramp approaching the destination very soon, a discussion took place early this evening for fixing up the details of our visit to Sakori. It is decided to reach Sakori on the next Thursday in the morning, and after staying there for the day, to return by the evening and join Baba, who will be waiting for us at a convenient spot in the near vicinity as Baba is not coming IN PERSON with us. Rustom and Sadashiv have, however, been given the choice of returning whenever they like due to the hesitation and slight resentment displayed by both of them when Baba asked us to return the very day from Sakori, after only taking the blessing of Shri Maharaj there.

October 29, 1923

Akola

We started from Rajur at about four in the morning at a brisk pace followed by Gustadji, who was lagging behind on account of a severe pain in the knee, while Aga Baidul as usual brought up the rear with the luggage in the cart. The descending by the hills which we had climbed near Bari for about five miles considerably helped us in reaching Akola at a distance of 13 miles from Rajur in so short time as three hours. So it was at about 7 A.M. that we came to Akola and as usual put up at the local P.W.D. bungalow. Special sweets were made to be prepared in clarified butter in the local bazaar containing a few shops

scattered here and there in the village. Thus the sweets and tumbler full of rich coffee prepared by Baba in milk made us a wholesome breakfast, while the afternoon meal was prepared by a village cook engaged by us for the day, assisted by our Sadashiv. After having meals, all went to sleep at 3 P.M. excepting myself, having got to write the diary notes as well as not feeling very sleepy. So I kept the watch and slept for a couple of hours after all were up at five in the evening. We took millet bread and spicy gram at supper and took to beds soon after.

October 30, 1923

### Sangamnere

Having had sufficient sleep and rest, it was an easy task for us to get ourselves on the move from Akola for Sangamnere so early as at 3:30 in the morning. At the fifth mile, we stopped by the river near the village Kalas, and having got milk with us we prepared tea. Baba and the rest of us took the same, while Sadashiv and Baburao had milk. Thus refreshed, we reached Sangamnere, a distance of 14 miles through a sort of a tableland, as the road from Akola to this town is along even ground, in contrast to the hills that we crossed every now and then since leaving Shahapur, in the best of spirits. Sangamnere (one of the two important towns of the district of Ahmednagar) being the largest town that we came across since leaving Thana, we experienced considerable difficulty in finding out the local district bungalow in this thickly populated town, as it is situated quite at the other side of the town on the Poona Road by the river. Some of us, having missed the road over the bridge, had to cross the river, which is at the most waist deep. Good food arrangement had been made through a local Hindu restaurant with the help of the local subinspector of police, an acquaintance of our Rustom. After a few hours' rest, and having had our meal, we again started from Sangamnere for Nimbgaon-Jalika—a village at a distance of 12 miles—at four in the evening. It was quite dark when we reached the bungalow at Nimbgaon-Jalika at 9 P.M. after a very laborious walk. Thus, we walked in all a record distance of 26 miles for the first time since leaving Bombay. The ready food brought with us from Sangamnere made a much needed meal, while Sadashiv and Baburao became the paid guests of the watchman, after which we retired soon to bed, being too much tired.

October 31, 1923

## Nimbgaon-Jalika

Being dog-tired the previous evening, we were allowed the most welcome liberty of keeping in bed till late hours this morning. This refreshed us to a very great extent when we got up today. Milk was procured from the village, which made tea for Baba and ourselves, while we took a joint breakfast and dinner before starting at ten this morning from Nimbgaon-Jalika. We stopped at Loni village for a few of the hottest hours of the day en route to Bableshawar. Here we took rest under a tree near the best of the local wells, and Baba also had his usual *dal*-rice here. Late in the evening we also had rough wheat bread and spicy gram for supper which we got prepared by some Maratha village elderly women. After that we again continued our walk at 5:30 in the cool of the evening and reached the bungalow at Bableshawar before sunset. The local bungalow is situated at a very convenient and suitable spot, being at the junction of roads going towards Sangamnere, Belapur, Sakori, and Ahmednagar in four different directions. Tomorrow we hope to reach Sakori as it is only ten miles from here, and therefore Baba has asked all of us to observe fast from seven o'clock this evening until we reach Sakori tomorrow, and after having Shri Maharaj's blessing, to take whatever is offered there.

November 1, 1923

## The End of the Tramp

According to the prearranged plan, Slamson kept company with Baba who remained in the bungalow, while the rest of us started from Bableshawar early at four this morning for Sakori. The distance of ten miles proved nothing in the excitement of the very near successful termination of our tramp. Even the bullock found the task very easy today because of the empty cart, as it has been settled to leave both there at Sakori with Yeshvantrao for disposal, there being no further need of the bullock cart as it has already been settled to go to Ahmednagar by one of the motor lorries running on hire between Belapur and Sangamnere.

## The Price of a Garland

When we were nearing Sakori, Rustom got the idea of getting a garland prepared from some of the gardens nearby. Hence

myself and Rustom went to the irrigation bungalow gardens while the rest proceeded to Rahta. We were able to persuade the gardener to prepare a garland after paying him eight annas, and when the garland was completed to our satisfaction, Rustom wanted to pay something more to the gardener but we both searched in vain our respective pockets for more change. Hence Rustom presented the gardener with all the contents of his shirt pockets, which amounted to a funny collection of a copying pencil, a piece of soap, one silk handkerchief and some loose coins, and marched away leaving the gardener gaping with amazement at the queer tip.

### Sakori

Both of us joined the rest of the *mandali* who were waiting for us at Rahta together with Vajifdar, Padri and Burjorji who had just arrived by train from Bombay under Baba's instructions. So together with all, we started again, and after a few minutes' walk from Rahta we reached Sakori, and thus by God's grace our journey ended in safety and success on the 14th day since we left Bombay, a very suggestive figure for our party. It is almost since a lapse of 12 months that I have come to Sakori and a general all round change seems to have taken place here. The half-completed surroundings and buildings of the temple now stand quite completed with extensive additions, presenting an imposing sight in contrast to the mud huts of the Sakori village in the immediate neighbourhood of the temple. The small trees grown by Shri Maharaj with his own hands over the barren grim piece of land nearby in which Shri Maharaj's hut is situated, have gained a rapid growth, changing the whole compound into a very charming and shady garden.

After waiting for about half an hour outside the compound, we all went near Shri Maharaj's hut, a portion of which had been converted into a small wooden cage in which Shri Maharaj had imprisoned himself for the last ten months or so! A very hot reception was accorded to the *mandali* this time. Hardly a few of us had entered into the hut, when all of a sudden, Shri Maharaj began abusing all of us in a very loud voice and almost shrieking with feigned anger asking to get all of us out of his hut at once! Thus amidst a shower of choice adjectives and volleys of abuse as well as threats, we beat a hasty retreat and again came to our position of waiting outside the compound; most of us not even getting a proper look at Shri Maharaj's

imprisoned body. Though we had been made to expect something of this sort by Baba, yet the actual performance caused a great ruffie amongst us. This was the first time that Baba's *mandali* as a whole received the privilege of Shri Maharaj's real appreciation in the right way, which is of course, quite opposite to the ordinary routine, bearing out the truth of the well-known saying, "The way of a Perfect Master is topsy turvy." Shri Maharaj, who used to greet us with all smiles, spend hours in amusing us with interesting explanations and advice, and take personal care that we were afforded all possible conveniences when we went to see him by train and carriage, now this time, when we have traversed a distance of nearly 200 miles on foot for his august blessing, ousted us from his presence and left us to ourselves, *pitied and advised* by most of the people and visitors there, considering Shri Maharaj to be really angry with his beloved spiritual son, his crown prince, and his heir's *mandali*.

After a few minutes of this storm, Shri Maharaj sent for Gustadji, Sadashiv, and Behramji, one after the other, giving each of them a special treat of his appreciation, they being the first three important members of Meher Baba's Circle. In the course of his abuses and remarks, Shri Maharaj gave out some suggestive hints such as, "You no-goods have put me in a cage and yourself go about from place to place." "Have you obliged me by walking 200 miles?" And finally, "Keep to what you are doing under instructions of whoever is your somebody"; also, "Go as soon as possible back to where you have got to return," and so on. In spite of the repeated hints about allowing the rest of the *mandali* to come before him by Gustadji, etc., Shri Maharaj did not seem to want the party to come in the hut. Upon this, after their return, we enquired of Shri Maharaj through Yeshvantrao if we could have his blessing without coming in the hut, but only from outside at a distance of a few yards before leaving Sakori. To this, we were informed after the lapse of one hour that we could pay our respects from the compound gate, and not to enter the compound too, and to leave Sakori at once. In the meantime, our fast was ended with tea served to the party by Durgamai. Soon after receiving Shri Maharaj's final instructions, we left Sakori after having his blessing from the compound gate. However, we were not satisfied with the improper view from such a long distance of the imprisoned body of this *greatest divine personality of the age*.

Durgamai and Yeshvantrao gave us bread, spicy gram, sweets and fruits for our meal, which we took at the outskirts of Rahta

near a canal, and after resting for a while, we continued walking back to Bableshtar. Our bullock cart was left with Yeshvantrao as prearranged, and thus for the first time, Aga Baidul accompanied us on foot. Making the return journey at a very easy pace we reached Bableshtar just after sunset. After taking the hot breads with the dish of nice vegetables at supper, which according to his characteristic care and kindness for the *mandali*, Baba had arranged to be kept ready for us, a couple of hours were passed very interestingly in discussing our experiences of the day as well as listening to Baba's explanation thereon.

November 2, 1923

### Starting from Bableshtar

It was about 6:30 this morning that as prearranged the motor lorry appeared at the bungalow when we were quite ready, having had our breakfast as well as packed all our things. Consequently, in a few minutes the luggage was arranged on the top and ourselves packed in the 14-passenger lorry, one of the many cars running between Belapur and Sangamner, and it started from Bableshtar for Ahmednagar which is about 45 miles from here. Half of the distance was hardly reached when some trouble arose in the engine of the car, which made us break our journey at Rahuri village. The big car and its "mixed" contents attracted considerable attention, specially of children as a big crowd of them swarmed round the car. The useless part of the engine was replaced with another good one, procured from a local car driver with great difficulty. Thus about an hour and a half was wasted after repairs. In the meantime, Baba got fresh sweets prepared in clarified butter at the sweetmeat shop nearby, and besides giving the same to the *mandali*, he made the rest to be distributed amongst the crowd of children around us. Upon this, most of them were heard to say that the sweets were distributed to make the car go, and the fact that, soon after, the driver prepared to start, no doubt may have strengthened their characteristic idea and belief. The convalescent engine would not start by the handle, and so the crowd proved very handy in pushing the car into motion, when amidst loud cheering we left Rahuri.

Another notable event that we witnessed was that while we were stopping along a streamlet, which was passing across the main road, for refilling the radiator with water, a big herd of deer was seen to cross the main road and run along the adjoining fields at a distance of about a mile. The surrounding country



being almost of level ground, the movements of the deer were clearly visible even to the naked eye. At the same moment, another car came at the spot from the opposite direction with a hunting party, and naturally, it stopped just a few yards ahead of us. Someone jumped out with a gun followed by a couple of servants, and the former began to move carefully in the direction in which the deer seemed to come. Just a few minutes of silence, and bang went the gun, conveying the message of death to one of the lot, while the rest managed to run away with one or two of them wounded too. Thus the cruel and savage sport came to end. At about two in the afternoon, we reached Ahmednagar, and put up at the Khushru Quarters, formerly known as the depot, and paid full justice to the wholesome meal kept ready for us by Rustom's family members. The rest of the day passed uneventfully, save for Baburao and Sadashiv's departure under Baba's instructions for Poona in the evening.

## Second Tour, North India

November 4, 1923  
Traveller's Shelter Again

SINCE our arrival at Khushru Quarters for the last two days we had a general wash-up and shave which was so very necessary after the tramp, and became our old selves again. Though Baba had already declared his plan of putting up in the local travellers' shelter near the station later on, yet it was a surprise for us to see Baba abruptly leaving the Quarters this morning with Gustadji, apparently for Rustom's indifference towards him, without even waiting for us to finish with the breakfast which we were about to take at the time. As per orders, we too followed Baba after a hasty breakfast to the shelter, and thus it was for the second time that we all lodged here. The whole day was passed discussing for the thousandth time the different routes to Persia, and the general pros and cons of travelling in that country in different seasons of the year. After a lengthy conference entailing hours of discomfort, pain and vexation to the parties concerned, the following practical plan resulted for the first time out of such wild-goose-chase deliberations, viz:

- a. That the following members besides Baba to form the party: 1) Gustadji, 2) Behramji, 3) Adi, 4) Doctor, 5) Vajifdar, 6) Myself, 7) Aga Baidul, 8) Padri, 9) Slamson, 10) Masaji, 11) Nervous.
- b. To start for Persia in the beginning of February via Bandar Abbas.
- c. To pass the interim at or near Karachi.
- d. All to sign on a stamped paper to this effect (in short):
  1. The signatories undertake the journey of their own free will and responsibility.
  2. Hereafter they do not expect any kind of external

and financial help from Baba as well as any definable internal benefit within a fixed period.

3. Further, they accompany Baba for an indefinite period, leaving all hopes of ever returning to India, if need be!

However, Doctor and myself are not bound as regarding the last clause, as we will be free of all bindings and promises after the 28th of February 1924.

Subject to the above plan, it was also settled that we all should start for Karachi on the 11th with the exception of Vajifdar, for whom Baba decided that he should stay in Bombay and continue his book duty up till December. It was further decided that myself and Doctor go home for a few days and Padri to Bombay for passport and other arrangements. The *mandali's* complete surrenderance to Baba as their teacher and master cannot solely be laid to their credit, as due regards must be paid to Baba, too, for the clever as well as laborious methods through which he brought about this.

November 5, 1923

Second Agreement Signed

According to the prearranged plan, we were busy bringing our things from the Quarters in the morning. In the afternoon, after careful consideration we put our signatures on the stamped paper which had already been procured for the purpose regarding the Persian tour. This is the second time since leaving the Manzil that we all have had to give our consent in writing and on duly stamped paper.

Myself, Doctor, Vajifdar and Padri left 'Nagar this evening, reaching Poona at 9 P.M. We all engaged carriages and went direct to Hazrat Babajan. She seemed to be in a pleasant mood. As usual, we left her after paying our respects within a few minutes, and we all separated, going towards our respective places.

November 10, 1923

Home Sweet Home

Since coming here on the morning of the 6th, the last four days were passed very well, enjoying the change. Specially today proved a regular holiday in company with Doctor and Abdulla-

bhai who came this morning from Poona. Myself and Doctor, as per Baba's instructions, left Lonavla for Ahmednagar by the Poona Passenger at 8 P.M. after witnessing the final programme of the day—the fireworks lavishly displayed by Papamyan. Bidding good-bye to Abdullabhai, we took to the Manmad Passenger at Poona, and made ourselves comfortable in the train as far as third-class travelling would allow. At 11 P.M. the train left Poona.

November 11, 1923

To Sind Hyderabad

Myself and Doctor reached 'Nagar early this morning. We found Baba and *mandali* enjoying the early sunshine outside in the compound of the travellers' shelter. After paying our respects, and the formal exchange of news, we took tea and bread served by Baba personally as per his usual kindness. Soon after that, Baba had a look after our bedding and clothing before we packed and added them to the other beddings and things that were lying ready packed in a corner for the journey. The only important change that the programme underwent in our absence was that we were going at present to Sind Hyderabad instead of Karachi to stay there for a few days, even to pass the interim there before going to Persia, if the city came to be preferred by all.

At the time of starting for the station the question of how the luggage was to be handled cropped up on account of Behramji's hesitation to manage the work as usual, on the grounds that the *mandali* did not follow his instructions to the letter. However, Baba asked us to remove the things ourselves to the station. We had hardly finished the whole lot when Baba sent word to bring back the things as the discussion between Baba and Behramji took a very hot turn. But the matter was soon resolved by the acceptance of the managership by Behramji. Baba drew the special attention of the stronger members of the party to luggage handling. Consequently most of us had to return back again to the station from the midway with our respective handicaps. But on account of all this, great haste had to be made in getting the things weighed, booked and put in the train all by ourselves which was already on the platform. According to Baba's wish, only Rustom was present at the station to see Baba off. Thus this time, we made a quiet departure when the train steamed out at 12:30 P.M. after Baba was garlanded and the

rest presented with flowers by Rustom. Baba served the *mandali* while in the train with the food which Rustom had given us, same as it had been provided to the *mandali* while we were putting up in the travellers' shelter. We reached Manmad early in the evening, and put up in the third-class waiting shed, where we also had our supper. Baba and the rest of the *mandali* excepting myself left Manmad by Nagpur Mail at 10 P.M. for Jalgaon, while I remained at Manmad under orders to bring Nervous with me, who having missed the train, was left behind at Ahmednagar.

November 12, 1923

### Second Change at Jalgaon

At 2 A.M. Nervous came to Manmad from 'Nagar and at 2:30 we both started for Jalgaon by the Calcutta Mail and joined the *mandali* at 5:30 in the morning. We had a wholesome breakfast before starting from Jalgaon at 8:30 by the Bhushawal-Surat train. After a couple of hours, we passed Amalner, where the G.I.P. changed into Tapti Valley Railway. There are some spots on this line having a sign board, one or two lamp posts and a strip of even ground along the rails called flagstations, for which tickets used to be issued in the train and collected at the stations by the same person who issued them. The country around the line—Kandesh District—seemed rich with a ready golden harvest at this time, while further on the train also rushed through a beautiful piece of land thick with green foliage and shady trees. In the evening we passed Bardoli, the chief stronghold of Gandhi when his non-cooperation movement was in full swing. At 7:30 in the evening, we reached Surat and, after removing the luggage on the opposite platform, waited for the train from Bombay for Ahmedabad. In the meantime Baba, Gustadji, Adi, Doctor and myself took a turn in the local bazaar near the station.

On the way back, a young Hindu boy of about 18 attracted our attention. He was lying on the footpath and seemed to be in a very pitiable state, shivering and almost stiff with cold. Baba made me enquire about him, and according to the boy's words, he had come from his native place Vadala to Surat for occupation, and on account of his sudden illness, he was now penniless and homeless. Under Baba's instructions, I took the boy to a Hindu hotel and made him eat to his full satisfaction. After that a ticket for Vadala was procured and Baba handed the same to the boy

after giving him some advice. However, the boy was at the eleventh hour detained by a subinspector of police on suspicion in spite of my remonstrations with him, and after a few minutes, we left for Ahmedabad at 10 P.M.

November 13, 1923

#### Fourth Change at Ahmedabad

Early morning saw us at Ahmedabad. Baba, Gustadji, Doctor and Adi went into the city after we all had a scanty breakfast on the station platform. In the meantime, the rest of us arranged about the luggage. After Baba and party returned with sweets and toasts, we got in the Ahmedabad-Hyderabad direct carriage attached to the metre-gauge Delhi Mail. At 8:50, the train steamed out of the platform passing through the beautiful locality where Ahmedabad's elite lives in the palatial bungalows along the railway line. In the afternoon, Baba distributed the sweets, toasts, and plantains which made an unusual meal, crowned by the task of balancing the hot glasses of tea served to each at the same time in the fast-going train. Another greater balancing feat was performed by all of us in the evening, when we began to prepare tea on the Primus stove while the train was going at full speed. What a scene it was! Every one of us suddenly sprang into action managing the unmanageable boiling water in the pot, the pot on the stove, and the stove on the shaking bench of the train. After a great excitement, the trouble was brought to end at the cost of many scorched hands, fingers and tongues by a hasty preparation and an equally quick distribution and consumption of the tea together with the remaining toast, making a hasty supper. At about 7 P.M. our carriage, after being detached from the Mail, was attached to the J.B. Railway passenger train at Marwar Junction, thus saving us the trouble of undergoing a fifth change. Soon after, the train left Marwar with the whole compartment to ourselves, which fact enabled us to retire for the night very comfortably, of course from the third-class travelling point of view.

November 14, 1923

#### The Quaint City

Almost the whole run of the train from Marwar to Hyderabad was through barren desert with sand flying in volumes, proving a regular nuisance. At 12:30 in the afternoon, we reached our

destination, Sind Hyderabad. Baba, Behramji, Gustadji, and Slamson went in the city to select a suitable shelter, while the rest of us waited at the station. We looked forward to sightseeing this great city of the Sind, which looked very quaint on account of the peculiar contrivance for ventilation on the top of almost every one of the buildings that came to our view from the platform.

Though being accustomed to sudden changes, still we were a bit disappointed when Baba returned from the city and asked us to prepare to proceed to Karachi by the train which was due in a few minutes. The reason for this sudden change was explained by Baba that he found the city almost enveloped with dust and sand which kept on flying all the time there. A very great haste had to be made as the train puffed in immediately with almost every carriage packed with passengers like sardines in a tin. However, we managed to squeeze in the Quetta-Karachi Mail of N.W. Railway, an exceptionally fine and very smooth running train. At about 6:30 in the evening, the train steamed into the Karachi Cantonment station. As per Baba's wire from Hyderabad, only Baily was present at the station. Baba got down here with Gustadji and Adi to approve the best of the lot of places and houses that Baily had, according to previous instructions, selected for our stay. We continued on towards the next city station because it afforded better facilities for the handling of the luggage. After removing the things from the platform, we waited Baba's return at the station. After a couple of hours, Baba returned by victoria, having approved a bungalow near Soldier Bazaar. More victorias were hired, and we all repaired to the bungalow. Having already taken our supper in the train we soon went to sleep on the dusty floors of the house.

November 15, 1923

Sweepers All

After the chief workers were presented with the "order of the broom," almost all of us got after cleaning the bungalow of the thick layer of dust on the floor and the cobwebs on the walls and ceilings, from early in the morning till late in the afternoon. The bungalow is situated in a nice, quiet locality off Soldier Bazaar, as well as fairly isolated from the city and cantonment both. It is a neat, simple building, having a big hall with two bedrooms attached with bathrooms on each wing. There is also a small verandah on the front and a kitchen in the rear,

the whole premises being surrounded with a compound wall with wide-open space all around it.

"Halt Ho!"

The rest of the day was quickly passed in getting ourselves settled. Myself, Baily, Doctor, Padri, and Nervous got the bedroom on the south; the room next to it was fixed as the dining room with the adjoining bathroom for general use. The bedroom on the northern wing was occupied by Behramji, Baidul, Masaji, Pendu and Slamson, the next room by Baba, Gustadji, and Adi and the adjoining bathroom as well as a small extra room nearby was arranged for Baba's use only. In the evening, when all were gathered near Baba, Baily proposed to name the place, upon which all were asked by Baba to suggest an appropriate name. After some discussion, Baba and Baily's joint suggestion of "Halt Ho!" was selected by all, from the host of other names brought forward. Therefore the bungalow was formally styled Halt Ho by Baba. Indeed, considering the settlement for two months which has already been made with the landlord for renting the place, as well as the minor arrangements which have been made for our stay, it makes us feel as if we have really halted here en route to Persia. Really speaking, we hope to make a regular halt for the first time since leaving the Manzil and starting upon the programme of drifting from place to place.

November 16, 1923

The "Halt" in Jeopardy

We got up at about six this morning, after having had a full sleep the previous night. It was many months since we had felt settled and "at home." Nearly a dozen letters were written by most of us to our respective places informing about our safe arrival, our fixed stay here for a month or two, as well as the new address, when Baba suddenly entered our room and with his characteristic abruptness presented a new plan, that of immediately leaving for Basra and passing the interim there until the snow and cold ends in Baghdad and Persia, as the programme regarding the route to Persia has already been changed, that is, it has been settled to go via Baghdad instead of Bandar Abbas. The continuous roaming about since leaving the Manzil has simply made the *mandali* ever ready for a move. Consequently almost all favoured the plan of starting immediately.



The quiet morning began to buzz with the excitement of discussions and preparations. Vajifdar was wired to send the passports and money, while Baily went into the city to enquire about the steamer and to inform the landlord, etc. Myself and Doctor accompanied Baily in the carriage to the camp for Friday prayers. Having an hour at our disposal, we took a turn in the principal commercial streets nearby, and passed an interesting hour in witnessing the good many shops on modern lines there. At 2 P.M., we again went in the mosque and besides the usual prayers, we joined the special prayer for the freedom of Jaziratul-Arab. After prayers, I took Doctor to Pilamai's place for him to join Baily who was waiting there. After being cordially greeted by Pilamai, we took tea, and having a look round the place where we had put up last time, we departed.

Near the tramway station I separated to return back to Halt Ho, while Baily and Doctor proceeded to make arrangements for our departure for Basra. Unhappily, the tram for Soldier Bazaar had just left, and the poor tram service provided another car only after half an hour so I preferred to walk the distance. When I got back at Halt Ho, the excitement about Basra and Baghdad was still rampant; but in the evening, matters again took a turn and there began to be disfavour on account of the news of keen cold and malarious mosquitoes there. Baily and Doctor's return with the news that neither the landlord nor the Persian Consul could be seen today put an end to the storm in the teapot, and it was finally decided to halt at Halt Ho! Thus we witnessed a very engaging and exciting time today.

November 19, 1923

#### Doctor Caught Napping

"*Gane me langoti nahin aur nam fatehkan*" (literally, While his bottom is uncovered, the man brags of his self-importance), so frequently repeated by Hazrat Babajan, was discussed by Baba early this morning and about which I was specially asked to take note of in my diary. All interpreted the same, and according to Doctor, the phrase means, "Though being poor, yet considering oneself rich, and possessing extreme pride and prejudice." The reason for all this storm was Doctor's keeping in bed long after the order of getting up was given by Baba, leading to a heated and tiresome discussion, with the result that as a punishment, Baba passed orders on Doctor and myself to get up daily

at 4 A.M. and after taking bath with cold water, to attend the morning prayers in the mosque.

For the last two days the time has been chiefly devoted to discussing as to how and where to find jobs for most of us, as Baba wants all—save a few—to work during the time we are in Karachi. Some of us have already been hunting after jobs, while Padri and Baidul have already got engaged in a tea shop near the Railway station at 20 rupees per month with board. There is no distinction drawn by Baba as to the kind and quality of the job that we can manage to get hold of, as well as there is no question of what income we make. Only work and service (honest of course) is the order of the day. Baba's order as regards myself and Doctor was after all cancelled late in the evening.

November 20, 1923

#### A Dry Picnic

This afternoon Baba and the rest of the *mandali*, excepting those hunting after jobs and doing service, started by tram from Soldier Bazaar for an evening out. After undergoing the usual change at the cantonment, we got down near the station. From here we walked to Clifton, the sea promenade, and without taking rest there for 15 minutes returned back in the scorching sun to the tramway and reached Halt Ho just at a time when one goes out for a walk in the cool of the evening. The whole excursion proved far from anything like going out for an airing, but on the contrary it was a regular "sweating job," as if undertaken in sympathy of those actually working and of those in search of jobs.

November 21, 1923

#### Heavy Atmosphere

The time and surroundings bear a peculiarly dull and dry atmosphere nowadays, so much so that Doctor asked Baba for permission to go to Poona this morning, as he said he was disgusted (probably with the "unsettled settlement" in the Halt Ho), upon which Baba not only granted the same but also added his permission for Doctor to return back to him whenever he liked.

A notable fact that we witnessed since our stay here was that of coming to know through Vajifdar's letter, that a couple of days ago Navrozji had been to the Persian Consul at Bombay

to get the latter's endorsement on our respective passports, but the Consul refused to endorse them unless he saw all of us personally, excepting Baba's own passport, which he duly endorsed saying he had seen Baba in his office when Baba told him that he (Baba) would send his passport with his man for him-the Consul-to endorse just a few days ago! Well, we know for a fact that not only we have been having Baba in our midst for the last one and a half months out of Bombay, but that Baba has never been near the Persian Consulate, far short of ever having seen the Persian Consul!

November 22, 1923

### Another Surprise

Since putting up in the Halt Ho, and until I get a job, I have been given the duty of sweeping the whole of the premises every morning. It was while sweeping that I saw Baba confer with Baily for a few minutes in private, quickly followed by a discussion which Baba started with the *mandali* in general. First, I could not trust my ears to have correctly picked up the topic, but to my pleasant surprise I was right in hearing for the second time that the discussion was on Baba's proposal to start for Poona immediately! This time, however, the surprising idea of getting back to Bombay side so soon really materialized into a great surprise. After quick and hasty preparations, we all found ourselves at the docks ready to embark on our first voyage by 2:30 P.M! Having come to know, while discussing about returning to Poona this morning, that a boat was to leave for Bombay this evening, all preferred to have the experience of a voyage to that of going by train. Thus in such a wonderfully short time, we managed to make ourselves comfortable on the upper deck of the S.S. *Vita* together with all our luggage, which as usual, was all removed by ourselves from the horse-drawn carriage to the boat, through the overcrowded gangways. The following hour or so we witnessed a very great din and hustle-bustle. At 4:12 P.M. the steamer weighed anchor amidst touching as well as humorous scenes of those who had come to see their friends and relations off. It was all a fascinating scene, and every minute of the progress of the steamer presented additions to the bird's eye view of Karachi. But we were not allowed to engage ourselves thus, but on the contrary all were ordered to pick rice amidst the hustle-bustle, a very trying job indeed under the circumstances. After taking meals, we retired for sleep on the

deck at 9 P.M. I had to get up again at 11 to keep watch up till 12 as it has been settled to do so every hour turn by turn throughout the night.

November 23, 1923

#### Cutch Mandvi

Last night was passed rather uncomfortably on account of the strong winds blowing throughout the upper deck, which provides but little protection therefrom. At about 7 A.M. the steamer touched Cutch Mandvi,<sup>38</sup> and for the first time, I had a look at my native land. As if in commemoration of the incident (of course through Doctor's mischief) Baba made me tie a piece of cloth round my back (so very characteristic of the orthodox Cutchi) and talk in Cutchi language with the fellow passengers who had just boarded. Thanks to the hustle-bustle of about 800 passengers that boarded the steamer at this port, this whole incident remained unnoticed by the outsiders, and thus only the *mandali* could enjoy the joke at my cost.

#### A Busy Day

At 12:30 we passed Dwarka, while late in the afternoon at 4:30 the ship dropped anchor near Porbandar which seemed to be a beautiful little town. Thus the whole day was well passed. And as if the engagement was not sufficient, a Parsi gentleman took a sudden fancy towards the *mandali*, as it was quite natural for him to do so considering the extraordinary mode of our living. But unlike the other passengers, he could not remain a passive onlooker, as he seemed to know our Baily. So quite suddenly, just as we were about to take our meals which had just been distributed by Baba, the gentleman appeared on the scene, and by way of opening discussion began to bombard us with questions and counterquestions as to our general mode of living and our vegetarian food in particular. Of course, we tried our best in giving him a reasonable hearing as well as explaining him as far as we could, but the gentleman did not seem satisfied. I am hanged if anyone can ever understand a saint or his actions through mere common sense and logic only. Hence, though I admit that the gentleman was so very inquisitive, with good motives, because of his well-known philanthropic activity in Karachi, yet for us he proved a regular nuisance. However, we did our best in facing him squarely, argument after argument,

throughout the day, and if Mr. Kandawala still remains dissatisfied—as can be seen he did, through his newspaper article—I think it is not due to the lack of giving information on our part, but he has to thank his own power of *limited* understanding.

The article appeared in the Parsi newspaper of 30th December 1923. Of course, it does not give a completely virgin-truth version of the affairs of the voyage but it gives a means of seeing us through others' eyes. For example, in the article the writer says that "while the discussion was going on, Meher Baba was taking notes." Well, I know for certain that Baba never pays serious attention to such discussion so as even to take formal part in it, far short of taking notes! But the writer perhaps might have misunderstood Baba's writing instructions for some of us to write letters accordingly, and this shows how people quite innocently become the victims of spreading false rumours about others. After reaching Bombay, Baba decided to pass some time in seclusion in an unknown station without letting even the *mandali* know where, save a few, and thus it has already been settled for all to remain at their respective places for that time.

## Baba's "Unknown" Movements

November 24, 1923

*Mandali Dispersed*

AT about nine this morning, Bombay began to be discerned faintly as if a city in the clouds. By and by, it began to be more clear and after some time a grand view of this grand city lay before us. However, it took a couple of hours more for the steamer to get alongside the docks and at 11:30 we got down at the Victoria Docks. With clockwork regularity, as per the plan settled in the steamer, Nervous, Slamson, and Padri, who were to stay in Bombay, separated, while the rest of us walked up to Victoria Terminus (save Baba and a couple more who came by victoria) direct from the docks. Adi and Masaji booked for Ahmednagar, Behramji and Baidul for Poona—while the remainder of us, Baba, Gustadji, Doctor and myself, took tickets for Lonavla. We all started by the Poona Express. As per his wish, we took every precaution of keeping Baba's present journey strictly secret. Coincidentally Doctor's father suddenly appeared on the platform, and but for my quick action of taking him to another compartment, already our precautions would have been in vain. It was with some effort that Baba's presence in the train was successfully kept out of his knowledge throughout the journey.

As a further precaution of keeping Baba's visit to Lonavla private, Baba and Gustadji got down at Khandala, where it was arranged that myself and Doctor would bring them a conveyance from Lonavla. Accordingly, both of us got down at Lonavla, and as soon as we could, secured Mr. Abdul Tayeb's car as well as a bungalow near Walwan which was in his charge too. After instructing the gardener to open and clean the bungalow we rushed back towards Khandala, but as expected we found Baba

midway, walking towards Lonavla. After Baba and Gustadji took seat, the motor was turned back, and we came direct to the bungalow. But in spite of all this Dr. Biwalkar, who knows Baba well, saw us while passing near his dispensary. Although I came to know afterwards that he did not see Baba, yet on account of passing in his sight, Baba allowed me to inform him of this visit, and of course, to tell him to keep it to himself. Thus with these few exceptions, Baba's present visit to Lonavla is not known even to the *mandali* at large as well as Baba's relatives at Poona. The main topic of the day was the discussions about the most suitable site where Baba can pass a certain time in quiet solitude without food and water as well as with the least chance of being disturbed.

November 28, 1923

#### Search after Solitude

The last two or three days remained uneventful. The time was generally passed in talks and a spin in the car about Lonavla. This morning we all motored to the municipal lakes for Baba to approve the site to pass his solitude period, but it did not quite attract him. On the contrary, the bungalow was preferred by Baba to be better, and if it could be occupied for a longer period, a month or two free, Baba declared his willingness to put up there. In that case, he said, even myself and Doctor were also not to come, unless called for; but only Gustadji was to live near the room in which Baba would confine himself. Hence, upon our request, Mr. Abdul Tayeb went to Bombay to arrange for a free, prolonged occupation of the bungalow by us. But before getting the final reply, Baba began to favour Ahmednagar side, and after some time, we got Mr. Abdul Tayeb's wire that the bungalow owners intended coming to stay themselves and hence it could not be had for a longer period. Vajifdar was wired to come to Lonavla under Baba's instructions today.

Having come to know of the recent failure of Abdulla's case, I was not in the best of spirits, and the nasty mood dragged me into an unpleasant discussion with Baba too.

November 29, 1923

#### To Unknown Destination

As per the telegram Vajifdar duly came to Lonavla this morning. After some discussions, it was finally decided by Baba to

leave for some unknown station towards Ahmednagar. Vajifdar, after getting necessary instructions, left for Bombay by the evening Express. Baba came to the station some time in advance, but kept himself in the car until the train was actually on the platform. By that time, the driver managed to inform his house people, and together with them, a good many more people swarmed round the car for Baba's blessing. Baba was pleased to permit Messrs. Abdul Tayeb, Papamyan and Biwalkar to be present at the station. At about 8:30 P.M. Baba and Gustadji left Lonavla for the first time for an unknown destination.

The eczema that has affected me for a long time has caused me great inconvenience every now and then, but, strangely enough, it has taken a very serious aspect since this very evening, holding out a very troublesome future for some time.

December 29, 1923

After the Lapse of a Month

As far as it concerns me personally, I think if I had as usual kept on writing the diary daily since Baba's departure completely a month ago—and in the absence of any news about Baba since he left—it would have been a long monotonous narration of a terrible experience that I underwent through the ferocious eczema that has got an unshakeable hold on me to this day. Thus it was a pleasant surprise for me to receive a letter today from Baba written by himself, full of news about him personally and the whole "dark" period of the last month.

Baba's Letter

Dear Ramjoo,

You must have by now, through Baily, come to know of my trip to Poona and also the occurrences there during my presence which you should please make dear Doctor aware of; and as you have every claim to know the change of my programme, system and movement, read the following and inform it to Doctor alone and both of you keep the matter a dead secret.

From the 1st December till yesterday, I continually observed 34 hours fast and from yesterday I have increased it to 40 hours. Thus every 40 hours, I will remain without food and water, and in the remaining 8 hours, I will take liquid and fruit, not grain. Thus in every 48 hours, 40 hours complete fast and 8 hours eating and drinking, and this



will continue till the 31st of January by the help of The Almighty. From the 1st of February I will begin eating regularly.

Most probably this will be my system till the 31st January; but if my health fails (I am growing weaker day by day) I'll give up this fast system from the 1st of January and keep on liquid throughout (any time of the day) in the month of January and begin eating regularly from February 1st.

After leaving Poona I came to Sholapur (know it by yourself, enquire of none and inform none), and on the 31st of the month I will leave for Bombay.

Thus during the whole month of January, I will stay at Bombay in a room Vajifdar will rent for the three of us. (Inform none please.)

On the 20th, you, Doctor and the rest of the *mandali* will be called to join me at Bombay.

Have no anxiety about any matter.

Don't try to reply to me. By the 5th you will receive — at your Lonavla address.

God bless you and Doctor,  
Let Doctor read this letter. (Sd.) Merwan.

December 30, 1923

Baba's Other Favour

Today I received another gracious favour from Baba which also I reproduce hereunder:

Dear Ramjoo,

I hope you have received my yesterday's letter sent c/o Doctor.

Now listen. You should be present at Lonavla station on the 31st, 'noon at 5:30. We three will be going to Bombay by the Madras Fast Passenger! You and Doctor alone should be present on the station. And you should inform none, not even Abdul Tayeb and Papamyan! And with you bring one bottle full of fresh made cocoa in *pure milk*! Doctor knows how to prepare it.

After seeing me at the station—you will then have to remain at Lonavla for 20 days more. I have grown very weak physically. Whilst writing this my hands were shaking.

(Sd.) Merwan

Last night was the most terrible one for me, and this morning I am left a physical wreck, so I am going to break the fast system and stay on liquid only till the 31st of January.

You may note down in your diary, if you like, the system I followed this month and am going to follow the next month.

(Sd.) Merwan

#### Baba's Movements

These letters speak for themselves thoroughly about Baba's personal condition during the period of the last month. As to his movements, I came to know afterwards they were not less limited, including visits to Sholapur and tramps about Arangaon under trying circumstances which can well be imagined, considering Baba's fasting programme. This much is certain: that as originally declared, Baba did not pass a long period in solitude; hence, it is also probable that such circumstances (that of separating from the *mandali*) would happen again, as it has repeatedly been heard of Baba that he has to pass about 30 to 40 days all alone in a cave or room without food or water some day in the future; and further, there were enough hints given at such times to show that this "sitting in solitude" will be the most important and the last action towards the perfection of his Circle. The why and wherefore of such actions are beyond the grasp of the common limited senses, and the following cutting extracted from an old issue of *The Bombay Chronicle* contains an interesting discourse on this very subject.

#### *On Spirituality*

It is a common practice to describe the processes of nature, physiological development, for instance, in terms of evolutionary theory—as unfolding potentialities which it contains from the first, being regulated by scientific formulae according to the progress of human investigation. Can such restricted or regulated definition be given for the domain of mind or rather for the higher form of thought, say soul or spirituality? Up to a certain point education, emotion, aestheticism and general culture no doubt play a great part in the formation of ideas; but for the higher conception of the ideal of human existence, the mind transgresses the so-called limits of the knowable and transcends all external rules, and the soul refuses to conform to the law of this world's ordering. This stage of mentality is not passive as is popularly misconceived—spiritual development is creative as it fashions life by new qualities and powers. It is dominant and more energetic than what people think it to be. In this domain, the sages and prophets of all times

and countries have revelled, showing the true developments of our manhood and guided human destiny with irresistible force with a living faith—which is intensely personal.

December 31, 1923

#### Baba's Blessing

As per the instructions, we prepared the cocoa in milk, and saw Baba on the station en route to Bombay this evening.

With Baba's permission we also accompanied him up to Khandala.

Baba's appearance was sufficiently corroborating of his words "I am left a physical wreck" in the last letter, as he looked very delicate and pale, almost a skeleton. But in spite of these grave physical shortcomings, he looked quite fresh in spirit and a picture of cheerfulness.

#### Baba's Recounted Movements

After leaving Lonavla on the evening of the 29th of November, Baba and Gustadji came to Poona the same night, where Behramji joined them.

On the following day, Baba, Gustadji, and Behramji left Poona for Sholapur by the evening passenger train quietly, without letting even the local members of the *mandali* be aware of it. Owing to crowds, the third-class carriages were closely packed and there was just room enough to sit comfortably. But finding Behramji in a drowsy state at Dhond, Baba enquired of the latter if he felt sleepy, and on his replying in the affirmative, made room for him to lie down. Hardly Behramji could drift away in dream land completely than he was again made to get up! While he was trying to open wide his red, blinking eyes, Baba began abusing him, "Don't you feel ashamed to sleep when I am sitting awake," and so kept on teasing him till he was quite wide awake with anger!

#### Sholapur

About midnight they got down at Sholapur. Their unusual mode of travelling with stove, utensils and such odd things, without proper dress, inspired a policeman to poke his nose in unnecessarily. His impertinent enquiries were retorted back by Gus-

tadji which led to a passage-at-arms with the representative of law and order. The policeman brought a ticket collector to his help and the latter demanded their tickets. By now, Gustadji was quite on the war path. He told the ticket collector to wait at the door and ask them for the tickets there when they passed through the exit as is the rule of ticket collecting. Perhaps to end the tussle, Baba asked Gustadji to lead him to a water closet. Gustadji took Baba to the gentlemen's lavatory and waited outside.

But the zealous policeman followed them there and began to quarrel with Gustadji. By the time Baba came out, the station master was also on the scene. Baba thereupon talked personally with the station master, and in reply to his assertion that the lavatory was only meant for first- and second-class passengers, Baba pointed to the board, which said it was for gentlemen! However the dispute came to an end when the station master took a reasonable attitude, and the party left the platform. Baba asked Behramji to spread the beddings outside the station building, which he did, after sweeping away the dirt and dust which was liberally spread nearby, as best as he could under the circumstances.

Before they could sleep, a Parsi guard was seen to go out of the station having just brought in a goods train. Baba asked Gustadji to approach him to arrange for them a shelter for the night. Gustadji found the gentleman very obliging, and he took them again to the station master and arranged for their stay overnight in the first-class waiting room. The beddings were again brought in the station to the great chagrin of the fuming policeman. In spite of comfortable vacant benches, Baba got all their beddings spread on the floor. Thus it was nearly 3 o'clock in the morning before the party went to sleep.

At 5 o'clock Baba got up, after a couple of hours sleep, and made the two companions also follow suit. Behramji was sent to find out a place nearby where they could take breakfast, since none of them had eaten anything since the previous afternoon. Behramji reported that there was an ordinary Muslim restaurant about a quarter of a mile from the station, and the party started in a carriage for the same. On arrival, the hotel was found to be in a very dirty condition with myriads of flies buzzing about.

When asked what could be had for breakfast, the attendant rattled out various meat dishes, but he was asked to bring bread and butter. Upon being served out, it was found to be in a stinking condition, so without touching it or even taking tea, Baba left the shop.

### A Dry Drive

The party took a carriage, and started for nowhere; that is, just to have a general ramble in and about Sholapur. In one locality, a big festival of a local saint was found to be in full swing. Hundreds of toy shops, etc., were arrayed in that part of the town, and it looked quite a gala day there. For hours together, the party moved from place to place, when at last, at about one o'clock, they stopped their carriage at the sight of a travellers' shelter finely situated with plenty of open space all around.

The carriage was dismissed, and they engaged a room there. The cook was ordered to prepare *dal*-rice for Gustadji and Behramji within one hour, while the latter was asked to get milk for Baba.

After the tramping and search for an hour for milk, Behramji came back all red and perspiring owing to the afternoon heat, and in a rundown condition through fasting, and reported that milk was not available at that hour. Quite a storm of hot and provocative words from Baba flowed out at this and made Behramji more red and hot, both physically and mentally; but at the same time, it also goaded him into one more search after milk. But this time, Baba added one more condition and told him to get milk before 3 P.M. to the second, under a threat that otherwise, he will not touch food for 36 hours more.

Somehow, Behramji managed to find a milkman who promised to get a buffalo from the jungle specially for the purpose, if a rupee was paid per *seer* of milk. It was agreed upon, and a boy was sent for the animal in the jungle. Finding it long past 2 o'clock, Behramji left the milk vessel with the milkman asking him to send the milk as soon as possible to the travellers' shelter, and came to inform Baba that although the milk will be available shortly, it may take more than 3 P.M. Learning this, Baba got more angry with Behramji, and took him right and left under the excuse of his leaving away the milk vessel there with the milkman. However, the atmosphere became calm and breathable soon after, as the milkman brought in the milk in time. Baba took a little milk and asked the two to partake of the food which the cook had just made ready for them.

### Continued Fasting

Thus after almost 24 hours, the party had touched food and completed an apparently unintended fast, but really it was the beginning of a strict fasting programme.

Because, while taking the excellent tea prepared by themselves with the pure fresh milk at 4 P.M., Baba declared that henceforth he will be taking food once every 34 hours, that too only such liquids as milk, fruit juices, tea, etc., while Gustadji and Behramji were also ordered to eat and drink once after every 24 hours!

### To Akolner

After tea, the party came back to the railway station and Behramji got tickets for Akolner (near Ahmednagar). The funds were exhausted, and only nine annas ought to have remained from the five-rupee note that Behramji gave to the booking clerk towards their railway fare, but the latter, mistaking the five-rupee note for a ten-rupee one, gave back to Behramji Rs. 5/9—which he brought before Baba and informed him about the booking clerk's mistake. Baba immediately made him return the five-rupee note back to the booking clerk, and they started by the night train for Dhond, en route to Akolner. In spite of scarcely sleeping overnight, again the night journey was undertaken and the party reached Dhond at about four in the morning. They got down there and boarded the Manmad train.

No sooner had they settled in and removed their luggage than a ticket collector asked them to vacate the compartment on the plea that it was going to be reserved for the military! Again a breeze occurred with the railway authorities. In the nick of time, however, Baba asked Gustadji to give in and change into another carriage.

Hardly all the things had been removed into the other compartment than the train started and thus the luggage got divided. However, bit by bit, by the time the station of Visapur was reached, all the things were collected back. At Akolner, Baba and Gustadji got down with the luggage, and Behramji was sent to Ahmednagar with instructions to inform none save Rustom the fact of Baba's presence in the near vicinity. Some sites were inspected at Akolner by Baba and Gustadji for Baba's solitary stay, but none came to his satisfaction. In the afternoon, milk was procured through a Muslim railway employee, by name Ismail, who was found to be very submissive and obliging, and tea was prepared. Behramji returned from Ahmednagar accompanied by Rustom and also brought food with which the two broke their fast in the evening. Again a search after some good

plot of land was made. A certain site came in for Baba's approval to some extent, and the owner, a retired Brahmin railway station master who happens to hold extensive lands near about with a good many wells, was approached. He was requested to allow the use of a small part of his land for a sick man who wanted to stay there for a few days for a change. The gentleman readily gave in, and Rustom was instructed to bring a small tent from Ahmednagar. The night was passed on the railway station platform.

The following day, Rustom brought in the tent and also food for Gustadji and Behramji. The tent was pitched on the selected spot; but the party, including Baba himself, slept the night out in the open in spite of the cold November night! Excessive cold was felt in the early hours of the morning when dry wood and leaves were collected by the party and set fire to, to warm their shivering bodies. In spite of having pitched the tent there, Baba did not quite seem satisfied with the place, and after some discussions, it was decided to repair to Arangaon.

#### Arangaon

Accordingly in the evening Baba, Behramji and Ismail came walking along the railway lines, while Gustadji came by the road in a bullock cart with the luggage, and all reached the good old post office building in the dark of the night, quite unknown to anybody in the village. In spite of the prolonged fasts, Baba cheerfully walked the distance of six miles on foot. The beddings were spread on the open verandah on the north of the building and the party soon retired for the night. At midnight, a heavy shower of rain came down suddenly, accompanied by a great thunder and lightning, although there were no signs of a forthcoming shower of any kind last evening. The sleep was disturbed for some time owing to this.

Perhaps Baba left Akolner for this very reason of being disturbed by rain while putting up in a tent in open land without any other shelter. In the dark hours of the early morning, Behramji went to the village and procured milk, to the great surprise of the party from whom it was taken, and to satisfy their immediate curiosity about his presence told them that only he—Behramji—had come there, as Baba was to follow him in a few days after and requested that till Baba's arrival even *his* presence be kept unknown from others of the village. Even water was drawn out of the well at the same hour to avoid detection, and

throughout the day the party kept as much indoors as possible. Baba asked Gustadji and Behramji to fix up the tent in the post office building itself for him to stay in under the double roofs of the tent and building both. The tent was found to be difficult to stretch in the building owing to the solid floor and walls all round. Baba became very impatient and irritable at the consequent delay and began grumbling at the pair of perspiring workers.

It made the job all the more confusing, so Gustadji addressed Baba in Gujarati: "If you don't speak in the middle, I will do it," and upon Baba agreeing to the condition, the two, after some more fumbling, managed to rig up the tent.

Thereupon, Baba took his seat in there, after locking from inside the door of the premises. In the absence of butter, Gustadji and Behramji had to keep contented with boiled rice and *dal* which they cooked in the dilapidated mud hut still standing just opposite the main building to break their own fast of 24 hours.

The following day, as per prearrangement, Adi came from 'Nagar and brought some butter. He was the next person in the *mandali* after Rustom to know about Baba's whereabouts.

After two or three days, Adi began bringing cooked food daily for Gustadji and Behramji to break their daily fast with, and saved them the cooking trouble.

Thus, they had nothing particular to do, save lying low in Baba's attendance, who all the time kept behind closed doors save for necessities or a drink after every 34 hours. Behramji and Gustadji all the while kept as much under cover as possible in the daytime, and kept on bringing water and milk in the dark hours.

Thus for days together, Baba stayed near Arangaon without even the villagers becoming the wiser of it. After the first week, however, Gulmai was allowed by Baba to accompany Adi at times and come to Arangaon.

By the end of the month, Baba came to Poona publicly for a day or two, and put up in Sadashiv Patel's place in Kasba Peth. Hundreds of people came for his blessing there. Baba continued his fasting programme. After that he came over to Arangaon quite unknown to anybody.

From the 27th Baba fasted for 40 hours, i.e., keeping without any food or drink during that time.

On the 31st of December Baba and party left Ahmednagar



for Bombay by the morning train, reaching there the same evening.

In Bombay they put up in Bharucha Building at Dadar in the suite of rooms Vajifdar had engaged for them under previous instructions.

## Bombay

January 11, 1924

## Persia Again

UNHAPPILY as predicted by me before, the eczema was going from bad to worse. As a last recourse I got injected under expert medical advice. But this too proved inefficacious. Hence, I was driven to write a direct complaint for the first time to Baba that this extraordinary ailment had become unbearable.

The question of the Persian tour is again coming to the front as arrangements for getting passports for Baily, Sadashiv and Barsoap are on foot. The rest of the *mandali* are in possession of the passports since putting up in the Irani Mansion in Bombay in October.

January 15, 1924

*Mandali* Recalled

Today I received the following letter from Baba:

Dear Ramjoo,

I received your letter and felt sorry to note your condition—not the physical irritations, but the mental one.

Well, don't feel disheartened. I am today sending you an ointment which you should rub (well) twice a day on the irritating parts. Begin on receiving it.

Also you and Doctor should start on the morning of — for Bombay by the morning express.

(Sd.) Merwan

January 20, 1924

## The Cat Is Out of the Bag, At Last

Doctor and myself left Lonavla this morning for Bombay. Baily and Jamshed also joined us in the train as they were going to

Baba, too. We duly reached Bombay in the noon, and found Baba as weak as before, having fasted completely for the last three days, and putting up in a room in the Bharucha Building.

It was not long before we felt the lively atmosphere indicating a "bombshell" of new plans. However, we were somewhat prepared for the shock by Baba's stray remarks that hereafter only those could keep company with Baba who were willing to surrender completely and indefinitely! After the meals the fateful moment arrived. Baba discussed the new change with myself and Doctor in private, the gist of which is something like this:

Whatever hopes and expectations Baba had held before us as going to happen and fructify by the 28th February 1924, were now to be considered to be all a FAILURE! Consequently, if we felt to have passed the last two years in vain, as well as no longer taking Baba for what we believed him to be for so long, he said he was sorry and asked to be pardoned! Nay, further, we could do what we liked with him by way of punishment. But on the contrary, if we still liked to pull on longer with him, we could do so, but for an indefinite period and on unconditional terms without any hopes and without the object of their definite fulfillment. Another alternative offered us was to stay home and do what we liked as regards our business or social relations, but be under Baba's instructions spiritually.

Of course, we could never countenance the idea of changing our beliefs about Baba nor consider the time passed in Baba's company to be in vain. On the contrary, the last two years will remain to be the most important and instructive in our lives, even if nothing further happens. However, we could not see our way to keep further company with Baba for an *indefinite* period, but were willing to obey his instructions at home.

Upon this, Baba said that if we believed in him and if he was really *that* which we believed him to be, he was sure of our spiritual awakening sooner or later in this life, and in the present form, as surely as the day follows the night—whether we were with him, far away, or even went against him, because of our spiritual connection with him. Baba further said he will prove that though we failed, he did not leave us, and then he would become our Master; otherwise, till the time of Realization, he was our Servant.

The sugar-coating of quick results was at last off the bitter pill of spiritual research! However, I take this to be the end of the second term as referred to by me since leaving the Manzil.

Many interesting explanations were given by Baba on spiritual

points, as well as cards were played too, when most of the *mandali* were present. Also Baba took food this evening and further declared that he will be taking food regularly once every evening.

January 22, 1924

### Secrets

In the course of a general conversation, Baba enquired of myself and Doctor if, when he calls us later on, we shall come and stay with him for a month or two, as at that time he will be explaining the inner secrets promised long ago to the selected few as a forerunner of Realization.

Baba's mother, Masaji and Babu came from Poona this afternoon.

January 23, 1924

### Another Chapter Begun

Upon further enquiry from Baba as to my thoughts on the recent development of events, I said I was still feeling to keep company longer with him provided I were free to leave him anytime I liked. After some discussion, Baba conceded the point, but told me to reconsider the subject well and decide finally by the 1st February, as he will no longer be responsible for my external affairs in any way, even in case of the passing away of someone from my family in my absence. Consequently, if I accompanied him to Persia I should no longer hold any hopes externally.

January 24, 1924

### A Compromise

It is almost settled that I am to accompany Baba to Persia. Doctor is also of the same opinion. Both of us are free, however, to leave Baba whenever we like. This means that a sort of compromise has been reached in our relations with Baba. That is, although like other members who will hereafter keep company with Baba, we have not completely surrendered ourselves to an indefinite period as before. By this, I don't mean any personal distinction has been accorded to both of us from the rest of the *mandali* by Baba, but that he has been kind enough to consider our special difficulties.

In any case, it can fairly be said to be the beginning of a new term of our spiritual schooling. First, there was a period of nearly a year of strict discipline and fixed routine. Then followed a similar period of more freedom in petty affairs, but with physical hardships and constant change, and under the impression of a fixed period. Now, there is no limit to the time, place, and circumstances under which one is to keep company with Baba! Complete surrender is the order of the day.

January 27, 1924

*Ghasal* Singing

The last two days were rather uneventful. However, today, Yassin's singing is arranged in the Manzil. The singing continued throughout the day without a hitch. But the arrangement to prepare the meals for the *mandali* and guests in the Irani Mansion at Vajifdar's place were the source of a great inconvenience to some of us, because big vessels containing cooked, hot food had to be carried from the second floor of the Mansion to the Manzil, a pretty uncomfortable distance with that handicap.

January 29, 1924

The Humour of Language

Today all of us went to the Persian Consul to get the necessary endorsements on our passports for going to Persia. The endorsements were duly secured after each of us was questioned by the Consul separately. Someone of our party, when questioned in Persian, was heard to say that he did not know the language. The humour of his denying the knowledge of the language in the same language did not occur to him. But we didn't take time to have a good laugh at his expense when he came out.

January 31, 1924

Special Ceremonies

Myself and Barsoap have been ordered to perform prayers five times today, while Babu and Yeshvantrao are observing fast from 8 P.M. last night until 8 P.M. tonight. In the evening, we all went to Abdur Rehman Baba's tomb where, through misunderstanding, we all did not perform the Muslim prayer just as

Baba meant us to do, and the result was a great storm after our return from the tomb.

Baba did not eat or drink anything throughout the day.

February 1, 1924

### Baba's Fasting

Baba had told us that after the 1st, that is today, he would be taking food regularly, but he again changed his idea and ordered for his food to be prepared as usual, i.e., at 2 P.M. But this arrived too late, so Baba did not take anything, save tea in the afternoon. Late in the evening, when he took food, it was brought out within a few minutes. Baba looked very ill afterwards. Interesting explanations were however given by Baba.

All are fasting from 9 P.M.

February 2, 1924

### Shri Narayan Maharaj

Save for Nervous, who kept company with Baba, we all went to Shri Narayan Maharaj who was at the time in Bombay. According to Baba's words, Narayan Maharaj is also one of the few greatest spiritual personalities of the age. But what a great difference in his mode of living in comparison with our Maharaj! While Upasni Maharaj puts up in a humble little hut of mud and straw, Narayan Maharaj passes his time in palatial buildings with all the luxuries that modern furnishing can afford. Upasni Maharaj has a piece of gunny cloth just sufficient to cover up his groins, while Narayan Maharaj uses the finest drapery possible for his clothes—nay, even a diamond ring flashes on his finger. Even in question of food, the contrast is the same, as we know that the former takes a few handfuls of coarse bread (or rice) with a bitter vegetable, while the latter is said to have rich dishes of all sorts at meals. In short, externally both are poles apart, and yet both are equally the greatest spiritual personalities, nay, internally both are *one and the same!* To come to the point, we had to wait for some time as Maharaj was having a shave. However, we soon had the opportunity of paying our respects, and then returned back to our own little Maharaj—I mean Baba.

At 3 P.M. our fast was brought to an end. Baba received a letter this morning dated the 1st instant from Jamshed, and it contained the following regarding Babajan:

On 25th morning Babajan wept much and I enquired. I was informed by Rahim that Babajan had wept much. On 30th morning Babajan got suddenly ill. He [Babajan referred to in masculine] vomited two or three times, moved bowels two or three times, temperature rose suddenly, went unconscious and lost speech. After a little sleep of intervals his hands and feet would jerk restlessly and he would shout, as though shaken from sleep through fright, and say, "Who is it?" "What is it?" He would raise his eyes high as if someone were strangling him.

Baba was also very restless tonight. I accompanied him for a stroll outside on the open road at midnight, when he complained it to be very hot and that he was perspiring, although the night was cool enough at the time!

February 3, 1924

#### Devotional Singing

Singing has been arranged this afternoon. Accordingly, Asthma and other outsiders came at ten o'clock, followed by Munshi and party at noon. After having meals, we all repaired to the Manzil, but as the *bhajan mandali* were late in coming up to the appointed time, Baba came back with some of us to Bharucha Building and played cards for some time. After an hour, Baba and ourselves came back to the Manzil and sat listening to the singing in the side room. However, Baba's annoyance at the singing party's failure to arrive at the appointed hour did not ease and soon the singing was brought to an end. The rest of the evening, after taking meals, was passed playing cards.

Baba received another letter from Jamshed saying that Babajan was more seriously ill and the chief symptoms were "feeling too hot, restless, and perspiring"—exactly the same complaint uttered by Baba while strolling with me late last night. A very suggestive coincidence it is.

February 4, 1924

#### Babajan's Recovery

A wire was received from Jamshed that Babajan was better. With Baba's permission, I left Bombay and reached Lonavla this evening to stay with my people till the 18th, and return by that evening to join Baba in the tour to Persia.

February 5, 1924

## Gandhiji's Release

Mahatma Gandhi has been released today from jail, and this reminds me of Baba's words uttered some months ago: "Shortly Gandhi will leave jail, whether through death or remittance of sentence, but he will no longer be in jail after some time." The alternative method of Gandhiji's leaving, i.e., through death, is a peculiar hint of the fact that he was very near it when he was operated upon in jail. At last, at least one of Baba's prophecies has come true!

February 9, 1924

## A Tight Corner

Baba's letter, which I received day before yesterday, asking me to come and join him on the 13th instead of the 18th, was sufficient to cause me much anxiety because of my wife's sudden and serious sickness, yet I received another intimation from Baba to be present in Bombay on the 11th as his birthday was to be celebrated on the 12th and we were to leave for Persia on the 14th. Here my wife is passing through a crisis and at least a week would be required for her to get better according to the doctor's advice. Anyhow, I have decided to follow the letter.

February 11, 1924

## In Bombay

Accordingly, I left Lonavla by the evening Express for Bombay, joining Patel and Barsoap who were also on their way to Bombay. We safely reached there at 7 P.M. A spacious canopy is erected in the open courtyard for the festival, gaily decorated with buntings and flowers.

February 12, 1924

## Formal Birthday

There were many outsiders and guests assembled since early morning to celebrate Baba's birthday. However, the home *mandali* did not get their usual tea, and this auspicious day began dry. After Baba was profusely garlanded, the singing began. Hardly a couple of songs had been finished when it was stopped. Some trouble arose among ourselves in bringing the food vessels



from the Irani Mansion where it was prepared as usual. Baba got much annoyed, and was so displeased that he himself went to the Irani Mansion and brought some of the big pots. It was quite an unexpected as well as very awkward position! In spite of our best entreaties, Baba waved us aside, and brought some of the big pots through the public road, leaving the spectators who knew him by sight, dumbfounded. A general confusion followed, and though we all had our meals with the guests, yet Munshi's party seemed to have disappeared. As soon as Baba came to know about this, he followed them in a car and brought them back just as they were crossing the railway bridge near the Charni Road station. After Baba's return with Munshi, the atmosphere calmed down, and the rest of the day passed off normally as the guests dispersed. The singing programme was dropped too.

February 13, 1924

#### Tour Postponed

The departure tomorrow to Persia has been postponed even though it was the reason Baba's birthday was *tried* to be celebrated yesterday, although it really falls on the 19th. Hence, Doctor left for Lonavla tonight for some urgent business, with Baba's permission, along with Abdulla who had also come to see Baba off to Persia, and for the premature (and I think, hence) unsuccessful birthday.

The canopy was dismantled and the things removed from the courtyard.

February 14, 1924

#### Maharaj's Release

News came from Sakori that Shri Maharaj had left the cage in which he had imprisoned himself for almost a year, the very day of the storm and confusion here.

As usual, Baba gave a discourse on spirituality. Many outsiders were also present, including an Irani gentleman of very intemperate habits and belonging to the fast set who, we came to know afterwards, was so affected by a single lecture that at a stroke he gave up strong drinks, intemperate habits, nay even his daily meals, and decided to keep himself on only water and bread. Of course, when Baba came to know about this, he called the Irani gentleman and advised him to be of temperate habits,

and persuaded him to change his decision of keeping on bread and water and so going from one extreme to the other.

We had been fasting since 2 P.M. for 24 hours but Baba made us break it at 9 P.M., to continue again from 9 P.M. for 24 hours.

February 15, 1924

#### Another Agreement

A further discussion took place about going to Persia, but this time it mainly centered round the route to be taken. Finally, it was settled to go by Bandar Abbas and not via Baghdad as prearranged, since it would be less costly.

An agreement was also signed by all to this effect:

We, the undersigned, hereby declare and agree that we have undertaken the journey to Persia of our own free will and accord. We further hold ourselves responsible for any mishap that may occur, whether mental, physical or financial, under any circumstances; that is, Meher Baba is in no way responsible for any consequences of the journey or otherwise for the time we are with him.  
Dated 15th day of Feb. 1924.

The fast we were observing since last night for 24 hours was, however, brought to an end at 12:30 P.M. today. This is the second time that for some reason the 24 hours was not completed. It has been decided to start for Persia on the 22nd and hence, also to celebrate Baba's birthday again on the 19th (his real birthday), as the last celebrations had all been upset because of the "storm."

February 18, 1924

#### Festival

A Muslim festival ceremony was performed tonight from 10:30 to 11:30, which was well arranged by Munshi's party.

February 19, 1924

#### Thirtieth Birthday

Baba's thirtieth birthday was celebrated today, but outsiders were not invited. Singing took place, and terminated without any hitch. A group photo was also taken, but later did not

prove successful. However, a slight breeze occurred in the afternoon when Baba felt a sudden appetite, but there was no food kept ready for him as he did not dine with us at the time, and through oversight we forgot to keep aside his meal. Doctor who had been to Lonavla came back early this morning to participate in the celebrations.

February 20, 1924

#### Scratching

The route is again changed, and it is arranged to proceed to Persia through Baghdad. However, only nine members are to go with Baba and the rest to remain at their respective places until Baba returns from Persia; of course, then to join him again. Consequently, it was mutually agreed between Baba and myself that I should remain home and join Baba again when he returns.

Again we began fasting from 9:30 for 24 hours under instructions. Passages had already been booked in the steamer according to the first plan, but after great trouble, Naval managed to cancel them without any loss. However, a considerable amount was spent in vain in foreign telegrams to Persia.

February 21, 1924

#### Behramji's Illness

Baba paid visits to Naval and Burjorji's house this morning accompanied by myself. In the evening, Behramji, who was not feeling well, began to get a high fever. The passages have been engaged via Bandar Bushire, the latest change of route. The fast was successfully terminated this evening 7 P.M., rather a couple of hours early.

February 22, 1924

#### To Persia at Last

We all got up early at 3 this morning. A last meeting was called of all the members and Baba took the sense of all as to whether to proceed to Iran or not, as although Behramji was slightly better, yet he was not completely free from fever. The majority was found to be in favour of abandoning the tour, but Baba decided to undertake the journey. Hence, all luggage, etc., was despatched to the docks by bullock cart, and Baba and *mandali* came by train. At 7:30 we all boarded the steamer

*Varela*. The following two hours passed away very quickly in exchanging farewells, setting the luggage, etc. At 9:30 the steamer weighed anchor after a touching separation with Baba, who embraced and kissed each of us.

#### Back to Lonavla

Since it was decided that I was not to accompany Baba, it was also settled that Adi should continue writing the diary. Hence, the details of this much-talked-of Persian tour in correct sequence is found in Adi's diary, which follows, and I think for the time being my diary comes to a close.

It was for about an hour that we lingered on the docks waving at the steamer our final adieu as it was still in sight. In the afternoon, I left Dadar and came to Lonavla this evening with Doctor. The following eight members have accompanied Baba to Persia: 1) Gustadji, 2) Behramji, 3) Adi, 4) Vajifdar, 5) Padri, 6) Masaji, 7) Nervous, 8) Aga Baidul.

## Persia and Travel in West India

February 22, 1924  
Good-Bye, India

WHEN the steamship *Varela* weighed anchor at about 9:30 A.M. on the 22nd of February 1924 and began to recede from the shores of Bombay, the ensuing half an hour was passed hailing back the touching send-off which was still being waved from the docks by some of the *mandali*.

Masaji began to cook for the party in the steamer. Some assorted vegetable dishes were made for Baba, while potatoes and bread made the general food for the rest of the party. In addition to Behramji being laid up with fever, Adi also went down with sea-sickness. He became very giddy and vomited frequently. At dinner time, however, Baba used to feed him—Adi—with his own hands. At Karachi, Pilamai came to see Baba and the *mandali* with flowers and all sorts of eatables and vegetables. There were a few more of Baba's admirers accompanying her. Throughout the voyage Adi and Behramji were all along laid up, vomiting and exhausted.

The number of Shiah and Sunni Muslims<sup>39</sup> on board the vessel provided a lively feature with the hot discussions and lectures which they held amongst themselves on the merits of their respective faith and belief, and which generally culminated in high spiritual personalities being freely abused. Particularly, a pair of brothers-in-law were the most humorous of the lot. One of them was a Sunni and the other a Shiah. The latter was greatly attracted towards Baba, after closely following Baba's mode of living and talking.

During some discussions, he directly asked Baba as to what religion he—Baba—followed. Baba smilingly answered him that all religions were equal to him. He walked with Baba for some

time. He was heard to repeat that if the system of master-disciple were current in his community, he would have taken Meher Baba as his master. Later on, the pair, however, became very aggressive in their discussions amongst themselves, and the climax was reached when, to the great amusement of the party, the brothers-in-law swore against each other, and avowed to leave each other in Baghdad from where they had arranged to start on pilgrimage together!

When the steamer began to wade through the Persian Gulf the sea was quite as calm as a pond, but nearing Bushire, a very cold wind began to blow, setting most of the passengers, including the whole of the party, chattering their teeth. Just at the end of the voyage, that is, while reaching the shores of Bandar Bushire in the steam launch, Baba and Vajifdar began vomiting, although they were quite free of sea-sickness throughout the trip.

#### Bandar Bushire

As soon as the party touched land, a tumultuous storm of foreign sounds and movements came to be experienced. The Persian coolies, with harnesslike contrivances on their backs as luggage carriers, showed that they could make up to some extent for the lack of mechanical lifts and trucks, by lifting on their backs pyramids of things, such as trunks, beddings and bundles heaped one upon the other. Slowly but surely, with bent backs and muttering "Ya Ali, Ya Ali," they made light work of the luggage. Some trouble arose about their charges, but Aga Baidul's typical Persian-speaking soon settled the difference, and besides the money, they were given the stale bread and onions remaining in excess with the party. The relish with which they helped themselves to the plain and raw eatables, and disappeared them into their stomachs, showed that whatever else they may be, they were also some prize eaters too!

As soon as the party took shelter in a house belonging to a Mr. Gulamhusain Lodi, the turn came for the mule owners to exhibit their business tactics. It was often that the party came to be addressed with "Sir, do you want a mule?" which is the commonest means of transport in this half-sleepy land.

By the time Nervous could bring in coal, the pump stove was lighted on which Baba warmed himself, as he felt very cold. Soon hearths were lighted in the room on account of the keen

cold winds blowing freely. The atmosphere was felt as very gloomy and uncomfortable.

As usual, Masaji began to cook food, while Nervous helped in getting necessary things from the bazaar. Water had to be purchased for drinking purposes, which cost about a rupee, and even at that, it was of a milky colour full of small worms with which one would hesitate to take even a bath in India. And one had to go to the sea for washing utensils, etc.

In spite of the pulled-down condition of the majority of the party, it was decided to go to Shiraz by motor, and a car was engaged for almost 400 rupees.

### The Sudden Return

The following day, the casualty list got an addition. Padri got a severe attack of fever and was laid down in one stroke. At the same time, a steamer was reported having arrived at the port on her way to Bombay from Baghdad.

As is usual with Baba, it did not take long for him to decide to return back to India! And after some discussions it was arranged that Baidul and Behramji should get down at Bandar Abbas and proceed from there into the interior for their respective places, while the rest return to Karachi. With a great hustle-bustle, the party once again boarded the steamer *Baroja*, a combined passenger and cargo boat, and beat an unexpectedly quick retreat from the Land of Fruit and Honey. The steamer was found to have limited accommodations for passengers, as it was full of cows, goats, donkeys, horses, and fowl, besides a huge lot of burly uncivilized Arabs.

The behaviour and general conduct of the latter were simply found to be quite out of keeping with modern life. Except for killing goats and fowls in dozens for their meals, and eating the same lustily, they didn't seem to find any other object to their existence. Some of them would sit for necessities just where they cooked their food! As to manners, one of them once kicked away Nervous' bedding when the latter kept it near theirs just for a few minutes while the deck was washed, and this kicker was at the same time on speaking terms with the party. In religious matters, they were no less rough. While an Arab was observing prayers, another came and began abusing forthwith the former for not facing the west properly; that same man was marked the following day observing prayers just as he tumbled

out of bed without making ablutions or even washing his mouth.

Nearing Bandar Abbas, Baba again broached the subject of going into Persia, and reproached the *mandali* for losing courage so lightly. Padri's fever having subsided a little, it was decided to get down at Bandar Abbas with Behramji and Aga Baidul.

#### Bandar Abbas

When the port was touched, preparations were made to take the small boats to shore, but Padri, who all along strongly favoured a return to India, again got intense fever. Once more the programme was cancelled, and Behramji and Baidul bid good-bye to Baba and the rest of the party and left the steamer on the shoreboats.

During the hour or two that the steamer had laid anchor, Padri once again began to revive, and just when there were only about 15 minutes left for the boat to move on, another attempt was made to land. The mail boat leaving for the shore was engaged, beddings, etc., packed and rolled in, when Padri relapsed back! At the nick of time, the beddings were respread on the deck and after all the party proceeded towards India.

At the suggestion of some Gurkhas in the ship, it was planned to go to Nepal after leaving Padri at Karachi for treatment under Nervous's nursing, and thus such a radical change in the touring programme came about.

#### Back into India

Touching the ports of Bahrein, Lingeh, Hanjam and Muscat, the *Baroja* came alongside the Karachi docks in the beginning of the second week of March.

Vajifdar went to leave Padri at Pilamai's place for treatment, with Nervous to look after him, and Masaji began to look out for a bullock cart to remove the luggage to the city railway station direct from the docks, as it has been settled to start forthwith towards Nepal.

A victoriawala offered to whisk away the party of four with all the luggage lock, stock and barrel, in one trip if he were paid three rupees for the distance. It was agreed upon, and the conveyance was packed like a tin of sardines with all the luggage and the four of them, and it started.

The zigzag course, and an occasional lurch that the cart was subjected to, with the bumper load it contained, testified to the



driver being soaked with wine. However, the precarious drive came to a safe end. The luggage was removed in the station or waiting room building, where the party put up for the night. Vajifdar soon joined them, and as it was nearing 10 P.M. all retired for the night, with the exception of one to keep watch over the things. The watch was continued throughout the night by turns. In the morning all took baths under the public tap in the courtyard after stretching blankets and sheets as a temporary cover.

The mountain load of luggage, containing for the most part provisions and other necessities that had originally been taken for the Persian tour, was a source of great trouble and embarrassment to the party, specially Vajifdar and Masaji. Because coolies were not to be engaged, the two had to bear the brunt of the thing. To add to the physical strain, there was the prospect of being troubled by the railway people. In fact a good beginning was made in this connection the first day, at the starting station Karachi, when a great row took place about the luggage and its passage into the platform.

#### To Nepal

Somehow, the party squeezed in the Quetta Mail, with the help of Nervous, who had come to the station to see them off, and started towards Nepal. While changing into the narrow-gauge railway at Hyderabad junction, Masaji lost his bedding, and with it, his temper, and this led to a serious quarrel between him and Gustadji. This was, however, quenched by Baba, (who at such moments looks unconcerned and reserved), and Masaji was given some sheets and a blanket or quilt from his—Baba's—own bedding.

Vajifdar had to bear the lion's share of the various physical and mental troubles of the haphazard travel, inasmuch as besides bearing the individual inconvenience and burden equally with all, he had to look after the general management about time, tickets, luggage and food. Baba's personal teasing and grumblings, which are profuse under inconvenient circumstances, added sauce to his soup of suffering!

On their way to Nepal, at Lucknow the party left the train and went in the city to get a pair of slippers for Baba. But none came to his liking, and the party returned to the station with eatables for the journey, which was then continued. Throughout the journey, Masaji cooked food and prepared tea in the train

on a stove, which was an additional troublesome feature of the tour. The progress was checked at Raxaul, the frontier station of Nepal, where the party was not allowed to proceed into Nepal proper. The party waited at Raxaul, while telegrams were despatched in vain to the authorities concerned, seeking permission to enter the "forbidden land." They were informed that had the party been there only a few days earlier, entry could have been granted on account of a big religious fair there, but now the pilgrims were, on the contrary, returning back, and hence none could be allowed entry unless on bona fide trade or other substantial reasons.

#### At Magar

Hence, the question of proceeding further was dropped, and the *mandali* came to Magar at Saint Kabir's tomb and stayed here for a couple of days. About 50 poor were fed here. All the surplus provision store that was carried throughout the journey, and voyage to and from Persia, was distributed amongst the needy. The luggage was also considerably reduced. Some big empty jars were given over to the local station master.

Kabir Saheb has two tombs! One is recognized by the Muslims as the true grave and the other is believed by the Hindus to be the real grave.

During the stay here, a quarrel was witnessed amongst some wandering pilgrims putting up near the tomb, when Baba intervened in their quarrel and gave them a sound lecture on how to behave when one lives the life of a pilgrim. From here the party came to Cawnpore. It took about a couple of hours' horse-carriage drive in this city before a suitable travellers' shelter was found for the *mandali's* stay. During the stay here, the party once went to the local bathing steps by tram cars and had baths there.

#### Baba Going Alone

After leaving Cawnpore, Baba instructed Vajifdar to return to Bombay, Masaji to Poona and Gustadji and Adi to Ahmednagar. The latter he asked to look for a suitable place for him to stay with the *mandali* somewhere in the vicinity of Sakori, preferably within a radius of five to six miles of Sakori, and got down alone at Itarsi. For some days Baba moved about alone

in the surrounding country, and also came across some Perfect Ones during these solitary ramblings.

Nearing the end of March once again Baba joined the *mandali*, and came back to Arangaon!

(end of excerpt from Adi's diary)

March 14, 1924

Some News

Although I had decided before to stop writing my diary, yet the postcard which I received today from Rustom tempts me to reproduce it here, which is as follows:

"I hope you know that Baba has changed the destination of their journey after reaching Bandar Bushire. They came back to Karachi and are going to go to Nepal. God knows what else is forthcoming."

Further, Doctor and I met Baily in the train, when the latter shed more light on this "wild-goose chase" (externally of course) to the effect that "Behramji and Baidul proceeded to Persia, while Baba came back to Karachi from Bushire on account of Padri's illness. Vajifdar went with Padri to leave him at Pilamai's place in Karachi with Nervous to look after him. The rest proceeded by train direct from the docks to an unknown destination, without even letting me (Baily) see them." Baily is to stay in Poona until further orders.

## Labour Yoga at Arangaon

March 20, 1924

"As You Were"

I RECEIVED a letter from Munshi today with the following news: "The latest news regarding Baba is that he has sent away all the members to their respective places from Itarsi. Mr. Vajifdar has returned to Bombay. Messrs. Adi and Gustadji have gone to Ahmednagar, Masaji to Poona, while Nervous and Padri are left at Karachi. The latter is reported to be very ill. Behramji and Aga Baidul have proceeded to Iran. Baba separated from the party at Itarsi, and nothing further is known about his movements. He has, however, instructed Mr. Gustadji to look for a suitable place for him somewhere in the vicinity of Sakori, say at a radius of five to six miles from it."

March 26, 1924

A Call from Both Sides

I was writing the diary in fair from short notes in my friend Mr. Abdul Tayeb's shop, when at about 12, the telegraph peon appeared with a telegram addressed to me. I almost half guessed the contents, and upon opening, it was as follows:

Come to Arangaon immediately.

Merwan

Accordingly, I began to prepare for leaving by the 2:30 P.M. passenger train. Just after a few minutes, I began to have fever and within half an hour, it was so much intensified that I was forced to lie down! It is a very strange coincidence, that half an hour ago I was as fit as a fiddle, and after a few minutes,

after I got the blessed telegram, I was down with a vengeance! I may add here that I was not at all shocked, or felt any considerable excitement in receiving the wire. In fact, I was expecting a call any time, knowing Baba to be back in India. Hence, this sudden change is very remarkable. Of course, I took necessary precautions in getting a fever mixture from my friend Dr. Biwalkar, and after wrapping myself in shawls I tried to walk to the station, which is only a few hundred yards from my house. But my limbs began to non-cooperate, so I had to get a carriage. Against remonstrations from my family members I came to the station and started by the same train. The fever subsided a little, and without any considerable difficulties I safely reached Arangaon at about 10:30 in the night.

March 27, 1924

### The Third Term

After the formal exchange of news, Baba informed me that as he was hereafter going to settle at one place again—and that, most probably at Arangaon—I could also join him immediately. Of course, some occupation will be arranged for me later on at Ahmednagar to maintain my family. I agreed to do so, but as the marriages of my sisters-in-law are arranged to take place on the 1st, Baba allowed me to return to Lonavla and stay there up to the 7th of April. Accordingly, I left Arangaon walking towards the Ahmednagar station to catch the train for Poona.

April 8, 1924

### Labour Yoga

After attending the marriage ceremonies, I returned back to Arangaon and duly joined the *mandali*. The labour yoga is in full swing, i.e., the *mandali* are subjected to very hard work in which the *ghamella* (iron pan) used by labourers plays the prominent part.<sup>40</sup> All have to get up at 5 A.M. From 6 to 7, each member has to recite prayers separately according to his respective faith. Then between 7 to 8 we get our breakfast consisting of a glass of weak tea without milk, and a few almond seeds—the latter are only given to those who are very weak and indisposed. We have to bring water from the well to the post office and do other necessary work about our own cooking, etc. From 8 to 11, the labour begins in all seriousness. The work generally consists of helping the mason in the erection of a new

room for Baba near the mess quarters, and other repairs to the grounds and buildings, including drawing water out of the well, preparing and providing mud and lime to the mason, shifting stones in a cart and otherwise, working with the limestone mill, digging and carrying earth and "playing" amateur masons, carpenters, coolies, and what not wherever needed. At 11, we are freed to take baths and meals consisting of *dal*-rice and to take rest and wash clothes when necessary. From 3 P.M. to 4:30 P.M. all get together and jointly recite or sing the special song of the names of God composed by Baba:

Khuda, Paramatman, Allah,  
Ahurmazda, Ram, Yazdan, Hu,

preceded and ended by Baba's poem:

It is the splendour of God that exists in the four elements  
(of nature) earth, air, water and fire.

You are the Master and the Lord of the two worlds—  
corporeal and spiritual. In every atom is concealed the  
light of your existence.

The lamp keeps burning itself in the love of God although  
the death of the moth lies in the eye (flame) of the lamp.

The rose blossoms every morning in the remembrance of  
God while the nightingale deeply in love, hazards its  
lifetime in pursuit of the rose in the garden.

Love exists in everything and in every being. Praise be to  
the Love that pervades every home and hearth.

Religion and society know not what pure love is in which  
the Beloved's image is ever fully present in  
contemplation.

Love is beyond (the achievement) of riches, power, intelli-  
gence and (normal) consciousness. A king and a beggar  
are of equal status in the realm of love.

Love making is not easy which every man can venture. It is  
a commodity which is difficult to purchase in the market  
of love.

Poverty, helplessness, ruination and oppression—every  
such hardship falls to the lot of the true lover.

Servitude, slavery coupled with the onslaught of infamy—  
millions of such trials waylay the difficult path or stages  
(of love).

Holy Zoroaster! How much hardship did he bear for the world? The end of this Saviour came at the stroke of an enemy's sword.

Nailed to the cross, his hands and feet, the body of Christ was taken on the cross. Mansoor gave up his body being hung on the gallows.

The foundation of Mazdiyasni (Zoroastrian) religion was laid on love. The knot that was introduced by Zoroaster in the religious thread (that the Parsis wear round the waist) represents the bond of love.

The existence of Truth was proved by Zoroaster through love. May truth prevail in thought, word and deed of all men.

O Zoroaster the Saviour, bestow love on your adherents is my prayer in the Kingdom of Ahuramazd (God).

From 4:30 again the labour begins up to 6 P.M. Then once more, we have to bring water, etc., for our own use and then take supper which consists of wheat bread and potatoes prepared by Masaji. In the evening, an occasional lecture or song from Baba terminates the busy day and at about 10 we go to bed.

April 13, 1924

*Ram-Navmi*

A small canopy is temporarily arranged in front of Baba's newly built room, in connection with the *Ram-Navmi* (Hindu festival when snakes are offered milk) celebrations today. Many visitors from Poona and Ahmednagar have arrived for the occasion including Baily, Barsoap, Padri, Masaji, Khan Saheb, Kaikhushru, and Bhikolya with his singing party. The *mandali* are observing a fast since yesterday. The singing took place for a couple of hours in the canopy, followed by a short story by Bhikolya of Ram and ended with the formal ceremonies of his birth. The usual *dal*-rice was served to the guests as well as to ourselves to break our fast with. After that, we were busy for some hours cleaning the basins and utensils, storing water and other necessary work in connection with the distribution of cooked food to the poor which is to be held tomorrow. In the evening, we were also entertained with a grand lecture by Baba, the sum total of which is: one should think twice before joining a Perfect Master, and once one attaches to him, one should completely surrender oneself to him for good. Baba also passed some impor-

tant stray remarks to the effect that "once I stay here, the atmosphere of this place will be greatly heightened both spiritually and materially, and I have a great mission to perform in my life in connection with the whole world, the outburst of which will take place in the near future."

At seven in the evening, the local storyteller with his two sons to help him with drums and harmonium arrived. After the formal ceremonies, the religious story began. An appropriate subject, contact with a spiritual master, was ably expressed and explained in a clear voice, with dramatic acting and with musical accompaniment which provided an interesting entertainment that terminated at a late hour.

April 14, 1924

#### A Great Treat

Baba appeared at the post office shouting to the *mandali* that "last night I had not a moment's sleep for a particular reason." Then calling all the *mandali* together, he said: "Yesterday, Kondiram asked train fare from me to see his mother who is sick at Poona, which I gave him. But now I am making a condition that hereafter I shall never give you any money or make anyone give any of you the same for any reason. If one's relative is dangerously ill, he can go on foot. But if he does otherwise at anybody's expense, he is no longer mine but will be considered to have given me up. Therefore, anybody who wishes to free himself at this moment may say so, and I will furnish his return journey expenses to his place." But all agreed to stick to him and agreed to the condition.

As prearranged, people began to get together to partake of the feast from 11 o'clock which lasted till late in the evening, about a thousand souls having enjoyed the *dal*-rice and potatoes prepared by Chowdhary, who was, of course, helped thoroughly by all of us. A meeting was called of the *mandali* as well as the guests to consider a subject brought forward by Rustom in the afternoon. The chairmanship was given to Mr. A.H. Jaffer, or rather "bucketmanship," as a bucket was provided for the presiding authority, while the rest of us took our seats on the ground as usual. The proposal was that a distinctive sign should be displayed by all those who were devoted to Baba, Maharaj and Babajan. Some suggested a shirt, the other a certain head gear, and so on.

Doctor found some fault with the "bucketship," and Abdulla



had to vacate it, when Doctor was selected to preside, and was given a *ghamella* to sit upon. The discussion was once again resumed on the proposal, but many were found against its being adopted. Baba also disfavoured the same and said, "Ours is not a society. Any mark of distinction will take away freedom and put the mind under a restriction." Hence the idea was dropped and the meeting was dissolved, but only after the two chairmen had, under their short-lived authority, made each other sit down and get up thrice upon some slight mistake committed by them respectively in the meeting.

In the evening, Baba, Padri and some others went for a spin in a car to Ahmednagar, where Padri was left to have his palms treated. The "work" has already begun to play havoc with our hands and feet generally, and Padri's in particular, who has got his palms badly bruised, battered and inflamed.

The day ended with an interesting display of a local game by the local villagers.

April 15, 1924

#### Baptism of the Zhopdi

Today being arranged a holiday, we got up at 6:30 instead of 5 A.M. Another meeting was held in the afternoon to determine a suitable name for Baba's new room. Scores of them were suggested but *zhopdi*, or hut, (hinted by Baba) was finally approved by all, and accordingly, it is decided to call the new room as such. The second proposal was about the names to be given to the three animals. Rustom's mother-in-law's offer of a white horse has been accepted by Baba, and it has been further decided to get also a white dog and a white ox. So after some discussion, Sufi, Sant and Sadhu were finally approved for the horse, ox and dog respectively and the meeting dispersed.

#### The *Muktas*

In the afternoon, all the guests departed for their respective places. Baba recited a few poems with Adi playing the *sitar* in the evening, when he also gave an explanation as follows:

"There are two kinds of *mukta*, i.e., freedom: one is called *videh mukta* and the other *janma mukta*. King Janek was *videh mukta*, which means that he did not possess external feelings. He was not affected with any outward attractions regarding his body. Janek placed his one foot in burning fire, and the other

in icy cold water at the same time, and did not feel their effect in the least. Sai Baba was also *videh mukta* (it is said that Sai Baba often used to put his arm in a boiling dish to serve as a big spoon.) The *janma mukta* means one who is liberated from the time of birth, as Ram, Krishna, Christ, etc. *Videh mukta* has one disadvantage. He cannot draw upon himself anybody's calamity. Supposing you have a severe headache: now to relieve you from it, a Perfect Master must suffer the same amount of suffering. Since a *videh mukta* has no feelings of body, how can he free the opposite party from headache?" Adi here asked Baba, "Then how can he be called a Perfect Master who cannot do good to others?" Baba said, "He can draw or share others' calamities but in small proportions." (Mentally, I suppose.)

The point of explanation here drifted to two kinds of realized beings, and Baba continued: "The game of *atya-patya* was played by the ancient sages who invented the same on spiritual lines. The middle path extending vertically from end to end is that of Illusion, and the rest of the horizontal paths or barriers are those of lust, anger and greed. Now one kind of realized being crossing all barriers of lust, anger and greed, safely reaches the other side, i.e., God, and remains there drowned; that is, he cannot help others to reach the goal achieved by himself. The other kind of realized being is he who, crossing all the lines, reaches the other side (God), and again returns to the starting point, once again crossing the lines—this time for others. So he who returns—Perfect Master—can alone take with him many more to the other end (God) in the twinkling of an eye. Thus, a Perfect Master after getting freed from Illusion has again to involve himself in Illusion to free others from it. As Swami Vivekananda says, 'The real teacher is he who brings himself down to the level of the student.' For example," Baba continued, "some pearls are lying in a heap of filth, Now in order to take them out, one has to thrust his hands in it. Likewise a Perfect Master has to involve himself in the filth of Illusion at times."

April 16, 1924

#### A Hot Day

Today our routine began again, and with it the hard labour. The work centered round the small structure used as bathrooms while the troops were at Arangaon. Myself and Padri were unfortunately caught napping by Baba while exchanging some remarks idly. Baba flung the stick he had in his hand towards

Padri who narrowly missed the "blessing." Both of us were severely reproached and suspended from work for some time. As Padri is to be taken to the hospital again for an operation on his palm, Rustom asked Baba also to accompany them for a spin. Upon this, Adi offered to drive them, and this led to a heated discussion between him and Baba, which was ended after Baba returned from Ahmednagar, where Adi repented for his temper. Padri, who had gotten a cut on his palm, was left at 'Nagar for further treatment.

April 17, 1924

### Another Hot Day

In the absence of our work manager Padri, I got the duty of getting all up at 5 in the morning, which I did, and the usual process began. Because of some miscarriage of Baba's instructions, he got very angry with Rustom. Nervous was sent to Rustom at Ahmednagar to fall at his feet and say, "I salute you on behalf of Baba. Please send the lime cart." According to Nervous, Rustom was much abashed and asked him to "please salute Baba on my behalf 20 times and say it is not due to my negligence that the lime cart did not turn up in time. Baba had ordered me not to hire a cart, and our own cart could not be secured in time."

In the meantime, again trouble arose between Baba and Adi. Then came Masaji's turn; Baba took him right and left for his breaking sighs and general carelessness in cooking more than is actually required, etc., etc. At last Masaji gave way. He burst out that if allowed, he would clear away from Arangaon. Baba said, "Yes, if you feel my words, you'd better not stay with me." Masaji replied, "I don't mind your taunts. But how am I to know whether you really mean me wasting the foodstuffs or not?" "It is all right; stay with me," said Baba. Just then the leader of the neighbouring village, Kedgaon, unfortunately or fortunately, appeared on the scene to seek Baba's permission for a song fest. He was turned away amidst a shower of abuse. Later on, the atmosphere was calmed down. The Kedgaon leader was also allowed to come for a song fest. Rustom, Padri and Gulmai came from 'Nagar in the car while we were reciting the usual prayers in the afternoon. Gulmai, as of late, brought Baba's meals, some of which was taken by Baba and the rest distributed to others, specially to Mr. Bharucha to break the fast he was made to observe since yesterday. Just as we were going to sleep,

the Kedgaon singing party arrived, and we were all asked to go to the Zhopdi. The singing lasted up till 12 o'clock. Baba has extended our sleeping hours up to 7 A.M. tomorrow and all are exempted from morning prayers, while I am also exempted from the labour work because of the fever that has taken a sound grip on me since this evening.

April 18, 1924

Down

All the members as prearranged got up today at seven this morning, and excepting myself, took to the work. The bathroom repairs have all been completed, and the work of paving the front space facing the Zhopdi with Shahabad stones has been started. Again Baba gets angry with Rustom for the latter's breach of Baba's instructions by sending two cartloads of Shahabad stones in hired carts. He comes to the post office greatly disturbed saying he would leave the place and *mandali* members completely. The fever was by now very acute with me. Upon finding me in this condition, Baba applied cologne water on my head and scolded the others with neglect and carelessness, saying, "All of you still possess too much of selfishness. When this vanishes, then alone disinterestedness will proceed from you. Give up self idea and always be for others." I think the *mandali* could do nothing more for me under the circumstances and order except giving me tea, etc., which Gustadji did. By this time, Rustom and Mother (Gulmai) arrived. Baba asked the former either to follow his instructions or let him alone. Under the pretext of Rustom's mistake and the *mandali's* carelessness in looking after my illness, he said he was going to Happy Valley (about 18 miles from Arangaon) for a change, taking only Nervous with him.

Baba was really going to put his threat into action when I said I cannot stay here in this condition without proper treatment in his absence. Of course, I said I wouldn't mind non-medical attendance if Baba were nearby, but in his absence, I was not prepared to lie with fever under the present circumstances. Then Baba offered me two alternatives, either to stay in a hospital or at Rustom's place at 'Nagar. I accepted the latter, but again declared my preference for home. At this, Baba said he would put off his going away if two of us undertook the managership of "Home" and "Labour" departments with responsibility, and looked after the respective duties without in-

volving Baba in them. Padri accepted the "Labour" manager-ship, but none came forward for the other department. There-upon, Rustom offered to take the post, and Baba finally abandoned his visit to Happy Valley. Subsequently, on Gustadji's undertaking to look after the domestic affairs, Baba freed Rustom of his responsibility and the matter ended. In the evening, during a discourse, Baba remarked, "*Maya* (Illusion) always draws a person to itself, thus hinders him on his way to Truth. The reason of its so doing is that it understands that once a person reaches the Truth, it will have to accept slavery. *Maya* rolls beneath the feet of a Realized One. *Maya* conquers man in ignorance, while man rules over *Maya* in Knowledge."

April 19, 1924

#### A Ceremony

The Hindu *mandali* are observing today Hanuman's birthday. Hence, all are exempted from the daily morning prayers and instead join the Hindu *mandali* at 6 A.M. in their singing. Just as the function came to an end, Rustom and Mother Gulmai arrive with the worship articles and sweets. Baba is annoyed to find them so very late, and asks Rustom, "Why have you come at all when you had to do so at this time?" Rustom apologizes and says they were delayed because of a puncture to the car tyre on the way. Nevertheless the sweets are in time and are duly distributed by Baba to all.

The labour work on the pavement was carried on for an extra hour more, i.e., up to 7 P.M., although I had been given light work because of yesterday's fever. After supper, however, the trouble begins. All are called to the Zhopdi in Baba's presence, and he asks Masaji if there is any surplus of cooked food. The reply is yes. Chowdhary is then asked the same question; he says, "At times there remains some surplus, but it is not wasted, as I and Kondiram anyhow finish it up even if others refuse to take more." Upon hearing this Baba severely takes to task the non-Hindu *mandali* in general, and Masaji in particular, as to why we waste a certain amount of food daily, contrary to the Hindus. In reply to Baba's question, Masaji defends himself on the plea of having cooked a lesser quantity than yesterday, and others declare their inability to account for their irregularity; but Gustadji replied very impolitely. This adds fuel to the fire of wrath! Baba says that from tomorrow we are to fall at the feet of every Hindu member. Then suddenly he asks Barsoap,

Will you fall at their feet?" Not getting a prompt reply, Baba jumps at him and gives him a ringing slap. Somehow Nervous comes across Baba and he too gets a few good slaps and pushed aside. Then comes Khairoo the mason's turn. Baba rushes towards him, but he gets off only with a lecture on hard work. Then he is asked by Baba whether he would work extra hours tonight. Khairoo replies, "Yes, if I am ordered, but I am deadly exhausted." Upon this, Baba allows him to go and sleep.

Then for an hour all were made to dig holes two feet deep around the proposed pavement for the *chambelli* (plants with small white fragrant flowers) that have been ordered for the purpose. All this time, an unpleasant duel of words was being exchanged between Gustadji and Baba. The former maintained that Baba did not keep his promise of not involving him in a scene with the rest of the *mandali*; while Baba retorted, "Had I not kept my word, I would never bear your harsh and taunting words with patience. It is because of that word that I overlook your disgraceful attitude towards me. Had there been any other of the *mandali* in your place today, I would have stifled him to death."

Without any further confusion we go to sleep; but Khairoo seems to have taken to his heels in terror, as there is no sign of him or his bedding!

April 20, 1924

#### The Coming "Man"

As usual Rustom and Mother came with Baba's food, but rather late at 4 P.M. All are called to hear the criticism appearing in a recent journal of The Iranian Association on Maharaj's Biography in Gujarati, as well as upon an article given in the same paper by Mr. Desai, giving as his *opinion* that the coming world teacher is Meher Baba. The same is read to the *mandali* by Rustom under Baba's instruction. After that, we take to the labour work as usual.

The pavement work in front of Baba's Zhopdi was estimated to be finished in one week; but through the collective efforts of the *mandali*, with heart and soul, and head and hands, it is completed by this evening, i.e., within two days. This daily labour to which we are subjected is exacted from us to the letter. Neither the scorching sun of April nor the screeching winds and cold—peculiar to Arangaon—are taken into account. During the appointed hours, all have to work at a stretch almost to the

point of gasping for breath, with a giddy head and tottering legs. After supper, Baba asks us if we are willing to do some more work; all agree, and soon take to some digging work for about an hour.

April 21, 1924

### Sour Grapes

During the work hours in the morning, Baba comes and cheers us with the prospect of a fruit treat as Navroz is expected here in the afternoon. This topic is often referred to by Baba, when at last, Navroz arrives with his family. Somebody is hurried forward to bring the supposed fruit basket from the carriage, but Navroz declares there is no fruit brought. The way Baba took him to task for causing us disappointment may well be imagined.

In the evening hours, necessary manure, etc., is collected and the *chambelli* plants are planted, along the two sides of the pavement. In the evening Rustom and Mother once again come with sweets and the news of a son having been born to Rustom. So after all, we get a treat.

April 22, 1924

### A Visitor

From today Adi and Jal are entrusted with the duty of watering the new plants daily from 7:30 to 10:00 in the morning and 4:30 to 7:00 in the evening, and exempted from all other labour work. In the afternoon, a man appears at the well, and after drinking water, declares himself to be hungry. We take him before Baba who, noticing his rickety figure, with eyes absorbed in deep meditation, declares him to be a *mast* (spiritually intoxicated) and a man with a very good mental state. Food and sweets are given to him under Baba's orders. When asked as to his native place and the reason for his present state, he cannot give any audible answer, only nodding his head. Baba also gives him a shirt and pants and niakes him put it on in place of a piece of rag on his loins.

Gustadji has of late begun to work very hard. Even when the *mandali* are having a rest, he is seen watering the cement joints of the new pavement in the scorching sun. Navroz has also joined the labour party and is busy repairing the pump on the well, etc.

In the evening, a weak old woman with her two sons comes

begging for food. She is also taken in Baba's presence. Seeing her pitiable plight, Baba orders Chowdhary to cook fresh *dal*-rice. In the meantime, the elder boy who has a small musical instrument is asked by Baba to sing. He recites the instructive and interesting life of Shri Gopichand and Jalandarnath Maharaj in couplets while playing his musical instrument. After half an hour, they are served with hot food. Some clothes are also given to the boys and their mother by Baba and they depart.

Of late, there is a grudge between Barsoap and Gustadji because of the former's request for a prayer-carpet and the latter's refusal. Hence, when all of us were sitting around Baba in the evening, he asks Barsoap whether his anger for Gustadji has subsided. Barsoap replying in the negative, Baba calls him near and explains, "No matter however harshly the opposite party treats you, you should be calm. Never mind how much you are found fault with, blamed or spoken piercing words, you should bear all with patience. This is real bravery and courage. Man can make a whole army yield to him, but he cannot overcome his own wrath." Referring to Christ's humility, Baba continued, "There are three things, as explained by Ramakrishna Paramhansa, that keep a person away from God. They are lust, greed and anger. The first two, lust and greed, may be overcome, but the control of the temper is the hardest of all. If you overcome these three enemies, you are a saint. Who is a saint? No higher than a person who controls lust, greed and anger." As a drastic measure to overcome this difficult object, Baba lays down the following two rules:

- 1) Every member of the company should salute and touch with hands the other's feet and say, "You are my brother," every morning.

- 2) Anyone who speaks with anger or taunt to any other member at any time within 24 hours, the speaker to report himself to Baba at once, when Baba will fall at his feet and salute him.

Barsoap says the first rule is against his religion. Baba explains that the rule means touching another's feet with hands only, there was no question of bowing his head or keeping his head on the feet. But Barsoap insists that even touching the feet is against his religion; hence, Baba issues special instructions for Barsoap to go to every member and shake hands instead. Then Baba asks me if I have any religious objection. I say I don't consider the rules to be infringing the religion and I accept



the first. But I will not report and get saluted by Baba but prefer going home. Padri and Nervous also decline to accept the second condition, but upon persuasion, they give in and the meeting is dispersed. In a subsequent private interview, Baba was good enough to exempt me from the second condition, and the question of my leaving Arangaon is dropped.

April 23, 1924

### Hoisting of the Flag

Today the work is chiefly composed of making a compound or putting a fence all round Baba's Zhopdi and the pavement to protect the plants. Some time ago it was decided that a flag be attached near Baba's Zhopdi as is the rule with such places. But the question of colour was disputed by all. The Hindus preferred a red flag, while I said it would be too Hindu-like, it should be green. The same argument was pushed forward by Hindus that green was a typically Muslim emblem. The Zoroastrian *mandali* disliked both. Hence a compromising solution was evolved by Baba that the flag be formed of seven colours. Accordingly, such a flag was prepared by Mrs. Navrozji. After the labour hours, the flag is hoisted near Baba's Zhopdi in the evening.

In the night, after supper, when all were sitting round Baba, I asked him what were the stars. Baba replying said, "These are also circles like the planets, but many of the latter are inhabited by people. They resemble this earth in culture, science, and in every material advancement; but spiritually our circle, i.e., the earth, is the most advanced. Nonetheless even on other planets there are spiritual masters in the flesh, but most of the Perfect Masters are born on this earth. These circles appear to be at great distances from each other but they are really very close to one another. After Realization, Man beholds all of them (millions over millions) like small bubbles issuing forth from his own Self, i.e., he experiences himself bigger than every thing and being. He finds he is the main source—the Maker of All. The material planes are different but the spiritual plane is one throughout."

April 24, 1924

### Nervous Non-Cooperates

The new rules framed day before yesterday about saluting each other and reporting the loss of temper to Baba, are declared

to come in force from today. Baba salutes Padri for the latter having overlooked Baba's instructions while seated for dinner. By way of teasing, Baba salutes Nervous. The latter takes it very seriously, and amidst tears, he takes his coat and is about to leave Arangaon. Baba explains to him that he saluted him of his own accord and not for any fault, so he, Nervous, should not interfere in his actions. But it has no effect on Nervous who, although still willing to obey all Baba's orders, save that of staying with him, persists in his desire to go away. A lengthy discussion ensued with Nervous crying all the while. Hence, Baba finally cancels the second rule of reporting and saluting for Nervous; but this again brings no change and Nervous is bent upon going away. Finally, Baba allows Nervous to go and offers him money for train fare, but he refuses to take it. Then Baba asks him how will he go without money. Nervous shows the golden buttons that he has on his shirt. Baba snatches away the buttons, and asks Nervous to go away on three conditions, i.e., neither to beg, borrow or steal. Nervous accepts the conditions and is still ready to go. Thereupon Baba says that he will follow him wherever he goes. Nervous is off at last, but Baba follows him. After some time, we find both returning back and Nervous is after all saved.

April 25, 1924

#### A Peep in the Future

The work today is centered round the foundations for the extension of the verandah at the back of Baba's Zhopdi and a small bathroom thereon. The horse Sufi arrives today. As declared, it is an excellent and graceful animal of snow-white colour. A portion of the mess quarters is turned into a stable for this beautiful but troublesome guest.

In the evening, when I am reading to Baba an Urdu book, *The Story of Mansoor*, Baba suddenly interrupts me and says, "I will live in this world for 54 years more, after which I will undergo a tragic death. The Parsis will bring about my end in a very bad way." Drifting on to the topic of a true lover of God, Baba continued: "Just as a thirsty man in the desert under the hot sun values water more than a heap of pearls and diamonds placed before him, so also a true lover of God wants Him alone and considers every other object as a trifle before God. The real Lover desires no name, fame, or money but his Beloved. He who does not possess such an attribute is a man full of self-interest."

After supper, when all are sitting around Baba, he asks each of us to sing a song. A few do so, and then comes Mr. Bharucha's turn. Mr. Bharucha asks Baba to be excused, saying he never visited a theatre to know how to sing. Baba gets very angry and orders Bharucha to quit the room, saying he possesses such a low opinion for the *mandali* to have compared it with dramatic performers. The rest of us all dispersed too. However, all are reassembled after some time and the singing is continued up to 9 P.M., when Baba, who is on fast today, takes some watermelon juice, milk and rose syrup prepared by Gustadji from the watermelon and rose syrup specially brought for this purpose in the afternoon by Nervous.

April 26, 1924

#### Animal Food

In the recess time, after the usual labour work in the afternoon, Baba gave us the following explanation:

"There are many disadvantages of flesh eating. The chief one is that it increases passion. There is very little intelligence in the stone, so little as to be nil. The manifestation of intelligence has its beginning from vegetable life. It increases in animals, and reaches its climax in the human form. Now passion increases with intelligence; the more intelligence, the more passion, and likewise, the less intelligence, the less passion. Therefore if we take animal food, the element of passion increases in us; while it neither increases nor decreases when we take vegetable food. Stone has almost no intelligence, but almost all knowledge, while a human being has almost no knowledge but almost all intelligence. The combination of these two elements gives birth to a Perfect One. The Perfect One is he who has all knowledge and all intelligence. Perfection comes only in the form of man. Now every man has a certain amount of knowledge and the rest intelligence. If he has one-fourth knowledge and three-fourths intelligence . . ." Somehow further notes could not be taken and unhappily Baba's full explanation cannot be given here.

April 27, 1924

#### "Sufi" Becomes "Shaitan"

Early this morning, when we were just going to sit for our usual prayers, Masaji raises the cry that the horse Sufi has stampeded. All are asked to chase after the animal. It was after a great deal of maneuvering for an hour on foot and cycle, through

fields and stream beds, that at last we succeeded in collaring Sufi and bringing him back to his stable. Although the chase caused many to gasp and fight for breath and some to measure the ground, yet it provided a very refreshing change from the monotonous prayers which were cancelled. Hence we take to the usual labours.

There were many visitors today, including the Satha brothers. The latter gentlemen are very keen followers of Gandhi and staunch supporters of the Swaraj movement. During discourse with them Baba asked them to denounce the idea of Swaraj and take up the idea of Self-Realization, which is the Real Swaraj, i.e., one's own rule.

In the afternoon, the atmosphere began to get "hot." Rustom, who was asked to come at a certain time, missed it, and appeared rather late. Then Masaji, too, is found fault with by Baba, who declares that he is disappointed with the *mandali* and talks about going away. In the evening, Rustom comes again in his car with a trainer, apparently with the object of "teaching manners" to Sufi, who is so very turbulent. The trainer takes a trial mount on the horse without his or Rustom's asking Baba's permission for doing so. As soon as Baba comes to know this, then the sparks seen in the afternoon burst into a bonfire. Rustom and the poor new trainer are taken right and left by Baba for taking a mount on the animal without his permission, once it had been dedicated to him. At first, Baba asked Rustom to take away the horse, but finding Rustom much grieved for the mistake he had made, Baba decided once again to keep the animal.

April 28, 1924

Nothing unusual happened today, and the day passed away in routine. To some persons who had come for Baba's blessing Baba gave a lecture mainly centered round "the boundless treasure found in Divinity, and the worthlessness of submitting oneself to a Perfect One for worldly benefits."

Mother Gulmai went to Poona by 10 P.M. train. We all were specially kept out of bed by Baba to wave her good-bye.

April 29, 1924

Director of Agriculture

We get visitors today. Mr. Ardeshir Irani with his friends and Mr. Faram from Karachi arrive in the afternoon; as a result

we get a good treat of fruits brought by them. Baba discussed with Mr. Ardeshir a plan of cultivating a fruit garden on Persian lines to provide occupation to the *mandali* under his direction. Thus an addition in the shape of Mr. Ardeshir was made to the whole-time-staying *mandali* today. Further it has been decided to begin the preliminary layout of grounds for this blessed garden immediately under the supervision of the newly appointed "Director of Agriculture."

April 30, 1924

#### Uninvited Guests

An unpleasant affair took place today. Nevertheless it provided a practical demonstration of Baba's control over his temper. Mr. Khursrov of Cursetji's family, along with a friend, came to see Baba from Ahmednagar. They alighted from their car, and without asking permission, walked straight with boots on to where Baba was having a talk with Mother Gulmai and others. Barsoap tried to make them take off their boots, but he was brushed aside, and thus they approached Baba without observing the commonplace decency and manners of strangers. To crown their vulgarity, they began to ask impertinent questions outright. To one of their questions as to what yoga he followed, Baba replied, "Labour yoga." Then they asked, "Why do you keep long locks of hair and remain in a *naked* state?" Baba calmly showed them the short pants he had under his long robe and put him the counterquestion, pointing to his English suit and head gear, "Why do you wear a felt hat? Did Zoroaster the Prophet ever dress like this?" By this time the other party was so much excited that he promptly replied, "Zoroaster did wear English dress," and in spite of actually seeing Baba's pants, persisted in taking Baba to be completely naked. Still Baba tried to meet their wild arguments from one point to another very calmly; thus being foiled of their own arguments, they began to abuse while taking their departure, and use many vulgar expressions such as, "You are an imposter, you direct others in wrong channels," etc. At this, however, Adi could no longer contain himself and asked them to "get out at once." At this Baba checked Adi and compelled him to apologize to the intruders for his words! No doubt they were greatly abashed at Adi's apology. Baba's control over his temper is all the more remarkable that since morning he took nothing but a little tea without milk!

May 1, 1924

Today we are allowed a well-deserved holiday, because the new "Director of Agriculture," with his rough-tough methods of primitive Iran, has simply worked havoc with most of us. And so far only the preliminary layout of his would-be fruit garden is going on! I wonder how many of us would be left alive to taste the fruits of this garden if ever it comes into existence. Nevertheless, we get a good treat of fruits today from the watermelons and grapes brought by Rustom and Syedsahib respectively.

May 3, 1924

Of late some children are coming daily from Arangaon for Baba's blessing. Today their number reached 30, and they have roughly been formed into a group. One of them called Vakdya has been appointed their leader. This Vakdya is really *vakdya* (crooked) from every angle of his physical body, he being a cripple. Nevertheless, he seems to wield a good influence among the younger boys in keeping them in order. Arjun has been given the duty of teaching these kiddies spiritual songs every day for a few hours. Almost every day some sort of fruit or sweets comes to Arangaon which makes a good *prasad* (an edible gift bearing the Master's love) for these young visitors, and makes them eagerly repeat their visits regularly and promptly. Today, the *prasad* was very special, as it came in the shape of two huge baskets of fruit brought by Munshi from Bombay. After Baba had some personal conversation with Munshi, all the *mandali* gathered round, and the question of Barsoap's refusal to pay respects to the *mandali* on religious grounds is discussed. Munshi's opinion is taken as to whether Baba's order to show respect to each other violates any religious rules of Islam. Of course, he too finds no fault with the order in question and Barsoap gets greatly abashed.

Baba received a letter from Baily saying that a friend of his said that he saw Baba in Bombay. Baily complains as to why he was overlooked if Baba had really been to Bombay; but adds that it may be a miracle as he is confident that Baba would have seen him or informed him if he had really come to Bombay. Whatever the facts may be, Baba is among us and has not been to any out-station, far short of going to Bombay.

In the afternoon Baba went to Happy Valley for a spin with Munshi, Syedsahib, Rustom and Adi. There in the beautiful and historic surroundings, Baba was in a very serene mood. Using Adi's version of the same I will reproduce here Baba's own words:

"At this time (after taking tea there) Baba appears as if deeply absorbed in some high thoughts. He breaks into ecstasy by saying, 'If you realize but a minute particle of that Knowledge, you will derive inexpressible bliss. Every external object will impart you happiness. Every substance will tell you its story in Knowledge. This whole universe which now appears as misery will shine forth as heaven. The spiritual Master moulds only one Chargeman like himself. To him he entrusts his everything. Of him he makes his sole heir. The Chargeman distributes this inherited treasure among his Circle—a few chosen ones, whose number counts 12. According to their respective abilities, the Treasure, namely Realization (which is the same to all) and Power (which depends upon the rank in the Circle, and also upon personal endurance before Realization), are distributed at the preappointed time, meaning when the Master of the Chargeman expires. It may be that the Master keeps up his external body while internally he expires; in some cases, the Master's external body fails before his internal expiration takes place. Distribution means the entrusting of the Chargeman's internal duty to the Circle members, so hence the Chargeman gets free. He gets freed to enjoy that unfathomable Bliss which hitherto had been blocked for him because of the duty to make his Circle brothers realize the Truth. The state of the Circle members differs from that of the Chargeman in this respect: members can enjoy that Bliss whenever they like, and can also direct their attention towards the Chargeman's duty at will, while the Chargeman after experiencing Realization for a certain period, say for a few days or hours, is returned to the lower plane, thereby concealing the above Experience, so that instead of being drowned in Divinity he can perform his Circle's duty. During the performance of the duty, he has to undergo much mental torture and has to pass through several crises.' "

Besides this, Adi says, Baba gave many more explanations which he does not remember. Baba and party returned at about 8 P.M. Munshi and Syedsahib left for Bombay and Nasik, respectively, while I accompanied them to the station on my way to Lonavla via Dhond, as Baba has been pleased to allow me to go home for the coming festival.

May 9, 1924

## Baba in Seclusion

After enjoying a few days at home, I came back to Arangaon last night. Great changes have taken place in my absence. Since May 7th, Baba has imprisoned himself in the Zhopdi which has been made insect proof with wire nets placed carefully over the few ventilation openings. It is said that the Zhopdi was specially prepared with great haste for this purpose. The work was carried on for extra hours with the exemption of morning prayers. Baba is said to remain in seclusion for months without food, and hence he is reported to have taken food thrice and even four times a day, before locking himself in. It was first arranged that after locking himself up, he would cease to talk even a single word, exchanging important matters in writing only. But yesterday in the evening after the singing Baba talked a little from the room. He said that his health is very much pulled down within a day, not because of keeping fasts or anything else, but for the burden of spiritual working, and added, "My state was never worse before. This body can no longer give me company. I will take many days to leave the room, but after two, three days, I will keep the door opened for all to see me."

Yesterday Baba took only a little quantity of water throughout the day; but today he partook of a little sago paste in the morning prepared by Masaji in milk, and also weak tea without milk.

May 10, 1924

## Cart Dragging

This morning proved very difficult for Vishnu who got a nasty sting from a scorpion, which was treated by Ardeshir. Baba summoned us all near his Zhopdi and warned us to be very careful about scorpions, and particularly snakes, and to carry lights with us when we were out in the night. Baba is still shut up in the room and remains on water, tea and sometimes sago paste. The work nowadays is chiefly centered round the well. According to Ardeshir's plan, a big platform of stones is to be raised from which his waterways will be fed with water to ensure a good distribution of water throughout the proposed garden. This necessitates the collection and carrying of big stones from the surroundings. This we do with the help of a small cart which is loaded to the brimful and then dragged by ourselves in turns



near the works. Sometimes, the distance thus required to be covered is even two furlongs. The task gets all the more trying, as often we have to drag the cart through fields, where the soft soil terribly hampers progress as the wheels get clogged. This painful occupation is not without a lighter side of it. As most of us wince, puff and breathe like bellows under the weight, when the turn comes for Barsoap, his big body between the poles struggling for progress looks very humorous. It has given us a practical idea of what an overloaded cart or carriage might mean to the animal concerned, whether it is a horse or bullock.

May 11, 1924

#### Snake-Bite Treatment

While the Hindu *mandali* were reciting their usual poems this morning near Baba's room, they were suddenly interrupted by Baba and asked if they carried lights with them in the night. Upon their replying in the negative, Baba stopped their devotionals and summoned all of us near him. We were put the same question, and happily we were found to be following his recent orders about carrying lights strictly. Thereupon, he once again enjoined us all to be very careful in this matter, and said, "Everyone must carry a lantern whilst out in the dark," and then he instructed Padri as to what should be done if anybody is bitten by a snake. He said that above the bitten part, a cord should be bound tightly, the actual spot being given a cut and stuffed with permanganate of potash. After this first-aid the person should be removed to the hospital at Ahmednagar by four members for further treatment. As for scorpion bites, one should report to Ardeshir to get himself treated by him. The work of the platform is going on still and along with it the cart-dragging.

Baba is still on liquids and in the room.

May 12, 1924

All are summoned before Baba this morning and severely taken to task, for some of us are lately having ill-feeling towards one another. Masaji and Adi are particularly criticized by Baba, and in the end, he calls us all his "Father" and salutes us and adds, "By the oath of my Master I tell you that if I were addressed by my Master as 'Father' and saluted, I would not have stayed

a moment longer with him, but would have left my Master considering myself unfit for his company, while you chaps do not even dare to give me up."

After many more lectures, we were dispersed. But in the afternoon, after dinner, Chowdhary, one of the Hindu *mandali*, declared his intention of going away because of the morning lectures, which he felt too much. We tried to make him change his intentions with every argument and appeal, but this on the contrary, irritated him more. So at last, word was sent to Baba through Gustadji about Chowdhary, when again, all of us were summoned in his presence. Baba also tried his best to save Chowdhary from slipping away, but to no avail. At last Baba asked Chowdhary why had he agreed to stay under the condition he could be treated in any way that Baba liked and now wants to go away for a few harsh words. But he did not reply and seemed bent upon going away, or in my opinion, committing spiritual suicide. While dismissing Chowdhary from the *mandali*, Baba asked us all, "Who else wants to give me up? He can go too." But no one else came forward. Upon this, Baba warned the rest of us to stick to him through thick and thin if we wanted to be benefited spiritually, and then dispersed us.

Baba once again began to talk of going to Persia on tour! He said he would go away anywhere for about a fortnight the moment he left the room. "If I go to Persia, I will take Adi, Gustadji and two others with me," he added. After this I was asked by Baba to question everyone from the *mandali* as to who wanted to accompany Baba on the tour. Almost all were found ready for a change. In the meantime Rustom came with Mother Gulmai from 'Nagar by motor. Baba discussed the same topic with Rustom of going to Persia in a motor car. It seems Rustom did not feel enthusiastic about this new plan, and so a breeze took place between him and Baba. When we were just going to start our afternoon singing with the Arangaon children as usual, I was called by Baba and ordered to ask everyone of the *mandali* the following question: "Baba has asked of you whether it is becoming on our part to stay here occupying Rustom's land who refuses to lend his car to Baba?" Accordingly, I approached everyone and put them this question. Some voted for and some went against this resolution and the matter ended there.

Nothing is settled as to when Baba will be away. The rest of the day passed off in routine, save for Chowdhary's departure, who went away to Poona after all.

May 13, 1924

Again this morning, some quarrel took place between Nervous and one of the *mandali* while doing the day's labour. Baba overheard the same and called us all near him. Nervous is badly taken to task for causing the disturbance, and as a further punishment he is stopped from doing the daily work. This makes Nervous feel very much and he refuses to take dinner in the afternoon. Later on, he is pardoned by Baba and given some other duty which he accepts and then takes his meal. Baba seems to be very comfortable and cheerful in his "prison" and his food continues to be tea, curd curry and water, i.e., only liquids. That blessed platform near the well is nearly complete today, and further labour work is chiefly centered round the digging and fixing of Shahabad stones to form a gutter running round the three sides of that platform to supply water to the different canals that will run through the proposed orchard.

May 14, 1924

In the afternoon a very weak old seeker came to the place and was taken to Baba. After asking him some questions, Baba ordered a bath for him, some clothes and food.

Accordingly, Gustadji gave him a bath and change of linen, and after giving him food, he was made to take rest under the big neem tree. There are already three other persons who are daily fed and well looked after by the *mandali* under Baba's instructions. They are an old pair of Hindus, man and wife, the husband being simply a bag of bones. The third one is a mad woman of middle age called Jai, while this fourth old Muslim seeker is the latest addition. In addition, the children are daily increasing in numbers and are coming twice a day, in the morning and evening, when they recite poems, which they have begun to do nicely under Arjun's enthusiastic leadership. Thus, Arangaon, or, rightly speaking, Baba's camp *Meherabad* near it, has begun to buzz with life.

May 15, 1924

Baba came out of the room today after being locked up for seven days, and took some *dal*-rice. Today being Thursday, we were to have exemption from labour, but it is postponed until tomorrow, and we take to daily labour as usual to finish off an

urgent piece of work. Adi, who was sent to Ahmednagar with a message to his father, returns rather late for which he is criticized by Baba. Rustom who came in the carriage is refused an interview at first, but after some time Baba talks with him. Baba also gave an interesting explanation to all of us on "Reaching Truth," and the day ended with the usual songs of the Arangaon children, which are followed by Baba with great interest.

May 16, 1924

Our holiday today is again postponed and all are asked to work as per routine. The ox which has already been named Sant arrives today. It is also of snow-white colour like the horse Sufi and an excellent companion for the latter. It is washed and cleaned by some of us and then tied near Sufi. Unfortunately through slackness, the ox got free and the whole *mandali* gave chase; after some time he is collared again and brought and securely tied in the stable, but not before we were all drenched with perspiration and mud through chasing in the fields and stream beds. Sant thus gave a practical demonstration of his being equal to Sufi not only in beauty but also in action. Now, only a dog is still to be added to this collection of animals called Sufi, Sant and Sadhu as prearranged.

Baba again talked of putting himself in the room, and under instructions, Padri is busy in fixing an insect-proof wire frame over the door for people to have Baba's blessing when he is locked up. But subsequently, Baba postponed his intention of getting into the room. In the evening, Yeshvantrao of Sakori came with some friends for Baba's blessing.

May 17, 1924

Navroz and his wife came to Meherabad this morning and the fruits brought by them proved a good treat for us. In the afternoon after dinner, when we were all seated round Baba and having a talk, Nervous suddenly exclaims that it is the anniversary of the Prophet Zoroaster's death. Baba told Nervous he ought to have informed about it earlier for suitable celebrations. When celebrations were pressed for by some of the Parsi and Irani *mandali*, Baba again said, "It is too late." At this, Adi said, "Had it been some Hindu holiday Baba would have shown keen interest." Upon this, Baba gave the Zoroastrian *mandali* full permission to celebrate the occasion in a fitting way, and

added, "It is because the Hindus take great interest in their religious celebrations that I give them encouragement. The element of devotion in Hindus is greater than in any other community."

Nervous was sent to 'Nagar post-haste on cycle to bring flowers and sweets. All excepting myself are exempted from the afternoon labour. They take a bath after Baba has his, and after a change of linen, gather round a blazing fire. By this time Nervous returns from 'Nagar with the necessary things and joins the rest after having a bath. Thus, after reciting some special prayers near the "dancing" fire in Baba's presence, who was all the time sitting quiet, the sweets, etc., were distributed. In the evening, Baba sang for a while to the accompaniment of a *sitar* played by Adi and also gave some fine explanations.

May 18, 1924

Baba has again put himself in the room and began to remain on liquids from today. Shri Maharaj's birthday is to be celebrated on the 20th next, and arrangements for its observance on a grand scale are in progress. One of the *mandali* was rather coldly treated by Khan Saheb (Adi's father) when he had been to 'Nagar to bring the necessary things for the celebration. This gave rise to a great deal of trouble. Upon hearing this, Baba sent for Adi immediately and told him he was greatly disappointed with his family, saying, "Ill treatment to my *mandali* was an insult to myself," and that he intended to leave this place, etc., etc. Lastly Adi was sent to 'Nagar to enquire of his father whether his treatment towards the *mandali* member was such and if so, why; and Adi was further asked to convey to Rustom (Adi's brother) not to come to Meherabad hereafter, nor let his father do so, and he Rustom, should act according to his own free will in all matters. After Adi's departure for 'Nagar, Baba ordered preparation to be made to go to Bombay, and Padri was ordered to take the wire net off the door. Before any of these orders were executed Adi returned, as he had met Rustom midway coming by motor to Baba with fruits he brought from Poona. Adi asked Baba if he would see Rustom, and after Baba agreed to an interview, Rustom saw Baba. After a long discussion, the matter, at least for the present, is ended upon Rustom's undertaking to follow Baba, word by word, irrespective of his father's attitude.

Rustom also brought a dog with him, which not being white

throughout, does not meet with Baba's choice, and thus the place of Sadhu still remains vacant.

May 19, 1924

Today Rustom's mother-in-law, Daulatmai, and her two daughters (one of whom is Mehera) arrive to stay for a few days and participate in Shri Maharaj's birthday celebrations. Two small rooms near the mess quarters have been set aside for ladies, who are about five now, including Davla Masi who was already with us. It is a holiday for us all save for Adi who has been given the duty of watering the plants around the Zhopdi of late, and as a compensation, he has been exempted from other labour work. The Zhopdi and compound have been profusely decorated with buntings and leaves of plantain, etc., for tomorrow's celebrations.

May 20, 1924

#### Shri Maharaj's Birthday

Meherabad has taken on a gay aspect today. Amidst the buntings and flowers, it is throbbing with the coming and going of carriages that have been bringing guests and visitors from different places. There is abundance of fruits, flowers and sweets and a great hustle-bustle of people. Baba gave separate interviews to all the guests, including his brothers Jamshed and Behram. After dinner at about 1 P.M. all gathered near Baba's Zhopdi on the Shahabad stone pavement opposite the door of the room in which Baba sat behind the wire net. The sun being at its height, a temporary shelter was contrived with great difficulty. There were many people from the surrounding villages. First, the devotional singing was carried on for a considerable time amidst a great clash of bells, and then religious stories were begun to the accompaniment of harmonium and drums. For non-Hindus, the latter was more interesting as the subject chosen by the leader was contact with the spiritual master, and delivered with great style in eloquent and flowing language. But all did not take place according to the programme.

By sunset, after performing the actual ceremony of birth by placing Shri's photo in a small cradle and then swinging it by a long string amidst some recitations, it was decided to carry the same photo in a palanquin specially decorated for this purpose. Suddenly powerful blowing of the winds began drowning

the storyteller's words. At this he began to deliver his final lecture at the top of his voice, but nature also increased its force by great rumblings of thunder and streaks of lightning that flashed every now and then. At last amidst a shower of rain the above birth-ceremony was quickly performed and *prasad* distributed, and all dispersed. The palanquin programme was also abandoned and we were ordered by Baba to take our supper. After supper, the sky became clear again and we were once more summoned near the Zhopdi to attend the devotional singing of the party who have specially come for the purpose from 'Nagar. This party said their poems and used their bells in a refined way, which lasted till midnight, after which we retired for sleep.

May 21, 1924

We had been exempted from our individual morning prayers, and hence after a long time we had the pleasure of leaving the beds at seven this morning instead of five. Baba has begun taking a little *dal*-rice once a day, but is still in the room, although now he talks freely with the *mandali* from the room. In the evening a Bohra gentleman came to see Baba. He seems to have some hankering for Truth. Baba gave him long explanations and some advice which looks to have impressed him much; after due salutations he departed.

May 23, 1924

Baba came out of the room today, this time after five days. He called those who had surrendered for life beside him and made them take serious oaths to stick to him. Doctor and Abdul Tayeb have come from Lonavla in the latter's car which has been specially brought to be placed under Baba's service. The mangoes, figs, etc., brought by them have provided us with a good change along with the sweets brought by Rustom. Rustom asked Baba, on behalf of his father, permission for Adi to attend the marriage of his cousin, which is to take place this evening, and to get shaved for this purpose. (We have all been keeping beards and none is allowed to shave nowadays.) Of course, Baba granted permission, but with great reluctance. Adi returned rather late after witnessing the marriage ceremony at about 10:30 P.M. He is seriously taken to task for the same as well as for bringing about a hitch in Baba's system by having to shave off his beard. At first, he is asked to go back home and live to

his full satisfaction there; but after some remonstrations he is allowed to resume his stay here.

May 24, 1924

Baba seems to have been greatly disturbed by the recent attitude of Khan Saheb. Since morning, the same topic is discussed by Baba; whether in view of his attitude we should remain here or go to some other place is the burning question of the day. Adi and his family are greatly criticized. In this "warm" atmosphere, Rustom and Mother Gulmai arrive; Baba continues his remarks to Rustom, who already having been deluged with such messages from Baba since morning, loses his temper and speaks rather rudely with Baba. This rudeness causes the recent sparks of resentment to fly in a great outburst. Baba seems to be greatly pained, and at once starts toward Abdul Tayeb's car to go away somewhere, never to return to Arangaon again. He takes his seat, while as many of the *mandali* as can be accommodated get in the car after Baba. The atmosphere becomes very choked at this sudden departure of Baba, and there are many who have tears streaming down their faces. The engine is started and the car is about to move on when Mother Gulmai, who has for so long controlled herself, burst into tears. At this touching sight many remonstrate with Baba to abandon his idea of going away and they apologize for the rude words. Rustom himself begged to be excused. After a great deal of solicitations and discussions, and with great reluctance, Baba agrees to stay but on three conditions: firstly, Adi should no longer stay with him; secondly, Rustom, his father or anyone else from their family should not visit this place; and thirdly, this land should be transferred into Adi's or Gustadji's name. After this Baba gets down from the car, and in a very touching tone, says, "It is only for Mother (meaning Gulmai) that I have alighted."

May 25, 1924

The atmosphere does not improve. It was no better than yesterday. On the contrary, the matter resumed seriousness when in the afternoon Rustom returned with the news that his father has not definitely agreed to transfer the land into Adi's name, on the grounds that Baba thinks him to be so very faithless as not to trust him. Baba again started the plan of going to Bombay or some other place, suitable for fruit gardening, there to buy



a fertile piece of land and pass the time in cultivating a fruit orchard. This time, Adi lost his head and told Baba, "You are simply seeking excuses to quit this place; and if you think it now unsuitable, why did you at all select it first for your permanent camp?" At this, Gustadji interrupted Adi for talking in that strain. Now a regular passage at arms between Adi and Gustadji began. Baba intervened and ordered Adi to keep quiet; but in the heat of rage, Adi overlooked Baba's words and kept on retorting to Gustadji. At this Baba gave a ringing slap to Adi who stopped talking completely. Afterwards Baba consoled Adi lovingly when the latter burst into tears. Rustom was again sent to his father. After some time, I was also asked by Baba to see Khan Saheb. Myself and Rustom returned with a written note from Khan Saheb to Baba saying that he was most willing to act as Baba said, and that there had been some misunderstanding with regard to his first reply to Baba. The topic ended with the decision of staying here permanently. A picnic party is arranged for Baba and some of the *mandali* to go to Aurangabad by motor cars tomorrow.

May 26, 1924

Baba and about 13 more from the *mandali* started this morning at about 5:30 in the two Ford cars for Aurangabad and Daulatabad caves as prearranged. The rest of us left here, took to our routine duties, and without any untoward event, the day ended. To keep up the sequence of Baba's movements, I reproduce hereunder some pages from Adi's diary:

On the way to Aurangabad, we came across the Imampur Ghats. Twelve miles away from Imampur, there appears the village of Ghodegaon where we halted for some time with a view to take tea; but milk could not be had there so we proceeded on. The next halt was at Toka. Toka is divided into halves by a river, one portion belonging to the British, with the opposite half beyond the river belonging to the Nizam.<sup>41</sup> The river is without a bridge; so the cars are driven down very carefully and slowly over a zigzag and very precipitous slope, and similarly the vehicles are climbed up over the other slope.

Finally the camp of Aurangabad is reached. We alighted at the inspection bungalow, but finding the charges to be very heavy, we repaired towards the station rest house. On the way we moved about in the camp and city in search of something

for our dinner, and *dal-rice* for Baba. With much difficulty and amidst continuous bustle created by Baba to make haste, we managed to get some rice and *dal*. Next some sweetmeat is brought for the Hindus, and bread, butter and jam for the rest. We reach the rest house and help ourselves with the dinner. Baba also took some of the *dal-rice*. After taking rest, Baba asked the *mandali's* opinion whether to proceed on to the Ellora Caves near Daulatabad or return to 'Nagar, because, he continued, his state is very much under depression, and so he finds no interest in further excursions. Yet, to please some enthusiasts among us, he accompanied us in the evening to Daulatabad.

On the way, Abdul Tayeb's car fails; so Sarosh who drives the other car stops too, and runs to the former to make up the disorder. In the meantime, Baba ordered me, Adi, to drive our car. Without looking back, I tried to reverse the car before starting away, and to my great amazement, it struck against a tree. The shock reduced the bentwood of the hood to pieces. Baba reproached me for not stopping the car in spite of his repeated shouts to do so, and ordered me never to drive a car in my life. Until today I was driving a car against his will. He never totally checked me from doing so lest I should take it ill; but now the ban is on for good against my driving any car. Anyhow, we again start for our destination. A little later near Daulatabad a tyre tube gives way. It is about 6 P.M. and still a considerable distance is to be covered to reach the caves. Baba says it is inadvisable to proceed further in the dark and then return late in the night. So after changing the punctured tube, we return to the rest house and pass the night there. Baba's condition is getting worse, and he passes a sleepless night.

May 27, 1924

Adi's diary is continued: At five in the early morning, we started back for 'Nagar. Tayeb's car gave much trouble on the return journey. It got punctured tyres several times and by Ghodegaon, Padri had had to fix the tubes a dozen times. Here Baba reminded us of our dinner and sent Patel and Doctor to the village to fetch some eatables for us. They returned after a long time bringing millet breads. At this, Baba reproachfully complained that none remembered his *dal-rice*, none even asked him whether he needed anything. We were partaking of the millet breads in the meanwhile and Baba was feeling very restless and uneasy. He shouted to Sarosh to drive the car soon. Sarosh started

it at once, and Patel had to run a short distance to overtake the moving car. The other car was still left behind for repairs and we proceeded on. We came to a small village and procured a little quantity of *dal*-rice which Baba refused to eat, but kept on asking for fresh *dal*-rice which was not available. Before the Imampur Ghats were fully crossed our car failed too, and so we pushed it for some time, after which we came to a travellers' shelter. Here we took rest while Gustadji prepared fresh *dal*-rice for Baba. After nearly an hour, Baba took the meal. The other party left behind had still not arrived. After an hour or two more, the car at last came with only Jal and Rustom in it (the rest following it on foot), with blankets, coats, etc., stuffed in the tyres as the tubes would no longer contain air. Sarosh here put on some new tubes and we started.

(end of Adi's diary entry)

So this picnic party at last came to Arangaon in the afternoon in a sorry plight, covered with mud and thoroughly shaken up.

May 28, 1924

The unsteady atmosphere continues as it has for the last few days. Baba does not seem to be at peace. He is talking today of going away to some other place and Kashmir is the latest favourite. Baba continues to talk about Kashmir and the prospect of staying there with the *mandali* at an orchard where the *mandali* can be engaged in fruit gardening for an occupation. Every now and then opinions are asked for. Some prefer a change of atmosphere, and some declare to be satisfied with the existing surroundings of Meherabad. Rustom and Adi are the principal leaders of the latter group. For the present, however, the matters stand as they are and no immediate change has been arrived at.

May 29, 1924

Today again the main topic of discussion between the *mandali* and Baba is about Kashmir. When Rustom comes, he is found to be of a depressed mental state. Baba gets more disappointed with Rustom for his present mood and tells him that if he, Rustom, is depressed in his company he should better give him up and follow the worldly life. Baba, then addressing the rest

of us, asked, "Who else is under mental depression in my company?" Many hands are raised up including my own to say that we were not in the best of spirits. At this, Baba advised all those who had declared themselves tired to give him up. But the day passed on without any unusual incident.

May 30, 1924

Kashmir continues to be discussed. Its beautiful scenery, fine gardens, and snow-clad mountains, when described, win more votes in its favour. Passages from Swami Vivekananda's Life are read out concerning his tour in this picturesque land. But later on, Quetta becomes the hot favourite as we are already acquainted with the same. A wire is sent to Rusi at Quetta enquiring of any available fruit gardens with a bungalow suitable for Baba and *mandali's* stay. Baba decides to immediately start for Quetta by car with Ardeshir, Padri, Doctor, Rustom and Sarosh, and to make preliminary arrangements for the rest of the *mandali* to follow on later by train. Rustom is instructed to equip a car with necessary accessories for this huge spin across India to Baluchistan, and to bring the car with Sarosh to start tomorrow. But the plan is soon upset by the arrival of Sarosh in the afternoon. He repeats the awful row he had with his father who strongly objected to his having accompanied Baba to Aurangabad. Hence the question of his, Sarosh's, further accompanying Baba to Quetta or Kashmir in the car was impossible. So the question of going to Quetta by car has been dropped, but the general arrangement to leave this place has now secured unanimous acceptance. When Baba related the fresh incident of Sarosh having been taken to task by his father for accompanying him, and asked the *mandali* once again their opinion as to the advisability of staying here permanently, all replied in the negative with one voice.

## Third Tour, North India

May 31, 1924

IT is finally decided today that tomorrow or the day after, Baba with a few of the *mandali* will start for Bombay en route to Quetta by railway. When all necessary arrangements are completed at Quetta, the rest of the *mandali* will be wired when they are also to follow suit. The day is passed busily making preparations for the big journey.

June 1, 1924

Most of the day passed in new arrangements and instructions by Baba to those who were to follow him after some time. Gustadji and Rustom were given all the details by Baba as to whom to bring with them and how, as also what to do with unnecessary things, because the Arangaon affair is to be completely wound up. The fate of Sufi and Sant, the horse and bullock, has also been decided. They are to be sent away to Sakori and offered to Shri Maharaj.

June 2, 1924

Good-Bye to Arangaon

Baba, together with Ardeshir, the now indispensable "Director of Agriculture," Doctor, myself, and Vajifdar started from Ahmednagar station by the morning train for Bombay via Manmad. We got a whole small compartment to ourselves till Manmad, which we comfortably reached by 12:30. In spite of being third-class passengers, Vajifdar, under Baba's instructions, had

succeeded in inducing the guard to wire ahead for vegetables, curry and rice to be kept ready for us at Manmad. Consequently, a wholesome food was found to be ready for us. Immediately after reaching Manmad, we repaired to the Bombay Passenger that was already ready on the opposite platform. Finding a commodious military carriage empty, save for a few passengers, we made ourselves comfortable there, and also paid full justice to the hot food served by the refreshment room there. With all these smooth circumstances, which are rarely encountered when out with Baba, I could not help but remark to Doctor that this journey is going to prove exceptionally comfortable. Little did I know the hot time awaiting us very shortly!

As soon as Deolali was reached, Baba sent one of us to get tea and another one for papers. In the meantime without previous notice, the railway authorities all of a sudden asked us and some other passengers to vacate, as the carriage is to be detached here! The already overcrowded rest of the third-class carriages in the train gave little hopes of our being able to squeeze in with all the luggage with us. So Baba asked me to arrange for the second-class difference to be paid. I approached the guard and informed him of our plight and our intention to resume the journey in second class from Deolali for which we will pay the difference. But the worthy, against the general practice of certifying passengers in such emergency at the end of the journey, insisted upon my paying the difference there and then to the local booking clerk on the plea of there being ample time. In the meantime, the carriage was already detached and shunted onto adjoining rails without letting us completely clear our luggage. From the guard, I rushed to the booking office, where the clerk told me I would miss the train if I paid the difference here, and it would take time to prepare the receipt, and he further advised us to occupy second class irrespective of the guard's words. Back I rushed to the train on the opposite platform as the signal was down. I found Baba in the second compartment with the tiffin basket, bedding, etc., but at the same time, I still marked Vajifdar, Doctor and Ardeshir struggling with the luggage at the engine end of the train when the train whistled. Unfortunately I informed Baba that the rest of them had not boarded the train. At this Baba hurriedly got down and I removed the things from the moving train and it rolled away. After regaining my breath, I looked for Doctor and the party, but there was no sign of them! I ran to the detached carriage, but to no purpose. For some time, I was greatly excited and

dumbfounded, but gradually I began to have an idea of the situation. The moment Baba and myself were getting down from the second class compartment, it seems Vajifdar and party managed to squeeze in the train after all!

On hearing all this, Baba became a little cross at first, but then absorbed himself in the newspapers and asked me to do the needful in the matter. I sent a telegram to Igatpuri as I had all the tickets with me. Later Baba asked me to see if a car was available to go to Igatpuri. The station master said I might get one if I went to the bazaar, but it would cost me more than Rs. 20, and he added, "I can't understand why you are in a hurry to reach Igatpuri; you can't get a train for Bombay now, save at 9 o'clock." But Baba's viewpoint in getting away from Deolali station was different. His distinguished appearance would certainly have attracted attention and disturbed his solitude. Hence it was finally decided to go to Lahit, the next station from Deolali toward Igatpuri. Accordingly, I engaged a carriage and both of us started from Deolali at about 4:30. After a mile or two of comfortable carriage drive on the smooth, metalled road, the carriage turned into a side track through some fields. The carriage driver informed us, when remonstrated with, that this was the best road leading to Lahit. Being strangers we could not but help take the driver at his word. The journey became more and more uncomfortable, as we advanced through stream beds. After about one hour more of tossing in the carriage over fields in a zigzag drive, the driver gave it up, and said he had lost the way to Lahit! Instead of taking him to task, Baba paid him something more than his agreed upon fare for Lahit and discharged him! From here, Baba and I crossed over to the railway line which could be seen at a distance of half a mile and continued our march towards Lahit along the railway line on foot. Although I offered to carry the basket with us throughout the tramp, Baba insisted upon sharing the burden and thus carried the same on his august head from time to time.

About sunset we reached the Lahit railway station. I advanced while Baba took rest near the cabin. At first, the station master hesitated to shelter us, but I succeeded in making him believe our situation and also informed him about Baba's personality as he seemed to know and have respect for Hazrat Sai Baba of Shirdi. The station master, after personally coming into Baba's contact, was much impressed and seemed willing to provide us with food. Baba asked him through me to provide us with food, providing he accepted whatever would be given to him

in return. At first the station master refused to accept anything in return, but I explained to him that either he should consider it as *prasad*, or keep it aside and give it to anybody else deserving the same; otherwise, Baba would not take his food. At this, he accepted from Baba a ten-rupee note and served us with good fresh food after some time.

The local cabin man being very fond of devotional songs, with Baba's permission he brought his stringed instrument and for an hour recited poems with great feeling and devotion. At this time the whole station staff, from the Brahmin station master to the low caste menial staff, gathered round Baba and sat listening to the songs reverently. By telephone through the station master we came to know that our companions had safely reached Igatpuri and were waiting to join us, while Vajifdar had already left for Deolali by the Mail. Vajifdar was also informed at Deolali about us, and when he returned by the Passenger, myself and Baba joined him at Lahit. At ten, we reached Igatpuri and joined all the others and then proceeded to Bombay by the same train. In spite of some inconvenience the adventure provided a fine walk amongst the Deolali hills, and a simple but devotional songfest in the calm and quiet atmosphere of Lahit.

June 4, 1924

We safely reached Bombay this morning and put up in the Irani Mansions No. 6 at Dadar. The preparations are in full swing for us to start for Quetta.

June 6, 1924

According to the latest arrangement, Doctor is to stay at home until the rest of the *mandali* are called, and then to join them and come to Quetta. So he left for Lonavla this afternoon. Adi, who is to accompany us to Quetta, has also come to Bombay. After all arrangements for our journey and that of the *mandali* to follow us are completed by Baba in every detail, Baba, myself, Adi, and Ardeshir leave Bombay this evening for Quetta by the Gujarat Mail.

June 7, 1924

The morning finds us at Ahmedabad junction. We change into the Ahmedabad-Hyderabad direct carriage of the metre-gauge



railway Mail to Delhi and proceed on our journey. In the evening Marwar junction is reached, where our carriage is detached from the Delhi Mail and attached to J. B. Railway train which, after some time, starts for Hyderabad, crossing the great barren desert of Rajputana.

June 8, 1924

We reached Hyderabad this morning. The following telegram is sent to Rusi under Baba's instructions:

Meher Baba and three reaching Quetta 9th. Arrange our undisturbed passing through Sibi. Inform none save Pirozshah. Avoid ceremonial reception. Keep matter strictly private.

This precaution for privacy is necessary to ensure solitude to Baba, whom so many people at Quetta already hold in esteem since his last visit. Soon we board the Quetta Mail from Karachi and leave Hyderabad.

June 9, 1924

We awoke this morning at Sibi junction and, thanks to the telegram to Rusi and the subsequent arrangements, we were spared the special police enquiries which are made of every passenger who wants to cross the frontier. At about five, we reached Quetta and, according to instructions, were quietly driven to Rusi's place. The lavish hospitality of our host soon made us forget the long journey of three days, and we were quite at home by the evening.

June 10, 1924

The particular garden approved by all when we were here the last time, and which was decided to be taken for our permanent stay here, is not available. Moreover, on enquiries on the spot as to its general climate, Quetta is almost enveloped in ice, and for people used to a hot climate, deaths from pneumonia were a trifling affair. Hence again discussions take place, and finally Sukkur is decided upon by Baba. There are possibilities of Munshi also coming there in the capacity of head storekeeper in connection with the Barrage Works at Sukkur. According

to these fresh developments, Baba asked me and Ardeshir to proceed to Sukkur to select a suitable site, as well as make other enquiries on the spot. Pirozshah provided us with an introductory note to a friend of his at Sukkur, and after taking Baba's permission, we both leave Quetta this evening for Sukkur.

June 11, 1924

We reached Sukkur this morning and repaired to the travellers' shelter. After depositing our bedding in a room under lock and key and having our breakfast, we went out in search of Mobedji for whom we had the note. We found him easily and delivered the note. After going through the contents and getting more information from us as to the object of our mission, he promised to take us to one of his friends who could help us more he said. However, he gave his own opinion about Sukkur being unsuitable for our purpose because of the great heat. However, he was good enough to introduce us to Mr. Rustomji the manager of the local firm of Messrs. Rali Bros. This latter gentleman proved a very kind, hospitable and obliging man who immediately put us in touch with a leading broker by name Mr. Holaram, who perfectly resembles a buffalo with his extremely short form and big belly. Although physically out of form, Mr. Holaram seems to have a brain in a very good form. Now this Holaram again introduced us to his cousins who asked him to take us round the principal places suitable for a garden in and around Sukkur. Thus, after these introductions and counter-introductions, we at last set forth on our mission.

Sukkur is situated along the great river Indus. The chief commercial houses of import and export mainly occupy the river side, with their offices and godowns along the shady road running right on the banks of the river. Here and there on the banks, some bathing steps and jetties are scattered. The river plays a great part as a highway for draining India's raw wealth to foreign countries, and a very large quantity of goods is transported in countryships between different cities and towns situated along this great river. Under the direction of our guide we engaged a small boat and crossed the Indus to the other side of the river, which our guide said contains the principal fruit gardens. Upon reaching the other side we found huge pieces of land cultivated with date, plantain, mango and other "coarse" fruit trees—it would be appropriate to say fruit jungles—which stretched for a couple of miles along this bank of the river. We passed about

an hour in inspecting two or three of the "gardens," but none was found to be suitable for our purpose and we returned.

Again after having our meals, we started in another boat, this time going along the Sukkur side of the river. At a distance of about a mile we found some more pieces of cultivated land. Some belongs to a rich Muslim landowner; some is public property belonging to the tomb of a renowned Muslim local saint, Bachalshah; while the third piece, partly cultivated with vegetables and a few mango and date trees, belongs to a Hindu gentleman. The latter, although not quite an ideal piece, was the best we had yet come across. Being situated in this quiet locality just adjoining the river with pretty surroundings and at a convenient distance of about a mile from the hum-drum of the city proper, both of us agreed as to its suitability for our purpose. We soon returned to Mr. Rustomji and asked him to enquire about this land. It is found to be on sale at a reasonable price. Still we decide to see some more gardens towards the railway station and beyond it.

After doing the day's work, we went out for a stroll in the city and along the bank of the river towards the station side. The river with its picturesque surroundings is the chief attraction of the town. Nature and science seem to have cooperated in giving it an extra charm by providing it with a gigantic hanging bridge, famous for its architecture, spanning the huge river without any pillars in a graceful curve, and a tiny island exactly in the centre of the river. This island, which looks beautiful with its fine walls, jetties, gardens and fine buildings, is called Sat-Bela and is occupied by a Hindu saint. It adds great romance to the pretty scene. After having our supper, we repaired to the travellers' shelter through well-kept and electrically illuminated roads, and wrote out a report of our activities to Baba, giving a favourable impression of Sukkur to be suitable for our permanent stay.

June 12, 1924

Again we continued our inspection soon after having our breakfast. Almost all the gardens available near the railway station and city proper were examined. Some of them were approved by Ardeshir from the business point of view, but none satisfied me as to the surroundings and situation. In the afternoon, we engaged a carriage and went to the old town of Sukkur on the other side of the railway station. There we visited many

gardens for miles along the river and even in the interior, but none surpassed our selection of yesterday, and thus we returned to the travellers' shelter late after sunset. We had a good taste of the heat too, which is terrible, and yet people here say it is very cool nowadays. In full summer, the mercury rises to 108 and 109 degrees! This cooled down my enthusiasm for Sukkur and I penned my final report to Baba disapproving Sukkur as a permanent place to put up for good, because of the extreme climate. Further I asked for instructions by telegram whether to return to Quetta or remain here, as we had practically finished with our investigations.

June 13, 1924

Not having received wire instructions from Baba, we decided to pass our time in sightseeing Rohri, another town on the other side of the Indus. We passed along the famous bridge connecting Sukkur and Rohri over the Indus. This giant structure provides both railway and public road. Its magnitude impressed us all the more from close inspection of its single great span over the giant river. We inspected more gardens here, but as expected none met with our choice. The rest of the day was passed eagerly taking turns at the station to see if a telegram had come. After supper, both of us repaired to the station with our beddings to catch the Quetta train in case the telegram had come by then. Still not finding the expected wire in the letter case I enquired personally in the telegraph and station master's office respectively to see if it had been left out through oversight, but I was informed that there was no such telegram from Quetta. The train was already on the platform. After some hesitation we decided mutually to escape from the choking atmosphere of Sukkur immediately. Thus at the eleventh hour, I rushed for the tickets and after getting the same, we boarded the train.

June 14, 1924

After passing a very uncomfortable hot night in a crowded third-class carriage, we reached Quetta this afternoon. The contrasting coolness here all the more prejudiced me against Sukkur and the hell of its climate. As soon as we reached Rusi's place, we were bewildered, as may well be imagined, upon hearing that Baba had left for Sukkur with Pirozshah last evening! That means Baba and ourselves were travelling last night in opposite

directions! At first, I thought of going back to Sukkur immediately, but to avoid further complications, I finally decided to await Baba's return or call. The rest of the day was passed gloomily repenting for our hasty action and quarrelling between ourselves, as Ardeshir disclaimed any responsibility in this unfortunate incident.

June 15, 1924

Baba returned to Quetta this afternoon and we were severely taken to task for the jumble committed by us, and for a long time Baba kept on reproaching us. Baba did send a telegram instructing us to await his arrival at Sukkur, and it reached Sukkur in time before our fateful departure. But it was misplaced by the staff under the station master's paper, as was found out by Pirozshah and Baba yesterday. After some time, Baba related the incidents of his visit to Sukkur. He personally inspected some gardens and finally selected the one approved by us. Through Holaram and Rustomji, Baba has already purchased the land! The general appearance and situation of Sukkur no doubt appealed to Baba, as it did to me the first day. It was our prolonged stay there that gave us an idea of its abnormal climate, but it is too late now. Baba also described to us his visit to Bachalshah's tomb and his having encountered a man absorbed in Divinity there.

In the evening, Baba and party went for a motor spin which greatly refreshed us. Again Baba discussed the question of staying at Sukkur. Until residential quarters are built on the purchased land, Baba decided to hire a suitable bungalow or house on rent for the *mandali* to stay till then. I am instructed to go to Sukkur tomorrow and engage a good place for Baba and the whole *mandali* to stay in a suitable locality, and preferably in the vicinity of the purchased land. I was also asked to visit Bachalshah's tomb and see the one absorbed in Divinity there, as well as go to Sat-Bela. Baba also asked me to keep in view a suitable house for my family too.

June 17, 1924

According to Baba's instructions, I left Quetta yesterday and once again came to Sukkur this morning. After some inspections, I selected a bungalow and engaged it on a lease of six months. Then I repaired to the newly purchased land and had a look

at it more closely. But for the climate, all seems to prove an ideal arrangement. I had a talk with the neighbouring landlord and made some necessary enquiries. After this, as per orders I came to Bachalshah's tomb, which is a stone's throw from the purchased land. After paying my respects at the tomb, I searched for the person answering the description given by Baba and was informed that he was out, but would be back in due time. In the meantime I marked a lady with some similarity in appearance to Hazrat Babajan of Poona moving about the place, muttering some inaudible words every now and then. She chanced to come across me and looked me full in the face, and for the first time, I marked an intelligent and normal look in her face. She abruptly but quite intelligently asked me, "Who is your master?" I promptly replied the one word, "Meher Baba." Thereupon she uttered the words, "King, Emperor," and again lost her intelligence and began to mutter queer words and moved about.

I enquired about this lady and her antecedents. Bachalshah, whose tomb is still greatly revered in Sukkur by both Hindus and Muslims, had been a great saint of his time and had an immense following of devotees. In the lifetime of Bachalshah, this lady once came for his blessing. She became greatly devoted to the saint and began to serve him diligently, irrespective of her household duties. After some six months, with great difficulty, her husband, who was alive at the time, prevailed upon her to return home. But after a few months, she came back to Bachalshah and began to serve him with great devotion. Again her husband and family members tried to take her back; but this time, Bachalshah advised them to let her alone. And since that time she continues to remain in the saint's service and by this time has become absorbed in Divinity. Up to this day she is residing near the shrine in an overpowered state of mind and is addressed as Mastani Mai. By this time the absorbed one answering to Baba's description appeared, to whom I gave the sum of Rs. 5/- given by Baba for him. He was all the time marked by me smiling and mightily pleased with himself.

I was about to leave the place when I came across a clean-shaven holy man addressed by all as Mustanshah, and who also seemed to have his permanent residence here by having a hut opposite the tomb. Somebody asked me in his presence from where did I come. I said from Bombay side. I was again questioned whether from Bombay proper or the districts. Thinking nobody would know of Lonavla, I added, "I come from a town

near Poona." At this Mustanshah looked very interested and asked me as to how a certain man was, what about his family, and so on. I at once put myself on guard lest he might be pulling my leg and put him counterquestions. But he seemed to know almost each and every Muslim family of Lonavla! He described my own family and asked how were they. I said almost all had crossed over to the other side of Existence. Then he put in, "What about Abdulla's son and daughter who were very young when I was there (at Lonavla)?" I replied, the daughter had been married and was in Poona while that son was before him (meaning myself).

I thoroughly enjoyed the dramatic situation. After this, Mustanshah made me sit near him and talked for a considerable time about his solitary stay on a hill at Lonavla, all the time lavishly treating me with fruits. I questioned him about what had made him take to the ascetic life, and he related the following story:

"My parents were very religious people, and as soon as I began to understand things, I was made to learn the Holy Koran. Before I was out of my teens, I could recite the whole of the holy scripture very flowingly and had made some part of it by heart too. The general rules and systems of religion were well picked up by me. I began the deeper study of our religion and took to understanding the meaning of the Koran. I kept on progressing up to that line which means, 'God is nearer to a person than his jugular vein,' and here I stuck. The literal translation did not satisfy me. I began approaching great learned people, but my curiosity increased all the more when I was told that the deeper Truth of religion was a thing to be experienced rather than understood. So I left off my literal studies and took to recitations and concentration, and it was during this period of my life that I was in Lonavla where I passed considerable time on a hill in meditation. Thereafter I passed about 12 years in travel, and it is another 12 years that I am here."

"What about the meaning of that verse in the Koran?" I asked.

"Well," he said, "I at last met somebody who explained it to me." "And what is that meaning?" I again asked him, at which he smiled and said it was beyond intelligence.

In the afternoon I went to Sat-Bela. Myself and the guide were rowed across the river to this important place of worship of the local Hindus. We mounted the few fine stone stairs, and after passing some arches, came near the "hall of audience." Here we had to leave our shoes and then we approached the

special seat on a swing on which was seated an imposing personality. He was the head of this institution and the descendant of a renowned Hindu saint. The swing was gently moved by some of the attendants, while others moved silver mounted fans, etc. An atmosphere of great sanctity and dignity prevailed. After paying due respects I offered the present which Baba had given me for the purpose. It was accepted and passed on to the attendants. Then he talked with me for some time very kindly and also gave a return present, and asked the attendants to feed me.

The institution is carried on generally with public donations. Food is served once a day to anybody who comes here for religious purposes and thus scores of needy persons get the benefit of the generous hospitality.

I leave for Quetta once again by 10 P.M. train.

\* \* \*

[The remaining pages of the regular diary are either torn or missing; to complete the period covered by the diary, Ramjoo's later narration describing the events of that period is given. It is titled "After a New Seat—1924."]

The ensuing week was again passed in lengthy discussions in settling up the details for the *mandali's* permanent stay. At first for a few days, the topic centered around Sukkur and the newly purchased land where Baba talked about building their own quarters and cultivating an orchard on the rest of the land, which again was to be turned into a legal trust with some of the *mandali* as the trustees to provide maintenance to all of them and their families according to respective shares, as per individual needs and circumstances out of the income of that institution.

But the persistent objections raised against the abnormal Sukkur heat by those of the party who had personal experience, as well as the tell-tale contrasts with Quetta through frequent visits to Sukkur, prevailed at last, and the Sukkur programme, in spite of all the "spade work," came to be cancelled by the end of the week! And Karachi became the third favourite as it was proved beyond doubt that it had a normal climate all through the seasons.

Again the same pair that had gone to Sukkur were sent to Karachi to repeat their inspections and enquiries on the spot. But by that time the rest of the *mandali* had already been wired to start for Sukkur with all their necessary belongings. Hence one of the pair going to Karachi was instructed to let them



proceed to Quetta, and store up the luggage at Sukkur, pending a settlement at Karachi. Accordingly the same was taken down at Sukkur. The scores of trunks, beddings and what-not covering a large portion of the platform caused no little flutter on the station, while many were heard to ask whether it was a circus or dramatic company! Nearly half a dozen bullock carts were required to take away all the things to the appointed place, and it was nearly midnight when everything was safely put under lock and key.

On the 30th June 1924, once again, the full *mandali* came together at Quetta, save for the pair who were in search for a suitable place for their permanent stay at Karachi.

### Death of a *Mandali*

All were found to be healthy and cheerful, save for Khodadad Farhad, popularly known among the *mandali* by his nickname Nervous. He was found to be slightly indisposed with fever due to a wound on his knee which the horse Sufi had inflicted upon him by way of a parting kick through carelessness.

Until the arrangements were ready at Karachi, the *mandali* were to be allowed a regular holiday. Besides enjoying the bracing and beautiful climate of Quetta, all had nothing particular to do save engage themselves in reading, hearing the gramophone or an occasional motor spin or walk in the fine surrounding countryside, while there was a plentiful supply of fruits, pastry and tasty vegetables and assorted dishes at dinner. The first week was thus passed very cheerfully by all save Nervous. His temperature began to keep steadily and continuously at a high point in spite of complete medical treatment under the direct supervision of a European civil surgeon, that was begun from the very first day of his arrival. And when the doctor began to suspect the fever to be enteric, in spite of the easy and holiday circumstances, the atmosphere began to assume gloominess. By the end of the week, the civil surgeon decidedly declared the case to be typhoid. That same day, Nervous was carefully removed on a stretcher to a separate and well-ventilated house in a quiet locality. Continuous nursing attendance throughout 24 hours was arranged amongst the fittest members of the *mandali*, who thus kept near his bedside attentive and alert every second of the day. In short, nothing was spared to save him. Money was spent like water, while the nurses exercised greater care in following the doctor's advice and instructions than was possible

elsewhere, specially since Baba came to see the patient every now and then and at odd hours through night and day, and personally observed the daily report and other arrangements. But for all that, his condition began to cause great anxiety to all, and naturally the spirits of the *mandali* were damped beyond description.

From the day Nervous was removed on stretcher, Baba began to pass off-hand remarks as to the case being hopeless, and that he will be the first of the two or three who were to die from the *mandali* before the Circle is completed! There are many who remember Baba having passed the latter hint as early as the Manzil days, and accordingly following Nervous's death at Quetta, Arjun died at Lonavla after a lapse of two and a half years.

But because of such remarks, the treatment and nursing were not made to suffer in the least. Baba insisted upon the best possible efforts to be made, and those who were in charge of the patient were asked to carry out unpleasant and painful tasks, as if it were a sacred duty, according to the letter and spirit of the doctor's orders. In the last stage of the illness, besides the European civil surgeon, another well-known Indian doctor was also called in twice every day. On the 16th July, Baba decided to leave for Karachi with two or three members of the party! In the morning, he visited the local cemetery of the Parsis (since there is no tower of silence at Quetta) and selected a certain spot where Pirozshah was asked to arrange for Nervous's burial *in case* he died after Baba's departure to Karachi. Baba also arranged for a sum of Rs. 2500 to be set aside, out of which Rs. 500 were to be utilized for the monument and religious ceremonies, and the rest to be handed over to the trustees of the cemetery for cemetery funds in his memory if such a contingency arrived. The rest of the *mandali* were asked to cheer up and not to lose heart. As soon as Nervous recovered or died, Baba told them to follow him to Karachi. In the former case, Nervous was to be carefully brought over to Karachi for convalescence and in the latter case, the *mandali* were instructed to come away as soon as the formal ceremonies and burial were over. "But do not leave a stone unturned to bring him round even at the eleventh hour" were Baba's final words when he left Quetta in the afternoon.

When Baba and party reached the station of Mach the same afternoon a telegraphic message was received that soon after their departure, Nervous left his mortal coil at about 2 P.M., and proved himself as the first to have kept up his promise of

life surrenderance to his Master for whom he had great feelings, regard and reverence!

### Karachi

Baba and party reached Karachi on the 17th of July in the morning. The next day, a commodious bungalow with a tiny hut, pretty garden and a bathing tank was arranged near the botanical gardens for the rest of the *mandali* who were to come shortly. Baba also had a personal inspection of a few selected pieces of land that the advance party had in view for their permanent stay.

On the 19th, Baba and party paid a flying visit to Maghar-Pir situated at a distance of 10 miles from Karachi by motor cars. There is located a shrine of a well-known saint besides a number of hot-water springs renowned for their medical properties. Separate bathing arrangements are in existence to afford facilities to all classes of people. Scores of lepers were found lying about the place hoping for a cure.

On the 20th, all came back from Quetta and also brought the luggage that had been left over at Sukkur, where the agreement for the purchase of the land and the bungalow lease were all cancelled, after handsomely compensating the different parties concerned.

Once again discussions on the future programme took place. Besides the fruit gardening, this time Baba added a new aspect to the future life. Once the establishment was started, he said, besides the labour work, the *mandali* will have to conduct a department of feeding and clothing the poor and needy. Not that a Poor Asylum was to be opened, but, the *mandali* were told that, by turn, they will have to form themselves in searching parties to fish out from the nooks and corners of that great city and its suburbs, persons such as the most neglected, disabled and needy, who did not stand a chance of relief under ordinary circumstances! And the search was not to be made haphazard, but very systematically, and for which some motor lorries were also proposed to be purchased. Besides doing all the physical duties, they were informed, they will also have to continuously repeat God's name mentally. In view of the recent calamity amongst them, the *mandali* were greatly depressed and dejected, and none came forward to show interest and enthusiasm in that very troublesome plan. Finding them in that condition, with his characteristic abruptness Baba suddenly stopped that topic, and set up quite a new ball rolling the next day. Such

members who had family ties and business tangles were offered freedom to remain at their respective places and take to their occupations. That being agreed upon, Baba cancelled the whole programme at one bold stroke, and decided to leave for Bombay from where all could disperse!

That evening, Baba gave a bath to every one of the *mandali* by sitting over the tank and pouring water over them, and left for Bombay the following morning, instructing the rest to follow him as soon as possible with all their belongings.

### Bombay

On the 25th of July 1924, all came together again in the Irani Mansion. By the end of that month, however, one after another, the *mandali* at large were completely dispersed, and all went away to their respective places, leaving only half a dozen of them remaining with Baba to keep company with him in his further activities. A large amount of money that Bai Daulatmai Jehangir had placed at Baba's disposal was also disbursed away. Certain amounts were set aside in connection with Hazrat Babajan's and Shri Maharaj's institutions respectively, Rs. 3000 were handed over for technical education for the poor in Persia under a trust to Mr. Hirjibehdin, the editor of the Gujarat weekly, and a small amount was distributed among such of the *mandali* who required a lift in their external affairs.

After these arrangements, Baba decided to start upon extensive touring and tramping for an indefinite period throughout India and bowing down to pilgrims wherever met. The ladies were asked to stay at Sakori with Shri Maharaj until the time the party returned from the tour and put up at a fixed place. Out of the remaining six, two members were asked to keep up at Bombay and Poona respectively and the other four of them were asked to prepare themselves for the unknown excursion. The latter were asked to provide themselves well with the necessary beddings, clothings, footwear, etc., as they were told that once they started on the tour nothing new will be purchased.

Consequently the luggage with the party became too heavy for self-handling. Padri was appointed manager to look after all arrangements and conduct of the tour. Finally they came over to Poona to take a start from there.

The detailed narration of the extensive ramble follows under next heading.

## The Search for 5,000 Pilgrims, South and Central India

At Madras

ON Friday the 2nd August, Baba and the party started from Poona by the afternoon train for Raichur. Many of the *mandali* were present to see them off.

Just a short while after the train had left Poona, Baba began his programme of bowing to pilgrims. Two of the latter were found to be travelling in the same carriage. Baba fed them, gave them some loose coins and touched their feet with his forehead!

Baba casually enquired of Padri at what time they would be reaching Raichur, and when he was informed that the train would reach there at 4 o'clock the following morning, under the excuse that it was a very inconvenient hour, Baba decided to proceed to Madras! As the tickets were already purchased for Raichur, the difference in the fare was made up to the railway authorities, and thus the beginning of a very uncertain ramble was made. They arrived at Madras Central Station on the 3rd at 9:30 P.M. and took shelter in the Shaikh Sidiqui Choultry rest house near the station. The following day, preparations and enquiries were made to go to Porto Novo and that side of the country where heavy floods were reported to have swept over the countryside, causing great damage to life and property. Grams, cheese and breads were taken as provisions for the journey in that distressed area. In the evening, the party came to the Madras Beach station of the S. I. Railway to start towards Porto Novo.

On account of the floods, it was said, many breaches had occurred along the railway lines, and, consequently, only one train was running every day. Hence enormous crowds were witnessed on and about the station, eager to get tickets and room in that solitary train. Somehow, Padri managed to squeeze in through the surging crowds and reached the booking office window only to be informed that the issue of tickets was stopped owing to the train being already overcrowded. He had to wade back again through the jostling crowds with all the odds and ends about his person, such as time-tables, papers, loose coins (which he had always to carry in handfuls to enable Baba to distribute the same among the pilgrims), and various other knick-knacks. Being the manager, he was expected also to be a ready reckoner, a general directory, a walking wardrobe and a storehouse of miscellaneous articles required by Baba at odd moments in the journey, and so to move about heavily loaded among the crowds was no easy affair. In spite of the booking said to be closed it was marked that the station master, a big bulging fellow, all red in the face, was issuing slips to some "selected" passengers who used them to get tickets in exchange for the same at the booking office. It was a funny sight to see the fuming and fumbling officer moving about the platform, going in and out of the room with a small crowd always kicking about his heels.

Perhaps, he was "making hay while the sun shone." Baily also managed to approach the worthy, but both of them being hot tempered, the result was only a hot breeze! At last, Baba asked Padri to book themselves by the second class, and when even this was said to be stopped, he was instructed to get tickets for the first class. But it was not destined for them to go to Porto Novo. Even the first-class tickets were refused, and before any other arrangements could be made, the train hissed out of the platform! Padri was greatly taken to task in not coming earlier to the station in view of the abnormal situation, but the programme was cancelled and the party came back to the rest house.

The following day it was planned to go to the Nilgiri Hills instead of Porto Novo and fresh arrangements were made for that new journey. The party left Madras on the 5th August at about 6:30 in the evening for Ooty. As the next change was to be made at Metropalayam junction on the following morning, the party somehow managed to go to sleep under the benches and over luggage carriers in the third-class carriage, thus making sufficient room for Baba over a part of a bench to lie down.

The next morning, station after station was passed, but no sign of the Metropalayam junction! A fellow passenger was at last asked as to when that blessed junction would be reached. He simply looked amazed and said that the train was not going to Metropalayam at all! Then it transpired that at Madras the party had boarded a direct carriage going to some other destination, and at a certain junction overnight while they were asleep or preoccupied, the same carriage was detached and put on to another train. On the first next station after this discovery, with a great hustle-bustle, they all got down and came back by another train to that junction.

The way Padri was lectured by Baba for that can alone be appreciated by himself, as to use his own expression, he simply smarted under those wordy lashes!

Anyhow, after some delay, the party came to Metropalayam, or, as Baba used to refer to it, "Petroleum." By that time Baba became very ill, as at leaving Madras he had begun to pass loose stools. But in spite of that the journey was continued.

#### In the Nilgiri Hills

About 12:45, they started in the small, toylike mountain railway. It has only two classes, the first and the third. The former resembled an ordinary railway compartment, while the latter, in which the party was travelling, was nothing better than a primitive type of tram-car, open on all sides, with curtains as the only protection against wind and rain. The snaillike speed at which the tiny little engine managed to pull the train up the hills proved a welcome feature of the journey, as it allowed the party to enjoy fully the fascinating scenery all round for which the hills are only too well known. In that rainy season which was in full swing at that time, the hills looked all the more beautiful with the silvery clouds flitting here and there. The more they topped the heights, the more their majestic charm was revealed to their eyesight; but at the same time, the atmosphere began to be extremely uncomfortable owing to keen cold winds that began to sweep through the all-open third-class carriage.

By the time they reached Ooty, which is the terminus of this hill railway, and which is as high as 7,250 feet from the sea-level, almost all were quivering and chattering with cold although it was only four in the afternoon. Two of them were sent in the bazaar by Baba to get *dal* or any other kind of vege-

table dish to eat with the bread which they had with them.

In spite of a hotel-to-hotel search, none was found to be available and the party had to be contented with bread and grams for the time being. Baba was almost laid up with fever by that time. However, they again left Ooty the same evening at 6:20, and came back to Coonoor at 7:45. Owing to fog, the night was pitch dark, and still there was only one lamp burning, and that flickeringly, on the whole of the platform. Here they succeeded in getting a square meal in a Hindu hotel, which they found out through the help and guidance of a Bombay tea merchant. But it was found to be too insanitary to lodge there, and Gustadji preferred to get himself frozen to ice cream out in the cold on the railway platform rather than pass the night there. However, the party did not find it necessary to go to the lengths of courting pneumonia by occupying the platform as the local station master was good enough to allow them the shelter of a first-class empty carriage that was to remain in siding till the following morning.

All of them slept well save Baba who passed a very bad night on account of high fever which did not leave him in the morning. In spite of that, Baba persisted in starting on foot towards that "Petroleum" of a Metropalayam junction the next morning at 7:20 which was about 21 miles away from Coonoor. They again came across the same Hindu tea merchant, who invited the party to tea and the great tea plantations, but he was politely put off and they continued their march. After walking a few miles the party took rest near a small village.

Excepting Baba, the four of them took bread and cheese for breakfast which they were carrying with them. Baba also delivered a homily ending with a remark to Padri, "Don't ever become a Baba if you can help it!"

The rest of the tramp through the beautiful hills was made very slowly, halting here and there on account of the fever that was still raging with Baba. Although a large quantity of tea is exported to other countries from the Nilgiris, yet the same was not found to be available in any of the refreshment shops that were passed by. It was like famine of coal at Newcastle! Wherever the party enquired for tea, coffee was offered to them. As Baba insisted upon having tea, the party made searching enquiries and efforts for the same but all to no purpose. Baba thus did not take anything that morning throughout the tramp, though he allowed the rest of them to take a cup of coffee each at a wayside refreshment shop. While passing through the village,



Baba distributed the grams that they had with them in handfuls to the children encountered there, and thus by the time the tramp came to an end he had finished up the whole of the stock.

The tramp was not continued exactly to the programme, as they all took to train again at the station of Kallar after walking 16 miles, and thus covered the remaining five miles to Metropalayam by rail. The return journey to Madras was completed comfortably and without any untoward incident. The party got a small 10-seat compartment to themselves throughout the night travel and arrived back at Madras at 8:30 in the morning of the 8th August.

That same day, one of the party declared himself to have had enough of that ramble and requested to be excused. The next morning, he was allowed to go to Poona, when most of the spare luggage including their heavy overcoats were also sent away with him. In the evening, Baba and the remaining three companions also came once again to the station to leave for Calcutta. The latest plan formed was to reach Calcutta and Hardwar and from there to walk back to Sakori through Kashi, Benares and such other places of pilgrimage, reaching the final destination by the end of January.

Owing to great rush of crowds, the third-class booking was found to be stopped. Using his own discretion, Padri bought inter-class tickets, but was greatly rebuked afterwards for that "extravagance"; but had he not done so, even then he would have been taken to task for being inactive and unresourceful! Such was Baba's method in the travel. While boarding the train, some English-dressed Parsi gentlemen were encountered on the platform. In spite of their hailings, Padri put them off, but they succeeded in netting Behramji. Although the party had been instructed to remain incognito, Behramji made the slip, and in reply to their enquiries blurted out that they belonged to Meher Baba's party. They, the Parsis, seemed to have heard about Baba, and upon learning the news, one and all flocked about the carriage in which Baba had already taken his seat. Their spokesman greeted Baba in a singularly frank style. "Sahebji, Meher Baba" were the first words he blurted out in a loud voice, and then turning towards his companions with "Oh, Peston, Rustom, come on, greet Meher Baba," he continued shouting on with great enthusiasm. But for all the lack of formalities and ceremonies they greeted with sincerity, and even invited the party to the local travellers' shelter. With that noisy

and unexpected send-off, Baba's party left Madras at 8 P.M. on the 9th August.

### Calcutta

On the 11th August at five in the evening, they arrived at Howrah (Calcutta) station. Under local advice, the party repaired to a Moghul Hotel in the near vicinity of the railway station. The lodging arrangement was found to be on the first floor of the building. Finding the same in a dirty and stinking condition, they beat a quick retreat from there. The next they came across was the Punjab Hotel. It was a "much-ado-about-nothing" type of house; but the party decided to occupy the same and engaged a second-class room. It was a small room, with an old, dilapidated dressing table having only half a piece of mirror in the frame, and one of the two drawers missing from it, as the only piece of furniture in it. Nevertheless, it was comparatively very clean and had sound roof and walls which was all that the party required under the circumstances.

That night the party had a joy-ride in a taxi, and did some sight-seeing for two hours in that great city of Bengal.

The next morning they went to Dakshineswar after crossing the river Hooghly in a launch to the place closely associated with Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa's and Swami Vivekananda's lives. On the other side of the river, a blind beggar was marked by them sitting neglected in dirty surroundings. He was removed from the place, which was cleaned and swept by them, including with their own hands, and after feeding him to full satisfaction, he was again made comfortable on his seat, after which they proceeded. A little distance away from the Dakshineswar village, they came upon the famous Ramakrishna Math, which, however, was not found by them to be so well known at Calcutta as expected. It was situated in calm and beautiful atmosphere along the Hooghly river. Baba made the party pay their respects at the room which was said to be occupied by Ramakrishna Paramhansa during his stay there.

The surrounding rooms which, in the lifetime of Swami Vivekananda, were occupied by Ramakrishna's Circle members were also inspected. The sandals and other things used by Ramakrishna Paramhansa which were preserved carefully there, also came to be viewed.

While returning from the temple they came upon a small tomb that was situated a good distance away from the main

buildings. It was found to contain a large photo of Shri Ramakrishna and a devotee who had been there for so many years, silently devoted to the great personality whose photo he had so fondly preserved and praised. Baba gave him some instructions about devotional exercises and then the party came back to the hotel.

### The Tramp about Hardwar

The same evening at 7:30, the party left Calcutta for Hardwar. Again owing to abnormal crowds, they had to travel by intermediate class. The next day they had to change into the O. & R. Railway at Moghul Sarai junction. And on the 14th of August they came to Hardwar. It was an auspicious day, being the 14th Thursday, full-moon day, and the day of the Hardwar Fair. The party took shelter in a travellers' house and then after some time went for a bath in the sacred Ganges river that originates from this place.

Finding a huge crowd at the river, and the bathing steps in a very dirty condition, they reached back to the shelter without having baths. A Ford car was afterwards engaged to take them to Rishikesh, a place at a distance of about 14 miles, where a number of ascetics were said to be living. The car was found to be in a very run-down condition, with the seats looking like the inward side of the collar of a well-worn coat, besides being torn here and there. Yet the party took seats in it as it was found to be offering cheapest fare to Rishikesh. But before it actually started a tyre went down. And when that was inflated some trouble arose in starting the worn-out engine. At that, the party left it and took to a costlier and better car. Through a rough and zigzag road, they arrived at Rishikesh. Baba bowed down to a great many pilgrims and lepers there, as he had been doing throughout the tour wherever and whenever a chance for doing so came in the way. Baba also had some conversation with an ascetic who was known there as Nepalibaba. From Rishikesh they walked a few miles, and went near the foot of the mighty Himalayas as far as the rope-bridge which is popularly known as Laxman Jhoola, or the cradle of Laxman.

At 1 o'clock they were back again at Hardwar. Preparations were set on foot for the proposed tramp to Sakori. The members who were observing a fast since that morning were allowed to partake of the eternal rice and *dal* in the evening.

The next morning, 15th August, they got up at 6 o'clock and

repaired to the local railway station where after a wash-up they had tea and a cake each. At 9 o'clock they began to walk from Hardwar towards Lakhsar. Very soon, with the beginnings of the tramp, Baba began to have loose stools, but the tramp was continued irrespective of the ailment. At the second mile, Baba allowed his companions to partake of the bread and *dal* that they had with them. The tramp was found to be extremely cumbersome with the heavy kit that they all had to carry with themselves under the scorching sun of an exceptionally hot day. They halted at Pathari for the night, after walking only 10 miles that day, as on account of Baba's ill health the progress was made very slowly and haltingly. In the evening a few pilgrims came from the opposite direction on their way to Hardwar and also halted there for the night. As usual, in those days, Baba gave them some money and bowed to each of them. One of them was found to be repeating "Ram, Ram" constantly as if he were a great devotee, but his sly eye over money and eatables did not escape the party's notice. Baba gave the latter a sound lecture on true ascetic life. Another one of the pilgrims had a small stone wedged in his heel which was brought out under Baba's instruction by one of the party, and the heel was also tended and nursed. Baba passed about 8 to 10 stools that day, but still was found to be lively, active and cheerful.

However, the next morning, they were again on the move at 5:45. In spite of the early hours, the handicap of luggage carrying made their progress slow. After the fourth mile, a man with long hair like Baba's, and looking like a Muslim, came across them; he salaamed Baba, shook hands with him, and just as quietly as he had approached, went away in the opposite direction. From that point the party left the road and began trudging along the railway lines. As soon as they were upon a deserted watchman's cabin, a shower of rain came down and so the cabin proved a very handy shelter. The party, excepting Baba, had their breakfast in that lonely cabin from the eatables they carried with them. A few miles' more walk brought them across a stream of bright clear water where they halted for an hour. They refreshed themselves by drinking handfuls of that sparkling water that was oozing out of the rocks. Baba also had here some bread and some chutney which was procured from a shepherd boy for an anna.

At 1 o'clock they reached Lakhsar, very exhausted after having walked only nine miles from Pathari. After taking baths, they took meals in a Hindu refreshment room and then rested for

a while in the waiting hall on the railway station. In the evening, it was decided to take to some travellers' shelter. Accordingly, Padri approached the keeper of one such place, but the question of religion came in the way. When those people were told that the party professed the Zoroastrian religion and were Parsis, they seemed to be at a loss to understand it. "Tell us clearly whether you are Hindus or Muslims" was their insistent demand. In order to impress upon the innkeeper that they were neither Hindus nor Muslims, Padri showed them the ceremonial thread he had round his waist. Seeing that, they began to discuss among themselves, and were heard to remark, "They seem to be Hindus, but at least they are not Muslims," and, after all, allowed Baba's party in; but by way of precaution, they gave a part of the verandah only.

Then the innkeeper brought in his visitor's book and asked for the names. Padri gave in his own name first, i.e., Fardoonji Navroji. Then came Behramji's turn. He said his name was Behramji Fardoonji. The innkeeper looked up with surprise at that and said to Behramji, "What! Are you his son?" pointing towards Padri who hardly looked out of his teens, while Behramji could easily be taken by anybody for 35 years of age. To their great amusement, the party enlightened the gaping innkeeper that both of them had no relationship between themselves and that the names of their fathers happened to be the same. However, the shelter that was secured after so much nig-nagging was found to be very insanitary and a stinking smell came floating now and then from a gutter that was near the verandah.

Within half an hour, they again came to the station and took to the waiting hall there. The station master was approached to allow them the use of the waiting room for a couple of days, which request was granted; but a local Parsi gentleman who was at that time standing beside the station master was asked by the latter to see the people of his own community. The Parsi gentleman surveyed Padri up and down, put some questions, even saw the ceremonial thread, but finally shrugged his shoulders and said, "Every man from Bombay is not a Parsi."

Lakhsar is an important junction specially in connection with a large pilgrim traffic. Consequently, a large number of pilgrims came in to be bowed by Baba during their stay there for a couple of days. Vajifdar joined them at this station under previous instructions, while some others of the *mandali* were also wired to meet them at certain other places. The tramping programme was dropped, and Baba decided to settle again at Arangaon after

finishing up the number of 5,000 pilgrims that were to be bowed down to. For this purpose, it was further decided to visit some places of pilgrimage by train. The companions were also eager to end the uncertainties and troubles of the haphazard touring and tramping, and so fell in very willing to the idea of a fixed stay somewhere.

### In the Interior of India

Accordingly the party left Hardwar on the 18th August and reached Moradabad the same evening. Immediately they set out in the city for a ramble among the pilgrims. The one who was found in a temple near the river, and to whom all bowed, applied ash on their foreheads, including that of Baba's! While returning to the Moradabad station, an apparently mad man was marked to be sitting under a neem tree in the near vicinity of the station. Upon enquiry it was found that he had been sitting there for the last four years under the shelter of the neem tree throughout all climates, irrespective of cold, rain or heat. When the party approached him, the surroundings were found to be in a dirty and stinking condition as he was said to pass stools on his hand and throw the refuse over his head nearby! Baba went very near to him and asked him if he would like to eat anything. He said he would take some ice cream, which was said to be his favourite food and which at times he took by pounds! Baba then fed him with ice cream to his full satisfaction with his own hands. Rs. 5 were also given to a hotelkeeper nearby to supply him ice cream whenever asked for after their departure. Baba declared him to be spiritually intoxicated.

The night was passed at the station platform and the next morning they started for Bhopal. They all had to change at Lucknow, save one of them who was instructed to proceed direct towards Kashi Benares to receive another member who was asked to come at the latter place, and then both of them to come to Baroda where the rest of the party was to follow after visiting Bhopal. The next change was made at Jhansi and Bhopal was reached in the afternoon of the 20th August.

Another member joined Baba the following day at Bhopal where the party as usual had a round in the city looking after ascetics. The same evening they left Bhopal for Rutlam. Behramji was sent direct to Baroda in advance to arrange for the rest of the party there, as Baba's health was by then reduced to a physical wreck and he badly needed complete rest. During the stay

of a few hours at Rutlam, an extensive tramp in the town was undertaken. On the 22nd they reached Baroda. The member who had joined at Bhopal was sent away to his place from Baroda, while the one who had been called at Benares duly joined them. The party repaired to the Gujarat Hindu Lodge in the Syaji Gunj, where Behramji had already arranged for their stay.

Here once again Baba declared to the great relief of his run-down companions that after visiting Mount Abu, they will finally settle down at Arangaon.

The following day the party went out for sight-seeing. The Baroda Museum and the Maharajah's palace were the finest sights they saw throughout that excursion of the day.

Instead of taking rest at Baroda to recoup his shattered health as prearranged, Baba left Baroda with the party after passing only one night there, and reached Ujjain on the 25th at 1 P.M. After meals, the party started for a ramble in the town. While passing along the banks of the river Narmada, many pilgrims and lepers were encountered on the way. Baba bowed to each of them and also gave each two coppers. At the temple, the place of local pilgrimage on the Narmada, the newly joined Hindu member of the party was instructed to take bath and undergo the necessary religious ceremonies of a pilgrimage. Near the same temple two peculiar pilgrims were also marked to be living under a small shed near the temple tank. One of them seemed to be a leper. His eyes looked to be merely big balls of red flesh and all his fingers were cramped and crippled. Baba took some money and went to him for his usual obeisance. But after putting the money near the pilgrim, when he was about to place his head on the pilgrim's feet, the latter quickly withdrew them and exclaimed, "Humph." So Baba only bowed to him from a distance and returned to where the *mandali* were staying. The latter were informed by Baba that the particular pilgrim was in a fair state of spiritual advancement. Before the party left the place, the same ugly pilgrim was also heard by them to sing, and it was observed that in contrast to his deformed physical appearance, he had a very sweet and melodious voice.

Leaving Ujjain the same evening at 4 P.M. the party came to Mortaka at 10 o'clock in the night. The night was passed again on the local railway station platform.

In the morning (26th), they started by bullock carts for Ankleshawar, a place of pilgrimage at a distance of about 10 miles from Mortaka. One of the party who also began to have dysen-

tery was left to rest at Mortaka station—while Baba in spite of wretched, physical condition, accompanied the party and underwent the bumps and jostles of bullock travel for those 10 miles. At Ankleshawar, Baba came across a Bengali known as Nirmalananda Swami and recognized by the villagers as a holy man. During the time Baba talked with him in English, the Hindu member of the party, again under Baba's instructions, took the religious bath in the sacred river nearby and went through other necessary ceremonies. Many other pilgrims were also seen here by Baba, to all of whom he bowed and paid respects.

They came back to Mortaka and started back for Baroda the same night at 10 P.M. At a wayside station nearing Baroda the next morning (27th), a Muslim tried to occupy the compartment occupied by the party; and when one of the party tried to obstruct the apparent lover of opium, his heavy-laden and drooping eyes caught sight of Baba's features, whereupon he renewed his feeble attempts at entering the compartment and kept on repeating, "At least let me see Miyan"; and then addressing Baba, he proffered his shrivelled hand and requested a handshake. He was let in and Baba talked with him for a long time. When asked for his opinion about Pavaghad Hills, he praised and praised it in the very humorous tone of an opium-influenced man, but that joke about the Pavaghad Hills proved serious business. Baba decided to visit them instead of the Mount Abu and then end the tour.

At 8 P.M. the party once more came to Baroda. The Hindu member was asked to go away to his place while the rest took to the same Gujarat Hindu Lodge. The following day, 28th Thursday, the party started from Baroda at 4 P.M. and came at the foot of the hills by 9 o'clock. A local Muslim police officer rendered them considerable assistance and conducted them to a travellers' shelter, as well as warned them to keep indoors in the dead of night as beasts of prey were said to frequent the immediate neighbourhood.

The next morning they got up at 6 o'clock and within half an hour began climbing the hills. Owing to the steep gradient of the path the climb was found to be very laborious. It was quite a feat on Baba's part to accompany the rest of the party in that hard climb, as he still suffered with dysentery and pains in the stomach, which only subsided whenever they halted for a while. Otherwise the pain continued with him during the whole of the climb, when Baba was often marked to wince and vibrate with it. Quite contrary to the Nilgiri Hills, they were



able to get excellent tea en route, and that twice, too. The three miles of uphill walking brought them to the summit at about 10 A.M. There is a temple here dedicated to Mother Kali which attracts thousands of pilgrims every year during the annual fair. Even in the ordinary days, at least three or four score of people go there daily on pilgrimage. There is also a shrine of a Muslim saint known as Sajjanshah Vali situated just immediately above the temple. At both the places, the party paid their respects and after that sat for a while viewing the delightful scenery all round, with the romantic fort of Pavaghad lying in ruins in the background. Baba here discussed the prospect of putting up here permanently or at the Sinhgad forts near Poona and compared the situation of the two places. They came down at 12 P.M. and, after taking meals, returned to Baroda the same evening. From Baroda they came over to Bombay, and again put up in the Irani Mansions at Dadar.

### Portuguese India

In spite of putting up there for a considerable time the question of a permanent stay remained shelved. On the contrary, in the following month of September, Baba again decided to go to Portuguese India. Padri, however, asked to be excused and begged to be left in Bombay as he said he had enough of the "merry-go-round" rambles. His place of managership was filled in with Vajifdar and the former was allowed to remain in Bombay.

From Bombay the party of four with Baba came to Poona, and directly taking to the M. & S. M. Railway, proceeded to Panjim. Some extremely charming scenic views came to be witnessed en route, especially when the train wound its way through hilly country. The Triple Waterfalls, popularly known as the Doodhya-Sagar, was the best sight. Vajifdar soon began to feel indisposed, and by the time the station of Londa junction was reached, he was completely laid up with fever. Baba became very angry with him on some pretext or other and subjected him to a great onslaught of his usual niggling. Vajifdar was left on the Londa station platform with Masaji to look after him. Behramji was sent in search of fresh milk for the former, while Baba and Gustadji went out to get food. After a considerable tramp, they found a "tolerable" Hindu hotel at distance of about a furlong from the station and took their meals there, as well as brought some with them for the rest of the companions. After

providing the fresh milk to Vajifdar the journey was proceeded with. Baba's nig-nagging brought about a remarkable change in Vajifdar's health. Instead of his condition becoming aggravated, the mental trouble caused him to be brought round quickly within a few hours.

At Castle Rock station, all their luggage was subjected to disinfection through steam, excepting Baba's bedding which was managed to be passed through intact.

The railway journey ended at Marmagoa, from where the party boarded a steam launch. After a few hours' refreshing cruising they arrived in Panjim and put up in a stylish Christian hotel. But during the stay there for two or three days, the party took their meals in a Hindu hotel and only lodged in the former.

Many notable sites and churches were inspected at Panjim and in the old Goa nearby. The most important spiritual place visited was the cathedral containing Saint Francis Xavier's shrine. His body is preserved to this day with the greatest care and reverence and forms a great pilgrim centre of the Christians. That particular cathedral was very closely inspected by Baba. He even went up all the way to the bell tower through a dark, spiral stairway.

#### The Recess

After their return from Goa to Bombay, Baba was constantly on the move between Bombay and Arangaon for the few months till he finally settled down at Arangaon by the end of January 1925. He also paid a flying visit to Belgaum in company of one of the party in December.

While in Arangaon in November 1924, Baba observed a short period of silence for a week from the 18th of that month, and during this week, he kept most of the time indoors. He seldom took food, and when at times Padri was asked to bring it in the room, the latter was ordered never to look at his face. At that time only three members were staying with him.

In December, Baba put up in a room rented temporarily in the Bharucha Building at Dadar with the few members of the *mandali* that were with him. All through his stay, Baba took food occasionally, as mostly he kept himself on sugar and warm water. During this period, Gustadji was also made to fast for a week and to remain on water only.

The rest of the time passed in Bombay in December and January was witnessed to be exceptionally calm and peaceful.

Quadrangular matches and Cine Madeline under Dadachanji's management were amongst the frequent entertainments visited and indulged in. It was as if recess were being enjoyed in preparation for the great Meherabad activities to be described hereafter.

## Notes

1. "I first saw the Master-Mystic, Merwanseth, whom one of my most intimate friends, Dr. Abdul Ghani, used to refer to as his schoolmate, at Munshi Abdur Rahim Saheb's place at Poona, at about the middle of the year 1921. And since then I not only heard Merwanseth's name frequently mentioned amongst all our friends, but noticed that it has begun to be held in great esteem. However, the first prolonged company I enjoyed with the new 'friend' was once while we happened to travel together in a railway train between Bombay and Poona. So very simply and freely did he mix with us that I almost forgot his presence until my attention was drawn when he remarked, 'Is that not very strange that, in spite of God being supposed to be equally just and merciful towards all, there are many people who are happy and many who are unhappy? Granted that this is due to individual good and bad actions on the part of the persons concerned; but what about those who are either born princes or born paupers?'

"Before one of us could find a suitable reply, Merwanseth remarked, 'Perhaps it is like the rain. It rains over all places, but while pools hold the water for a long time, rocks soon get dried up: but we cannot blame the rain for this result, can we?'

"'Certainly not,' chimed in every one of us, approving the explanation and thinking that the unexpected serious turn given to the light discussions going on would stop at that.

"'But then,' continued Merwanseth, 'why are there pools that hold water and the rocks that dry up soon, and who is responsible for creating this difference?'

"With the same abruptness with which he started the topic, he brushed aside the subject without allowing anybody to ponder over it, saying, 'Oh, leave the matter and let us talk about something else.'

"The following day when I had forgotten all about the journey, S. M. Usman, one of my best friends, who was also with us on the preceding day, rebuked me mildly, saying, 'I say you ought not to have stretched your legs and placed your feet with the boots on against Merwanseth's seat in the train yesterday.'

"And what harm was there in so doing?' I asked. 'No harm,' replied my friend, 'but it was rather rude of you to do so.'

"And thus I came to know that besides esteem my friends had also begun to have reverence for Merwanseth. But it made no difference in my own attitude of disinterestedness towards him."

Ramjoo Abdulla, "The Mystics I Have Met," *The Meher Message*, vol. III, no. 2 (1931) pp. 34-36.

2. Doctor Abdul Ghani. *See* Biographies.

3. "For the following few months, without information or invitation, and quite under unexpected circumstances, I used to find myself present in Bombay on several occasions whenever any friends arranged a singing or a picnic party to be enjoyed in Merwanseth's company. On one of such occasions when I had come to Bombay to make purchases for a small cloth shop that I had at Lonavla, Merwanseth remarked, 'It would be better if you make no purchases at this time.' Later on I found that the purchases proved a source of much trouble to me, though at the time I smiled at the unsolicited advice and thought I knew my business better.

"In the course of time I myself began to feel some attraction towards Merwanseth and thereupon I made some off-hand yet deliberate attempts to see him. But whereas formerly I used to come across him without any intention to do so, now every time that I tried I failed to reach him, until the 23rd of January 1922."

Ramjoo Abdulla, "The Mystics I Have Met," *The Meher Message*, vol. III, no. 2 (1931) p. 36.

4. Munshi Abdur Rahim. *See* Biographies.

5. Gustadji N. Hansotia. *See* Biographies.

6. Behli J. Irani. *See* Biographies.

7. Charni Road was the Bombay residence of Munshi Abdur Rahim. Baba stayed there for 10 days in January 1922 after Upasni Maharaj had completed his task of returning Baba to normal human consciousness while yet retaining his God consciousness.

8. The Khilafat movement aimed at the preservation of the Turkish empire and of the sovereignty of the sultan as caliph. When the Khilafat deputation was rejected by David Lloyd George great discontent arose among the Indian Muslims. The Ali brothers, Mohammed and Shaukat, announced that it was the duty of all true Muslims to leave India for countries where Islam was respected. Thousands responded to this call, sold their goods and fled to Afghanistan. Afghanistan, unable to absorb and support these immigrants, forbade their entry and the Khyber Pass was filled with the graves of the old and the weak who died on this abortive journey. The failure of this flight, plus the establishment of a strong secular republic in Turkey, caused the Khilafat movement to peter out by 1924.

Swaraj, the Congress home-rule party, advocating home rule for India, became linked with Mohandas Gandhi's non-cooperation movement and identified with India's struggle for independence.

9. Sadashiv Patel. *See* Biographies.

10. Arjun Dagdu Supekar. *See* Biographies.

11. The Kasba Peth section of Poona was the base for Baba's work from 1917 to 1921. It was there that Baba gathered his earliest disciples, formed the nucleus of his *mandali* and lived out the majority of the seven years of returning to normal consciousness under the guidance of Upasni Maharaj following Babajan's kiss unveiling Baba's God consciousness. In July 1921 Baba went to Sakori for six months to live with Maharaj. In early January 1922, Maharaj completed the process of bringing Baba back to normal consciousness. Baba commenced his Avataric mission, living in a small hut in Poona, while returning to the Kasba Peth section weekly, as described in the text.

Since the Kasba Peth period of Baba's life is very important, has been little discussed, and forms a natural prelude to the commencement of this diary, I have included a description of these activities.

Sometime in 1917 Baba's father opened a toddy shop in the Kasba Peth section of Poona. Baba, who as yet was still most

absorbed in his God-conscious state, looked after the shop for two hours every day. In 1918 Baba determined to open a toddy shop of his own. He and Behramji secured a licence, went into partnership and opened a toddy shop. Baba worked long hours in the shop, at least six hours a day, washing the bottles, serving the customers, sweeping the floors—indeed, all the menial tasks. After a year, Baba ceased working in the shop and eventually it was closed.

During this period many people came to the shop, met Baba and conversed with him. Shortly thereafter, he hired a small room near the tomb of Khwaja Salauddin, which he decorated with pictures of Upasni Maharaj and Babajan. Ceremonies, singing, etc., were performed there every evening and twice a week early in the morning. In addition meetings and discussions were held there. Later the Kasba Peth gatherings were held in two places, the home of Sadashiv Patel or a small room rented by Arjun. Following are descriptions of this period by two of Baba's early disciples:

"It is to Kasba Peth, the fishermen locality of Poona, on the banks of the Moola river, that the honour of first recognizing Meher Baba's spiritual worth is rightly due, and it is somewhat reminiscent of the early association of Jesus Christ with the fishermen of Galilee. The wisdom in the choice of this locality by Meher Baba, in the matter of his first spiritual contact with the outside world, would be well appreciated if the following concomitant factors are taken into account.

"The Hindu local populace, consisting mostly of fishermen, though religiously orthodox to an extent, evinced a sort of a camaraderie with the Muslim element there, over their common allegiance to the spiritual genius of the place—the shrine of the famous Muslim saint Khwaja Salauddin. Hence the social contact of Hindus and Muslims at Kasba Peth, with Meher Baba as the centre of attraction, never smacked of that indefinable feeling of restraint and reservation which one unmistakably sniffs in the atmosphere of ultra-orthodoxy as that of Southern India.

"In spite of the merry atmosphere of these social evenings, with Meher Baba as the cynosure of all eyes, one could feel him asserting himself or rather expanding towards those around him in very many subtle ways. He began taking personal interest in the affairs of individuals—Hindus and Muslims alike—and the advice he gave was greatly appreciated and implicitly followed.

At this stage he came to be regarded as a very sincere and disinterested friend, and many would feel relieved and comforted after unburdening to him the best or worst of their secrets and troubles.

"Meher Baba, in dealing with people opening out their hearts to him, demonstrated a very happy knack of inspiring confidence and hope in him by a timely gesture of appreciation and a kindly word spoken at an opportune moment, which would go a very long way in retrieving many a desolate soul from the depths of despondency, and in goading many desperate people to exert an extra spurt in the matter of facing the odds in life. . . .

"The early *mandali* at Kasba Peth were gradually trained to rise above their mundane pastimes and were encouraged to think and talk more of spiritual matters. When in a lighter vein or mood, Meher Baba would be the first to crack or enjoy a joke, but he would simply refuse to countenance any vulgarity and frivolous behaviour from anyone around him.

"Individual likes and dislikes were scrupulously taken note of by him. The Hindus were allowed to perform worship ceremonies, devotional singing and religious speeches and other rites after their own way, and whenever the Muslims were in attendance in sufficient numbers, *ghazal* singing, mostly amateurish, was indulged in, wherein Khak Saheb and myself would sometimes participate. Meher Baba, too, oftentimes would entertain the assemblage by singing a few *ghazals* (odes) from his favorite poet, Hafiz, in his sweet, warbling voice, and would sometimes accompany the devotional singing and music by playing dexterously the Indian drums cylindrical in shape commonly known as *murdang* or *dhol*."

Dr. Abdul Ghani, "Twenty Years with Meher Baba,"  
*Meher Baba Journal*, August 1940, pp. 679-680.

"For some time at Poona I seemed to have lost touch with Merwan, who still visited Sakori, until one day I met Baily, who was known to Merwan long before he met me at Poona Cantonment. He informed me that Merwan was staying at Kasba Peth at one end of the city. As I did not know the way to go to Kasba Peth he gave me an indication of the roads and streets which I could hardly remember. With difficulty, one day during spare hours I managed to find Kasba Peth and there in a small one-storied building of Arjun, who was a pet disciple, I found Merwan. I was overjoyed to meet him there.

"There were two buildings at Kasba Peth which Merwan often



visited—the small one belonging to Arjun and another, a bigger three-storied building some blocks ahead, belonging to Sadashiv Shelke (Patel). Sadashiv is one of the oldest disciples and friends of Merwan. There was a band of about a dozen fishermen-disciples of Merwan at Kasba Peth, to which Arjun belonged, and Sadashiv was the head of them all. Merwan passed most of his time in the two houses, singing Hindu devotional songs and *ghazals*, playing drum, seeing people who came for blessing and giving occasional discourses in Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati and English. His food was meagre. Baily used to bring to Kasba Peth the evening meal composed of thick *dal* and bread cooked by Davla Masi, the aunt of Merwan, who lived about 100 yards away from Merwan's parents' house in the cantonment part of Poona. Merwan and his disciple friends used to sit and take this meal together."

Adi K. Irani, "My Life with Avatar Meher Baba,"  
*Divya Vani*, March 1965, pp. 25-26.

12. Charbawdi is the part of Poona where Babajan had her seat.

13. *Holi*. A Hindu holiday, the coconut day. It falls in the Hindu month of Fagan, the Christian month of March.

14. Behramji Fardoonji Irani. *See* Biographies.

15. Babu Geruo Ubale. *See* Biographies.

16. Ahmed Abbas. *See* Biographies.

17. Adi K. Irani. *See* Biographies.

18. Ardeshir N. Hansotia. *See* Biographies.

19. One of the participants in this incident, Adi K. Irani has described the events and their effect upon him:

"Very early morning, all the devotees gathered near Baba at Sadashiv's house, and before beginning the journey, Baba decided to give them a small breakfast. He chose Dr. Ghani and me to go to a small restaurant nearby and bring a plate of cream and bread and a cup of tea for each one. When the man in the restaurant began to prepare this, I felt hungry and enticed to eat but dared not do it on my own initiative. I asked Ghani and he gave his assent. When we reached Sadashiv's house with the consignment carried by servants, we were late and Baba at once asked us the cause for the delay. I admitted to

have taken the breakfast myself first, but on Ghani's consent. Ghani said that I did it on my own. Baba became 'furious' and this was the first lesson I got from him. With a violent impact of his hand, I was shaken to the depth of my ego. The mind, though convinced of the cause justifying the rap I received, revolted, but the heart was too full with his love and at once silenced the mind. The number of blows I have had in my life at his chastising hands ever cherished in me a sweet reforming memory of my weaknesses."

Adi K. Irani, "My Life with Avatar Meher Baba,"  
*Divya Vani*, May 1965, p. 25.

20. Sarosh K. Irani. *See* Biographies.

21. *Iti-danda*, also known as *gili-danda*. "Speaking of *iti-danda*, an Indian game with a wooden stick about two feet long and a smaller piece of wood pointed at both ends, Meher Baba delivered himself as follows:

"This game consists in striking the smaller piece of wood lying on the ground on the pointed end by the longer piece held in the hand, thereby making it rise and rotate in the air. Before allowing the smaller piece of wood to fall on the ground, it should be struck again with the rod in hand driving it as far as possible.' Meher Baba further explained, 'When a Perfect Master selects a disciple worthy of God realization, he invariably strikes at the lower part of his nature, his self-egoism. This corresponds to the striking of the smaller piece of wood by the rod in hand to enable the former to lift itself in the air. The egoism or the lower self of the disciple once shattered, the second step consists in driving him onwards towards the Goal of Self-realization. This second ordeal is explanatory of the second stroke which sends the piece hanging in the air to a distance proportionate to the force of the impact conveyed.' "

Dr. Abdul Ghani, "Twenty Years with Meher Baba,"  
*Meher Baba Journal*, Sept. 1940, pp. 682-683.

22. Khodadad K. Irani. *See* p. 78.

23. Baba Abdur Rehman, a Bombay saint, was often visited by Babajan. His disciple Tipoo Baba was visited by Meher Baba in 1915 in Bombay. Abdur Rehman's tomb was visited by Meher Baba at the outset of the Manzil days and quite frequently afterwards by the *mandali* at Baba's direction. It appeared to play some part in the spiritual working of Meher Baba.

24. "Now there is a special thing about the Manzil-e-Meem meaning—a Persian letter which has a circle and a tangent attached to it. When Baba named the house Manzil-e-Meem I happened to ask him what it meant. He said that the circle represents God and the circle with the tangent attached to it which makes the whole thing *meem*—it is Avatar. Avatar is the circle and the tangent—the circle is God and the circle with the tangent is the Avatar. At that time, of course, he did not say Avatar but only Perfect Master. Many years later when he declared himself to be the Avatar he explained that *meem* stands for the Avatar. It is a very important letter in the Persian alphabet."

From a conversation with Adi K. Irani, 1970.

25. Aga Baidul. *See* Biographies.

26. Rustom K. Irani. *See* Biographies.

27. Gulmai Irani, mother of Adi and Rustom, and Meher Baba's spiritual mother. *See* Biographies.

28. Homi J. Vajifdar. *See* Biographies.

29. Navroji Talati. *See* Biographies.

30. Jal S. Irani. *See* Biographies.

31. "The hearing of dreams formed a very interesting feature of the Manzil life. I am sure it would not be time thrown away if I give here a few significant and interesting dreams dreamt by the adherents of the Master in the Manzil. . . .

"One night, Mr. Gustadji Hansotia dreamt that he, in company with Meher Baba, was passing through a thoroughfare of a big city. Suddenly they came across Her Holiness Babajan who was seated in the frontage of a palatial building. The dreamer worshipped Her Holiness and then went with the two Perfect Masters into the building. To his surprise, there he saw a big machine fixed deep into something resembling a pit from which was shooting forth a steady livid flame. It seemed to the dreamer that the flame if not immediately put out would burn up the entire world, and so he promptly sought permission of the Master to stop the machine from working. The permission was given, and down he jumped into the pit, but no sooner did he jump than he found himself in the waking state.

"A far more interesting and an equally far more significant dream than any of the above ones was dreamt by Mr. Behli

[Baily] J. Irani one afternoon in the month of October in the room on the left side of the verandah which was allotted to him whenever he came to stay in the Manzil. Baily in those days used to sleep not at night but in the daytime. . . . Baily, in the beginning of his dream, found himself loitering in the deserted street of a village which he could not recognize. The street contained a number of huts, but nobody seemed to him to be dwelling in them. After he crossed the street, he saw a small lane which he entered. No sooner did he go into it than he saw a number of Hindu girls close by a water pipe washing their vessels and filling them with water. One of the girls was so beautiful that, though all of her companions were certainly comely, she totally eclipsed their beauty. She was possessed of bewitching eyes, blooming cheeks, golden hair and fair feet. Neither in the dreamland nor in the gross world had the dreamer ever seen such a beautiful girl. At the very sight, he fell into what is stupidly called love with her, and began to think out a plan of enticing her into his possession. By means fair or foul, he resolutely resolved to have her. When he was absorbed in his wily thought of seducing her, she caught sight of him. And no sooner did the eyes of both meet than he smiled a significant smile to which she responded with an equally significant smile, as if the same feelings had entered her heart at the first sight. Hope of winning her entered the dreamer's heart, but he could no longer stare at her openly in the presence of those other girls. So he entered an empty hut and there, through a cleft with lustful eyes, he began to behold her. Seizing the first opportunity, he beckoned her to come to him. She in reply, after assuring herself that none was noticing her, made a gesture the meaning of which was that she could come to him at the first opportunity. This gesture made the dreamer's heart dance with joy, but his joy was short-lived. To his boundless astonishment, when he was impatiently waiting for his sweetheart, he saw Meher Baba standing close by him. He would not have been more astonished had an African rhinoceros entered the hut he occupied and attacked him. He was bewildered to the last degree at seeing the Master, and was equally mortified when the Master questioned him as to what he was doing. He was too much abashed to utter a word in reply. What reply can a thief give when he is caught with his booty? But the Master, as soon as he caught sight of the girl looking in the direction of the hut, in an instant understood how the matters stood. He addressed not a word of reproach to his disciple, but asking him to follow him left the hut.

"The dreamer then found himself passing with Meher Baba through lane after lane. After they covered more than a mile, they stopped and entered an empty hut which reminded the dreamer of Shri Upasni Maharaj's hut at Sakori. The Master left the hut asking Baily to remain there till he returned to it. When Baily was pacing up and down, he suddenly caught sight of a chart. In the corners of the chart, there were in all four pictures, each containing one. The upper corners contained the pictures of a Hindu temple and a Muhammadan mosque, the lower ones contained the pictures of a Christian temple and a Parsi firetemple. In the midst of the chart was the photo of Meher Baba. The dreamer simply could not help contemplating on the significance of the chart, and wished from the bottom of his heart that it might bring down the barriers that separate one creed from another and might bring about universal brotherhood. When the Master returned to the hut, Baily remembers to have asked him: 'Of whose brain this chart is the product?' 'Of your own' was the reply. 'Of my own? Oh, no; You are making a mistake, Baba,' said the dreamer. The Master rejoined, 'This chart I ordered to be prepared in accordance with the views you had expressed to me some time ago. When it shall be put before the public, all the credit for it shall go to you and you will be much renowned.' So saying the Master left the hut asking Baily to follow him.

"In the dreamland, Baily then found himself ambling with the Master in a street which was full of beautiful Egyptian and European ladies and in which delightful music was being played of a certain town of Egypt. He was so much bewitched by the sights he saw and the music he heard that for a time he became oblivious of the Master. Imagine his dismay and astonishment when he found that the Master had disappeared while his mind was rapt in longing for sensual pleasures! The disappearance of the Master he took as a punishment for his carnal-mindedness and contrition pierced his heart. Tears trickled down his cheeks and in a tone of anguish he shouted, 'Baba, O Baba, where are you?' To this he received no reply; but when he shouted the Master's name for the second time, he heard these words, 'Baily, I am here.' He turned round, for he heard the voice coming from behind but he did not see the Master. Again he heard the voice, this time as if it came from the sky, 'Baily, I am here.' The dreamer still remembers to have asked in a tone of anguish, 'Where, Baba, where are you? I do not see you anywhere.' To this he got the reply, which came from below the earth, 'Baily, I am everywhere.' Poor Baily was grief stricken and bewildered.

Not far from him was a gutter covered with a lid. Something prompted him to go to it and remove its lid. As soon as he removed the lid, he caught sight of Jesus Christ standing in that gutter, the lower part of his body being immersed in its foul stinking water. Jesus, with a finger of His right hand, pointed to heaven and looked at Baily with ineffable compassion, but uttered not a word. The dreamer was so much struck with awe at seeing the figure of Jesus that he began to cry as if his heart would break. On seeing him weeping, a number of people gathered round him and asked him the reason of his grief. He replied that Shri Meher Baba had fallen into the gutter and requested them to take him out of it. What happened then Baily does not know, for his dream was over, and he found himself crying, in the waking state."

K. J. Dastur, "Life of Shri Meher Baba," unpublished, 1926.

32. Fardoon N. Driver. *See* Biographies.

33. Baba's mother.

34. Vishnu N. Deorukhkar. *See* Biographies.

35. Gulmai's husband and father of Rustom and Adi.

36. Aspandiar Rustom Irani. *See* Biographies.

37. "We" appears to refer to the following: Gustadji, Behramji, Ramjoo, Adi, Slamson, Babu, Baidul, Pendu, Nervous, Padri and Jal.

38. Cutch or Kutch: former state of West India, on the Arabian Sea, now part of the state of Gujarat. (From Webster's *New World Dictionary*, 1974.)

39. Shiah Muslim: a member of one of the two great sects of Muslims. The Shiah consider Ali, Muhammad's son-in-law and the fourth of the caliphs, as the first Imam and the rightful successor of Muhammad and do not accept the Sunna (orthodox Muslim law based on the teachings and practices of Muhammad) as authoritative.

Sunni Muslim: a member of the other of the two great sects of Muslims. The Sunni approve the historical order of the first four caliphs as the rightful line of succession to Muhammad and accept the Sunna as an authoritative supplement to the Koran. (From Webster's *New World Dictionary*, 1974.)

40. "The *ghamella* is an iron pan generally used by coolies to carry heavy loads of hard substances over their heads, and since heaps of half-torn buildings had either to be removed or repaired and approaches prepared to the same through hills and fields, the *ghamella* was the most prominent tool in operation."

Abdul Karim Abdulla, "Manzil-e-Meem," *Meher Baba Journal*, May 1939, p. 49.

41. Nizam: title of former native rulers in Hyderabad, India

# Biographies

SINCE the members of Baba's *mandali* spring forth full blown as characters in this diary without antecedents, I thought it would be of interest to include a brief contemporary description of their origins and how they were drawn to Baba. The following biographical sketches, describing their lives up to the time they joined Baba, are mostly taken from K. J. Dastur's "Life of Shri Meher Baba," an unpublished biography of Baba's early life, written at Meherabad in 1928 while Dastur was living among the *mandali* with Baba. The manuscript bears Baba's signature on the cover, indicating that it was at least read by Baba.

The entries are preceded by the note number bearing that name and are arranged in the order they are noted. The entries are direct quotations from Dastur's biography unless otherwise stated.

2. *Dr. Abdul Ghani (Doctor)*. He was born in the same year in which the Master was born and, as his house was in the same locality in which the Master's house was situated, he was fortunate in coming into contact with the future Perfect Master from his early childhood. Both were playmates, and a deep attachment sprang up between them very early in their lives. Both passed the matriculation examination in the same year, and both joined the Deccan College. After becoming an undergraduate of arts, Mr. Ghani joined the Medical College of Poona, and from the day on which he joined it, his friends began to call him Doctor, doubtless in anticipation of his becoming a physician. But he passed through the Medical College without learning much and



without passing a single examination, probably because of his habit of putting off till tomorrow what he could do today. However, some time after he left the Medical College, he succeeded in securing the Calcutta degree of L.H.M.S. and to his credit it must be said that he is well posted up in the science of homeopathy.

[The narrative is continued by Dr. Ghani himself in his autobiography.]

It was in the year 1920 that I met Meher Baba once again after a lapse of almost six years, during which period we had practically forgotten each other. I was a practising homeopath in Bombay at the time and used to make infrequent trips to Poona to see friends and relations. In one such visit to Poona by me, I called upon my friend Munshi Abdur Rahim [see note 4] whose residence was always associated in the minds of those who knew him, with festive little parties, and where I was always certain of contacting most of my local Muslim friends and acquaintances, who invariably gathered there in the evenings to indulge in a feast of reason and the flow of soul.

The usual coterie of familiar faces was there right enough, but amongst them I was pleasantly surprised to find Meher Baba (who was Merwan to me at the time) whom I could not resist the temptation of greeting in the most informal manner the way I used to in school and college days. Ignoring the presence of all others for the moment, I attacked Merwan straight off with a volley of questions, personal and unconventional, as to his life and career, to which he seemed to react very good-humouredly, to the surprise of those around.

Although everyone present there knew me well and long enough, my fresh introduction to them by Merwan as his college and also childhood friend, made me somehow feel on the occasion that there was something criminal in my behaviour that evening. My outburst of flippant familiarity with Merwan was evidently not relished by Munshiji (as Munshi Abdur Rahim was styled by his friends) in particular, who gave vent to his pentup resentment by recalling an Indian proverb that "a friend of the past is always an awkward customer, alas."

This remark set me thinking furiously and it didn't take me long to discover that the attitude of all those present towards Merwan was of great reverence and respect, the why and wherefore of it I could not then fathom. In between me and Merwan we recounted that evening many of our boyhood pranks and adventures and the punitive expeditions against each other in

the absence of our elders from our neighboring homes, much to the entertainment of the listeners. The party broke up that evening with a mute encouragement from Merwan for me to see more of him and I left with an indelible impression within me that because of my early association with Merwan I would be welcome to the circle of friends there always and more than ever.

. . . Matters did not end here. . . . Oftentimes we would repair to an Irani restaurant opposite Hazrat Babajan's seat (Char-bawdi) and over a cup of tea Meher Baba would subtly initiate a discussion on varied topics, particularly politics, by putting me a suggestive question, such as, "Do you like the idea of Indian leaders dragging in religion to serve political ends?" The Khilafat<sup>8</sup> movement had made common cause with the non-cooperation of the Indian Congress at the time, and Meher Baba would listen to my arguments for or against the question with an unassuming eagerness, as if politics was the only subject uppermost in his mind. From what I know of him today, I realize vividly that I must have bored him to death with my philosophy of politics; but he played his part to perfection as he never allowed me to have an inkling of it for the time being. On the contrary, he made me believe that he immensely enjoyed my talks by encouraging and inviting me to meet him as often as possible.

Reviewing the situation from such a long distance of time I can confidently assert that Meher Baba was then trying to sound the recesses of my mind and heart, ascertain my likes and dislikes and discover my fads and hobbies, if any, in life. This line of action he invariably adopts towards people in whom he is spiritually interested, with a view to adopting the line of least resistance from them for their ultimate good. Whilst others smile condescendingly, Meher Baba accommodates and humours people knowingly, thereby affording glimpses of his deep understanding of the psychological make-up of man. Such timely gestures and concessions succeed as nothing else can in drawing the recipients thereof closer to Meher Baba than ever, and an alert mind here is afforded ample time to bail itself out of a particular weakness which the Master was humouring all along.

. . .

To pick up the thread of my narrative, soon afterwards Munshiji was transferred to Bombay . . . and when Baba heard of it he nonchalantly said, "It is all prearranged; the venue of my working will shortly be shifted to Bombay."

During the period of Meher Baba's stay at the hut the coterie

of his friends and admirers from Bombay (mostly Muslims) were enjoined to pay him a weekly visit, on the express understanding that they should first pay their respects and homage to Hazrat Babajan before coming to him or attending to some other engagements after alighting in Poona. This injunction was faithfully carried out in spirit and letter by most of those concerned. In one such visit to Poona I delayed my visit of homage to Hazrat Babajan till late at night and the lady saint of Charbawdi gave me a very rude shaking physically in the presence of the crowd around her, saying, "You were due in the morning and come at night." This incident, although awkwardly disconcerting at the moment, afforded me a very pleasurable insight into the perfect spiritual understanding that existed between Meher Baba and his Master, and this feeling was further accentuated when the following morning I was given for the first time an unusually cold reception, altogether unlike what I was used to, by Meher Baba who ordered the basket of fruits for him that I was carrying on my shoulders to be unceremoniously thrown into a well nearby, with a message to boot that he would not see me that day. This avowedly was meant as a sort of a warning for me in not obeying his orders literally, with an implied lesson for others also in like circumstances.

Similar demonstrations of his occult knowledge and power . . . which I witnessed while travelling with him to Bombay in one of his visits to Munshiji, coupled with the living memory of the tributes paid to his spiritual greatness by his Masters, Hazrat Babajan and Shri Upasni Maharaj, could not but impress me very deeply. Thereafter my attitude towards Meher Baba completely changed from levity to seriousness and I decided to follow his advice and instructions implicitly, when one day giving me a look-up in my dispensary (Sandhurst Road, Bombay) he advised me to dust and sweep the establishment with my own hands for a period of six months instead of the servant doing it. The reason adduced by him for the queer order was that he visualized therein a great and happy future for me both materially and spiritually. The result has been that I did literally carry out his instructions in the matter for the given period, whereby, most of my friends and the *mandali* members know, I did subsequently succeed in sweeping my medical establishment clean out of existence.

Dr. Abdul Ghani, "Twenty Years with Meher Baba,"  
*Meher Baba Journal*, July and August 1940, pp. 621-  
624, 685-687.

4. *Munshi Abdur Rahim (Munshiji)*. Munshi Saheb was born at Gazipur in the district of Kashi in 1876. He was bred in poverty, but was no unfortunate as regards education. From the humble post of a time-keeper in the P.W.D. of Poona, which he filled for a few years and for which he received the salary of Rs. 12 per month, he has risen to the responsible post of storekeeper in the Back Bay Reclamation Scheme Department of Bombay for which he receives Rs. 250 per month.

From his early boyhood days he has been religious-minded in the true sense of the word. Some time before Meher Baba became a conscious Perfect Master, Munshi Saheb came across him. He began to consider him as a saint when Merwan weaned a friend of his from his drunken habits and debauchery. His faith in the Master was strengthened, when on a certain day, he called upon Munshiji at his house early in the morning and abruptly said to him, "What a nice remedy you took recourse to. A bath at dead of night, and two quinine pills to remove your fever." Overnight, Munshi Saheb, though feverish, had taken bath at dead of night and then had swallowed two quinine pills. He was therefore thunderstruck when the Master, who came to know of his peculiar remedy to remove his fever by means of his superhuman powers, reminded him of it, though he had not spoken to anybody about it.

5. *Gustadji N. Hansotia (Gustadji)*. He was born at Hansotia in Gujarat about thirty-eight years ago [approx. 1890]. When about seven years old, he was sent to Bombay where he lived with his aunt. He was sent to the Proprietary and Fort High School where he studied till the Anglo-vernacular third standard only, as he left it on account of his dislike to study. He loved to study the biographies of saints and prophets more than the dry-as-dust facts of history and geography. He took far greater interest in the study of scriptures than in solving the problems of arithmetic. He has been religious-minded from his boyhood days. As a lad, he was gentle and sweet-tempered, courageous and truthful, kind to animals and loving to friends, respectful to elders and dutiful to his parents. He has throughout been a strict *brahmacharin* (celibate) and indeed it has not been difficult for him to keep his passions under control. He has been free from avarice; the expanse of his noble heart has seldom been troubled by the gusts of desires. The trinkets of the world have miserably failed to dazzle him.

For several years after the death of his father, he took part in various kinds of business. He earned money not for himself

but for the members of his family. He always laid the fruits of his labour at their feet. In 1910, when he was staying at Deolali with his brother, who kept a toddy shop, he, as good luck would have it, came to know of Hazrat Sai Baba. As soon as possible, he repaired to Shirdi to pay his respects to this great Perfect Master. But to see him was to be drawn to him. Once every month, Gustadji called upon this Perfect Master and stayed with him on every occasion for four or five days, and sometimes for a longer period. He became a sincere devotee of him, and when he came to know of His Holiness Upasni Maharaj, he became his devotee too. In 1917 he came into contact with Meher Baba. From 1918 he has been leading a life of total renunciation. Since then he has not suffered himself to be fettered with misery-bringing bonds. Nobody who was well acquainted with Gustadji was surprised at seeing him driven to the line of spirituality. He has taken to this line as a duck takes to water.

When Hazrat Sai Baba's lamp of life in this gross world was extinguished, Gustadji was close by him and had the privilege of conveying his bier to the grave. He is very proud of having done so, and equally proud of having once seen in a dream the prophet of the Parsis, Lord Zoroaster, whom he had yearned to see. He suffered much, both at the hands of Hazrat Sai Baba and Upasni Maharaj, as these Perfect Masters, in order to wipe out his red *sanskaras*, the stock of which was very large and almost all of which he had contracted in his previous lives, used to abuse and beat him. He was not unconscious of the fact that it is a million times better to experience the blows and buffets of a Perfect Master than the blows and buffets of the world. In the beginning of 1919 he went to Poona and at the desire of Meher Baba and Upasni Maharaj worked for some months in the toddy shop of Meher Baba. In October 1919 when Meher Baba called upon Upasni Maharaj, the latter desired him to call upon Gustadji who was at Shirdi. Baba carried out the desire of his Master. Gustadji became as much delighted as surprised at seeing him. Gustadji requested Baba not to go away without taking supper with him, but he could not see his way to accede to the request. When Baba became a Perfect Master, Gustadji, at the desire of his former Master, Upasni Maharaj, became Shri Meher Baba's disciple and has been continuously staying with Baba since then.

6. *Behli J. Irani (Baily)*. On the roll of the disciples of the Master, the name of Mr. Behli Jamshed Irani stands and will continue to stand high. It was with this Baily that the Master,

when a boy, dared to go to the Parsi tower of silence, on one occasion at dead of night. Baily was born on the day of the vernal equinox in the same year in which the Master was born. Unlike the Master, he was unfortunately born with several bad habits, which were strengthened on account of the bad company he kept during his school-life and for a few years after it. He who has now become Meher Baba was the only good and noble friend of Baily during his boyhood. Though himself, on the whole, a bad boy, Baily loved the noble Meher. Indeed on occasions he simply could not do without Meher, and so whenever their son gave them a lot of trouble, his parents would request Meher to give him good advice and to blame him for his misbehaviour. Meher was not given to giving advice, but in the case of Baily, he would go out of his way to do so and used to do his utmost to improve his conduct. As he was aware of Baily's affection for him, he would oft warn the naughty boy thus: "If you won't behave properly, I shan't speak with you!" Unfortunately, Baily was influenced more by his bad friends than by his only good friend. He studied only till the fourth form and then bade good-bye to school education. Soon after that, he became addicted to the nasty habits of drinking and gambling, which afterwards brought disgrace upon him and his family.

When the great war broke out in 1914, Baily resolved to serve the British Government. He was appointed to the post of storekeeper on a British hospital ship, and in this capacity he got the opportunity of seeing various parts of the world. His experience of the world increased, and with it unfortunately also increased the force of bad habits. In 1917, at his own request, Baily was transferred on land duty to Aden. In Aden, from the beginning, he led a gay life. He tumbled headlong into the booby-trap of the temptations of the world. Pleasures are shallow, but the troubles that follow the pleasures are deep. His love for sensual pleasures hurried him into an error, of which full advantage was taken by his enemies. He was accused of disgraceful conduct, was court-martialled and sentenced to two years' imprisonment which was afterwards decreased by six months.

When, in 1920, Baily returned in an anguish of remorse to his native city, Poona, he found himself an object of contempt. It seemed to him that the entire Parsi community of Poona had entered into a conspiracy to boycott him. His own mother and all those who were near and dear to him did not like to speak with him. He made great efforts to search for employment,

but they ended in smoke. A sense of total helplessness took entire possession of him. The whole horizon loomed before him totally black. He was driven to throw all bright hopes overboard into the black ocean of misfortunes. While there is hope, there is life; and when one's hopes are extinguished, thoughts of suicide invade one's mind. Baily got so much disgusted with the world and with his life that one day in the morning he resolved to commit suicide on that very night. In the afternoon, when he was on the point of leaving his home with the firm resolve never to return to it, his elder brother entered his room and said to him to his boundless surprise: "Merwan wishes to see you and has asked me to take you to his toddy shop." My readers must have guessed at the fact that this Merwan was none other than Meher Baba. Though not fully conscious, he had not forgotten his old friend Baily. Neither had Baily forgotten him, but thinking that like others, he, too, had become faithless to him, he had not cared to seek for help from him. Baily had resolved to do away with his life, and so, though his old friend sent for him, he did not like to accede to his request. Needless to say that he was totally unconscious of the fact that his friend had become God-realized. He merely said to his elder brother, "Alright, I shall go afterwards." But his brother was not thus to be put off, and he was bound to carry out the wish of Merwan. He said to Baily, "No, no, you must come with me. Merwan has taken a promise from me, which I could break only on pain of his severe displeasure, that I should take you to him." With reluctance he was compelled to go with his brother to see his old friend.

As soon as Merwan saw Baily approaching his shop, he ran to him, and without caring for what the passers-by would think of him, warmly embraced him and stamped his forehead with a number of kisses. He then took him to his shop, where he requested Baily to give him the promise of seeing him on the following day without fail. The reason why the Master made this request was that by his powers he had divined that his friend had resolved to commit suicide. Ever since he had returned to his native city, Baily had been treated not only with indifference, but also with rudeness and contempt by almost everybody with whom he had come into contact. Consequently the love that his old friend showed to him made him so much joyous that he forgot all his troubles, and with the troubles the decision to commit suicide. There was at least one person in the world who loved him, and so hope entered his breast.

On the following day, the two friends again met each other and talked heartily. Merwan extricated Baily from all his difficulties, and Baily became so grateful to him that, though he was unaware of the spiritual perfection of his friend, he thought it his duty to carry out all his wishes. Merwan, before he became fully conscious, succeeded in weaning Baily from all his bad habits, and in making his mind incline to communion divine. Think of the surprise and delight of Baily when he came to know at the end of 1921, that his old friend, Meher, was a spiritual giant! He surrendered himself at the feet of Merwan and his devotion to the Master has been knowing no bounds. When the Master was in the hut, none excepting Baily was allowed to remain in or come into it at night after the clock struck nine. Baily's duty at that time was to keep watch, when the Master lay down for rest.

9. *Sadashiv Patel*. Moreover it was in this [toddy] shop that one of his present disciples was drawn to him, viz., Mr. Sadashiv Patel, who is a Maratha by caste and who is nearly 35 years of age. Mr. Patel somehow got the inkling of the high spiritual position of Meher Baba and so, often called upon him.

10. *Arjun Supekar*. I must now pass on to the late Mr. Arjun Dagdu Supekar, who was with the Master throughout the whole period of his stay in the Manzil and who was on intimate terms with Mr. Vishnu. Mr. Arjun, who was by caste a Bhoi Kshatriya, was born in 1895, in the city of Poona. He learned for a few years in the Municipal School of his native city, and then served for a few years in the tobacco shop of Mr. Agarwalla. In 1914, he himself opened a tobacco shop in the Kasba Peth. He came into contact with Meher Baba soon after Mr. Behramji F. Irani became the licensee, in partnership with the Master, of the Kasba Peth toddy shop. When Mr. Arjun first saw the Master, he was stirred to the depths, and, as time glided by, he was more and more drawn to him. Baba occasionally used to go to Mr. Arjun's shop and there used to partake of a little tobacco and used to clean his teeth with it. As early as 1919, Mr. Arjun somewhat got an inkling of the spiritual perfection of Baba, and therefore not only did he attend the worship ceremony, but also worshipped the Master regularly. For six months, he himself served in the Master's shop, and when Baba became a conscious Perfect Master, he took pride in calling himself his disciple. When the



Master left Poona for Bombay in May 1922, Mr. Arjun readily accompanied him, leaving his tobacco shop in the charge of his brother, who is still conducting it.

14. *Behramji Fardoonji Irani*. Scarcely a month elapsed after Meher Baba regained a little of his lost consciousness [approx. December 1914], when one day, his friend Mr. Khodadad Rustom Irani, who had brought with him a gentleman, called upon him. Mr. Khodadad, who is a disciple of Meher Baba, introduced the gentleman who bears the name of Behramji Fardoonji Irani to him. As Behramji's connection with Meher Baba has been very close since the day on which he was introduced to him, and as he is the superintendent of the Meher Ashram, I think it proper to introduce him in a few words to my readers.

Behramji, who is a son of Zoroastrian parents, was born in Persia about 37 years ago without silver spoon in his mouth and with serious defects in his eyes. On account of his defective eyes, he passed his childhood and the great part of his boyhood in great misery. He had to remain confined in a dark room of his house, as his eyes could not bear the light of day. He could not take any part in the pranks and plays of boys. He could not be put to school, nor could any education be imparted to him in the house. It seemed as if he was destined to drag out his life like a man accursed. But when the boy was 15 years old, as good luck would have it, his worthy maternal uncle, Khan Saheb—then plain Mr.—Aspandiar Rustomji Irani was on a flying visit to his native country. He did not forget to meet his sister, the mother of Behramji. To her house he repaired one day and she seized the opportunity of pouring out the tale of the misery of the boy into his sympathetic ears. The Khan Saheb took compassion on the boy, and with the consent of his sister, brought him to Poona. So Behramji, when 15 years old, found himself in Poona under the care and protection of his kind uncle. The Khan Saheb, at the first opportunity, put the boy under the treatment of an expert oculist, and within a few months, his eyes became free from defects.

When Mr. Khodadad introduced Behramji, at the end of 1914, to Meher Baba, he performed perhaps one of the best deeds of his life. Behramji was from the first taken up with Meher Baba. As soon as Baba came to know that Behramji was illiterate, he offered to teach him Persian, as a friend, free of charge. He was then 22 years old, but was burning with the eagerness

to study his mother tongue. So he snapped at the handsome offer with great delight. . . . For four months, Behramji had the good fortune to learn Persian from Meher Baba.

15. *Babu Geroo Ubale (Babu Cyclewala)*. Another disciple who stayed with the Master in the Manzil and whom I should not forget to mention, was Mr. Babu Geroo Ubale. He is known among his fellow disciples as Babu Cyclewala, inasmuch as he conducts a bicycle shop in the Sachapir street of Poona. He was born about 29 years ago [circa 1900], and is a Kshatriya Taili by caste. He took little secular education, but has had a deal of spiritual education for which he is indebted to Meher Baba.

16. *Ahmed Abbas (Khak)*. The third Muhammadan disciple whom I have to write about is a fairly good poet and the joint author of the life of Shri Upasni Maharaj. He bears the name of Shaikh Ahmed Abbas but is known among the followers of the Master as Khak Saheb, as he writes poems under the pseudonym of Khak, which is a Persian word meaning "dust." He was born about 35 years ago in the city of Poona. From his early boyhood, he has been spiritually-minded and is firmly imbued with the conviction that some day or other, with the grace of his spiritual Master, Shri Meher Baba, he will get spiritual enlightenment and the salvation of his soul will be accomplished. He came into contact with the Master soon after Babajan made him God-realized, but began to believe in him after he became a conscious Perfect Master.

17. *Adi K. Irani*. An equally staunch disciple of the Master is Mr. Rustom's younger brother, Adi. Mr. Adi was born in 1904, and matriculated from the Panchgani High School at the early age of 17. He has had an artistic turn of mind, being very fond of music. When he first saw the Master, a singular feeling of awe descended on him and his heart was moved to its depths. In his eagerness to serve Baba, he was, when in the Manzil, second to none.

[Adi, when asked in 1970 how he came to Baba, gave the following answer.]

I first came in contact with Baba in 1921 when I saw him at Sakori. It was during the last days of his separation from Upasni Maharaj, and my mother, Gulmai, was also there. Baba was said to be the best disciple of Maharaj, but we did not know that

Baba was a Perfect Master. Neither did we have the least idea that Baba was the Avatar of the Age, and that in future he would come out and declare himself to be the Avatar.

Later Upasni Maharaj was called by my mother to be present at the housewarming ceremony of the new three-storied house that my father had built in Ahmednagar, but all the Parsis of Ahmednagar and my uncle also were much against this. We were a joint family—my uncle's and my father's families lived together. In spite of this opposition my mother invited Upasni Maharaj, and he came. At that time Baba, also, came to our house. I had gone home during my vacation from school and I saw Baba there—the second time that I had seen him. I fell ill at that time, and Baba kept coming to my bed. He showed such a deep concern and love for me that I was so much taken by him that I compared all of our small loves for mother or father or relatives or friends—and eventually I felt that Baba, who lavishes so much love, is really something by far so great there cannot be anything greater than his love.

Then one day I happened to go to my old house. Baba was there and he made me sit before him. He just asked me whether I would ever be with him. I was a pretty young boy, 18 years old, and I did not know what to answer. But he said, "Do you know who I am?"

I said, "I know that you are the chief disciple of Upasni Maharaj—more than that I do not know."

So Baba said, "I shall not tell you who I am today, but you will definitely come to know and you will see that your name is made known all over the world."

I do not remember exactly the words he used, but he made me feel that his work was really universal, that he wanted me to be near him, and that wherever he would be known I also would be known. I was deeply impressed but I was more deeply impressed by his love, his most unselfish love. Then, hearing all about this, my mother came forward and just offered me to Baba, saying, "This, my son, belongs to you and he will obey you. He can live with you—I have not got the least objection—and as of today he does not belong to me, he belongs to you."

Baba was very happy and I, too, was very happy, and ever after I was in contact with him.

Then Baba went to Poona and stayed in a small hut on Fergusson College Road and I went to Deccan College. There Baba asked me to be present every evening, whether I had studies or any other work to do. So I had to give up all the sports,

and every evening after college I was asked to go to that hut and stay there with him. In late evening I went back to the college, a distance of about three and a half miles. Then Baba undertook a foot journey from Poona to Bombay, a distance of about 115 miles. There were about 45 lovers of Baba and I was amongst them. After the long journey on foot we reached Bombay and stayed in a suburb with Baba in a house called Manzil-e-Meem.

18. *Ardeshir N. Hansotia (Slamson)*. I must now pass on to a Parsi disciple who bears the name of Ardeshir Nusserwanji Hansotia and the nickname of Slamson. Mr. Slamson is nearly 30 years old and, like his elder brother Gustadji, from his early boyhood has been spiritually inclined. With his elder brother he used to go to Sai Baba and Shri Upasni Maharaj in order to worship them. For the last eight years, he has been serving Meher Baba, whom he takes pride in calling his spiritual Master. Most of his *sanskaras* have already been wiped out, and he has attained freedom from the network of vulgar desires.

20. *Sarosh K. Irani*. Mr. Sarosh Kaikhushru Irani, the cousin of Messrs. Rustom and Adi, also stayed with the Master in the Manzil. He was taken by his cousin, Mr. Adi, to Meher Baba in March 1922. Mr. Sarosh was so much taken with the personality of the Master that he wanted no other indication or proof of Meher Baba being a Perfect Master.

25. *Rustom Behram Jafrabadi (Aga Baidul)*. One of the most faithful disciples of Meher Baba is Mr. Rustom Behram Jafrabadi, who is known among the Master's followers as Aga Baidul, the nickname given to him by the Master himself. Mr. Aga Baidul was born about 35 years ago in Jafrabad, Yezd, Persia. His parents were poor, but very religious-minded; and they trained the boy in the way in which he should go in his after-life. When he was eight years old, he was sent to the metropolis of the Bombay Presidency. In Bombay he was put to the charitable school for Iranis which was situated near Chowpatty and in which he learned Gujarati and Persian for a couple of years. When only ten years of age, circumstances forced him to earn his own living, and this he did by serving in a restaurant.

When 17 years old, he returned to his native land where he became a farmer. In his twenty-second year he married an Irani girl of his native village who bore the name of Sultan Jamshed.

Some time after his marriage, the people of Jafrabad made him the leader of the village. In his twenty-fifth year he found himself to be on the whole a prosperous and respected man, but he had not much peace of mind, for some external force was impelling him to leave his native country and go once more to Bombay. He resolved to obey the mysterious call, and, much to the surprise of his relatives and friends, one day set out for Bombay. Soon after his arrival in Bombay, he opened a restaurant in the Kharas Building, Parel. As it did not bring him a good income and as he was tired of Bombay, he went to Poona in 1921, where also he opened a restaurant in partnership with an Irani gentleman. But materialistic pursuits were quite unwholesome to the constitution of his mind, and so he yearned for life spiritual. His shop was occasionally honoured with the visit of Babajan whom he took delight in serving out tea.

In the beginning of 1922, he came to know Meher Baba through Mr. Behramji F. Irani with whom he formed friendship soon after his settlement in Poona. He became eager to see the Perfect Master, but something or other prevented him from calling upon him till the 21st of May of the same year, i.e., just one day prior to the day on which the Master with his party left Poona for Bombay. On the 20th of May Behramji called upon Aga Baidul at his shop, and in the course of their conversation informed his friend that Shri Meher Baba intended to leave Poona for Bombay within a couple of days. Aga Baidul became anxious to see Baba before he left Poona, and on the following day Behramji took him to the Master. The Master was not present when they approached, but several of his disciples were there, including Adi K. Irani. Taking Adi to be Shri Meher Baba, Aga Baidul, much to the amusement of all those present, worshipped him. When he was informed about the mistake he had committed, he could not help joining in the general amusement. When the Master came, Aga Baidul was introduced to him by Behramji. Soon after he worshipped Baba, the Master asked him, "What do you want?" "I want to be your disciple, and am anxious to stay with you," was the reply.

The Master, to show to those present the stuff of which his visitor was made, tempted him with the offer of a large sum of money and told him that he would be very rich if he invested it with wisdom. But Aga Baidul was not a bit tempted. His yearning for life spiritual was strong indeed, and he told the Master that no amount of money could change his purpose. The Master then told him that if he stayed with him, he would have to

undergo many hardships, and that he lived in a fool's paradise if he thought that his life would thenceforth be a bed of roses. Thereupon Mr. Baidul observed: "With you I shall undergo any sort of hardship. I shall rather suffer in life spiritual than be happy in life material." The Master then accepted him, as his disciple, and a very worthy disciple he has proved to be. Since then his thoughts have never been taken up with the anxieties and excitements of worldly life.

26. *Rustom K. Irani*. I have now to introduce to my readers a worthy disciple of the Master, who, though showered by fortune with many a good gift, cares not a straw for riches and whose nature recoils with horror from the thought of leading a materialistic life. His name is Mr. Rustom Kaikhushru Irani, the elder son of Khan Saheb Kaikhushru Sarosh Irani, the renowned merchant prince of the Ahmednagar District. Mr. Rustom was born on the fourth day of the seventh month of the year 1898. At an early age, he matriculated from the (Bharda) New High School of Bombay and joined St. Xavier's College, where he passed the examination following the first year's course. He then joined Sydenham College, but he passed through it with a single examination and without learning much. Though surfeited with what are called the good things of life, from his early boyhood he has been spiritually-minded. Towards the end of 1921, Shri Upasni Maharaj with Meher Baba honoured the bungalow of the Khan Saheb, who had made an invitation to the Perfect Master, by visiting it. It was here that Rustom saw for the first time Meher Baba. Shri Upasni Maharaj spoke so highly of Baba that Rustom was much impressed. He had at first the intention of becoming a disciple of Shri Upasni Maharaj, but Meher Baba, on account of Rustom's connection with him in past lives, persuaded him to follow himself. Since then, Rustom has been a staunch disciple of the Master.

27. *Gulmai Irani*. Gulmai was an emblem of silent suffering. She was of a very quiet temperament. She had a delicate fair body but a stout heart. She was born in Bombay and her father was a carpenter. She had one sister and one brother. She could not easily mix with people, having led the best part of her married life almost by herself and with her children, whom she could not give what she wanted. She had to depend on other members of the joint family for food, clothes and all other necessities of life for a number of years. This coupled with her nature

of not depending upon others and her deep affection for her husband and children could not make her live happily. Deep inroads of suffering were created on her finer mettle and thus there was a growing dissatisfaction with life and surroundings. Nothing that she wished for, nobly and helpfully for her children, could she do, as she was always heard to say, without stretching her hand to a family member for a coin or a word of sympathy, despite the fact that her husband was the main source of initiative and energy for the roaring business which was built up by him out of almost nothing to begin with. My father [Adi, Gulmai's son, is the author] was known for his loud thinking and vigorous activity, which enabled him to make a good name and earn money in Ahmednagar, but he sadly lacked in giving attention to his wife and children, which he ever wanted to do but could not. Gulmai suffered at his hands indirectly, and everything that seemed to others to go well came to a break.

I am certain that God's ways are unknown and the ways of Perfect Masters are unfathomable. Upasni Maharaj gave a break to her worldly suffering by diverting her care and attention from her home to Sakori, and Meher Baba later restored her to her home and family with a broader vision, a greater love and a stronger mind. During this period of transition, she became so deeply and intimately devoted to Meher Baba that she was always prepared, at Meher Baba's word, not only for any sacrifice of herself and her possessions, but also of her children and their possessions. Her love for Meher Baba became the mainstay of her life, which became the source of inspiration to all the members of the joint family to gradually and surely follow her footsteps. Once drawn to Meher Baba, a person becomes so much sheltered under the ever-open wings of his love that all persons or circumstances by which he is drawn become insignificant, in spite of the fact that their memory remains ever fresh.

All Gulmai's trouble at home cannot be attributed to my father or to the other joint-family members. It was partly due to her aloofness from all family activity, in which she found herself misplaced. She did not take enough part which she was supposed to, and so felt herself neglected by others. But this did not rob from her, her self-confidence and peaceful nature which she always had, and which attracted family members for her quiet advice and strength during grave personal crisis. Frail in body she looked like a rock in storm, and impressed the family members with her inner strength and understanding on personal matters. She had less of worldly knowledge but had a deeper

sensitivity and appreciation of human suffering that would sometimes get her into hot waters with others. Her single-minded devotion to Meher Baba was exemplary. This was in no less measure due to Meher Baba giving her exuberance of his love and affection as a mother. The name Gulbai was turned into Gulmai by Meher Baba.

Adi K. Irani, "My Life with Avatar Meher Baba,"  
*Divya Vani*, March 1967, pp. 21-23.

28. *Homi J. Vajifdar*. I must write a word about Mr. Homi Jehangir Vajifdar, the well-known, all-round cricketer, who stayed with the Master in the Manzil. Mr. Homi was born in 1893 in Bombay and studied in the Fort and Proprietary High School. As soon as he heard of Meher Baba, he, being spiritually inclined and not hankering after wealth, one day in June 1922, called upon him to worship him, and the Master accepted him as his disciple and asked him to stay in the Manzil.

29. *Navroji Talati (Naval)*. Thousands are the disciples and followers of my beloved Master. It is not possible to mention all of them, but I must not forget to acquaint my readers with Mr. Navroji Cursetji Talati, who stayed with the Master during the whole period of nearly 11 months in the Manzil. Mr. Navroji was born in 1893 in Surat, but was educated in Bombay at the Fort and Proprietary High School. Being spiritually inclined, he has always liked to see and talk with saints. One day in 1914, soon after he left the said school, he called upon Shri Upasni Maharaj. At that very first meeting he was so much drawn to that great Perfect Master of Sakori that he resolved there and then to visit him now and then. Needless to say he remained true to his resolution. Indeed, he could not resist the temptation of going to Sakori with a view to worship Maharaj whenever he found himself free from work. There, occasionally, he saw Meher Baba whom he, in his ignorance, used to call the mad Irani. Little did he dream then that the time would come when he could have to acknowledge the "mad Irani" as his spiritual Master. However, as early as the beginning of 1921 he brought himself to believe that the Irani would surely be the recipient of the grace of Shri Upasni Maharaj. When Meher Baba became known as a Perfect Master, Mr. Navroji became anxious to serve him. At the end of May 1922, he met the Master at Mr. Ramjoo's place and willingly carried out the Master's command to stay



with him in the Manzil. He took an active part in whitewashing the Manzil and in partitioning its halls.

30. *Jal S. Irani*. I have now to introduce a disciple who since his birth has been with Baba. He is Mr. Jal Sheriar Irani, a younger brother of the Master. Mr. Jal was born in 1902 in the city of Poona. He learned till the sixth form in the St. Vincent's High School. From his early boyhood he has been religious-minded and a believer in saints. Some time after he left school, he called upon Siddharuth Swami of Hubli, who is a God-realized personage and has thousands of devotees. He did not know about the high spiritual position of his elder brother till Baba informed him about it in the beginning of 1922, i.e., soon after he became a conscious Perfect Master. At first Mr. Jal simply could not believe what his brother said of himself, and when Baba said that he had extraordinary powers with which he could perform miracles, the younger brother boasted that he too had such powers. The Master thereupon asked him whether he had the power to bear the pain of the fire. The reply was in the affirmative, and so the Master ordered two fire-balls to be put on Mr. Jal's right hand, one on its palm and the other a little above the wrist. Though terrible indeed was the agony that the fire-balls caused him and though his skin was burning fast, Mr. Jal stoically bore the pain and neither screamed nor groaned. When after the expiration of five minutes, the Master ordered the fire-balls to be removed from his hand, it was with great difficulty that the order was carried out, as his skin was stuck fast to the fireballs. It may be said that Baba practised horrible cruelty upon his brother. And indeed, to all appearances, the order was cruel to a degree, but in reality it was kind to a degree. The Master's object in putting the fire-balls on the hand of his brother was not to punish him for his idle boast, but to make him learn to suffer terrible agony, to raise him above the feelings of pain, and to wipe out some of his bad *sanskaras*. Mr. Jal was almost miraculously cured of his hurts and since then has been faithfully serving the Master.

32. *Fardoon N. Driver (Padri)*. Another Irani youth, who served the Master in the Manzil and who is still serving him, was Mr. Fardoon Navroji who bears the nickname of Padri given to him by Meher Baba. Mr. Padri was born in 1903 in the city of Poona and was educated in the Poona Camp Government English School. After leaving the school, he worked for a few

months as an apprentice in a motorcycle workshop. In the beginning of 1922, his mother, who is a devotee of Hazrat Babajan, was informed by an enemy of her son that he was leading the life of a debauchee. The information was at once groundless and malicious; but she believed it, simply because her son did not like to obey her and she considered disobedience to be the mother of all vices. Out of evil cometh good. The result was that the mother of Padri asked him to see Meher Baba. Padri resolutely refused to carry out her wish, but she insisted upon his visiting the Perfect Master, till he was forced to do so one day in February 1922. When he saw the Master, he was so much impressed that he said to himself in spirit though not in words, "In him is life, and that life is the light of men." Thenceforth he called upon Baba every day, and accompanied him in his journey on foot from Poona to Bombay.

34. *Vishnu N. Deorukhkar*. Another disciple-inmate of the Manzil about whom I must write a little, was Mr. Vishnu Narayana Deorukhkar, who is at present one of the private secretaries to Meher Baba. Mr. Vishnu, who is by caste a Daiwadnya Brahmin, was born on 21st June 1903, exactly ten days after the day on which the assassination of the royal family of Serbia took place. He lost his father, who was a goldsmith, when he was only six years of age. But he did not feel this loss much, as his grandfather in every way filled the place of his father. He was put to the New English School of Poona, in which he studied till the matriculations class. His house was in the same locality in which was situated the toddy shop which Behramji, in partnership with Meher Baba, bought at a government auction on 1st August 1918.

At that time, Vishnu was only 15 years old and was in the sixth standard of the said school. Liquor and toddy sellers are considered by the Brahmins as mean, impious fellows, and so the boy Vishnu was surprised at the performance on Thursdays and Sundays by the new licensees of the ceremony of the *arti* in honour of the Hindu saint Shri Upasni Maharaj. This did not tempt him to strike up acquaintance with Sethji, as Baba was then known in the locality of Kasba Peth. But when the boy learned that soon after the ceremony was over, Baba used to serve out sweetmeats and fruits, he promptly made up his mind to present himself on every occasion at the time of the ceremony. Needless to say, this resolution he carried out and availed himself of every opportunity to come into contact with Meher Baba.

The boy Vishnu had no idea that Baba was a God-realized personage, but as Baba was very kind to him, he brought himself to love him and was as much drawn to him as the steel to the magnet.

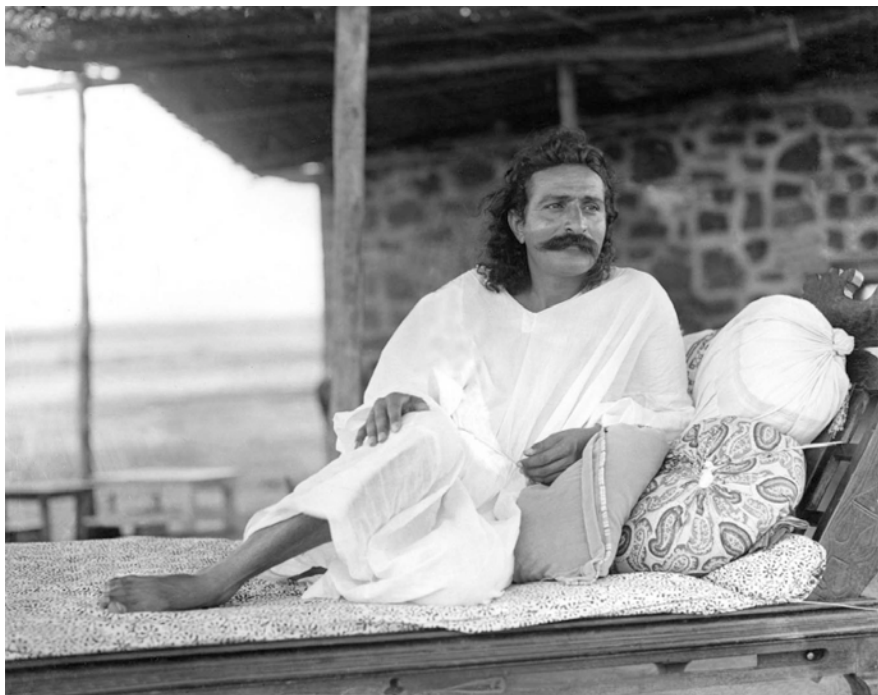
The Master on occasions made enquiries of him as to his studies and as to the company he used to keep then. Many of Mr. Vishnu's school friends belonged to the well-to-do and used to spend a lot of money in gratifying their senses. The boy Vishnu could not afford to do so every day, but in order to keep up appearances and to maintain their friendship, he did not hesitate to take resort to foul means in order to obtain money. Neglecting his studies, he wasted his time, in company with his worthless class-chums, in hunting after pleasures. His mother, when she came to know of the evil propensities of her son, was much aggrieved, but was at a loss what course she should take to improve the normal standard of her son. In her perplexity, she was driven to acquaint Mr. Sadashiv Patel, for whom her son had great respect, with his bad ways. Mr. Sadashiv thought that it was not probable that the boy would act up to his advice, so he complained to Meher Baba about the misdemeanour of Mr. Vishnu. Baba, though not fully conscious at that time, fully understood the nature and habits of the boy. At the first opportunity, in the presence of a number of persons, he reprimanded the boy in harsh language for his moral lapse and then caned him. The Master punished him in such a way as to charge home his sins to him, and the boy's conscience responded to the charge. To his bitter sorrow, he now learned that he had laid out his ill-gotten money in the purchase of tearful repentance. His mother, in her eagerness to see her son improved, informed all her relatives about the evil tendencies into which her son had fallen. The boy, though he repented of his misdeeds, bitterly resented this exposure, and smarting under it as well as his failure at the matriculations examination at which he had appeared in April 1920, though not well up for it, left his mother's shelter and repaired to Bombay.

In Bombay, Mr. Vishnu dragged on a miserable existence till Meher Baba asked Mr. Gustadji N. Hansotia to fetch him to Poona. When Mr. Vishnu returned to Poona, the Master asked him to seek for employment. He obeyed Baba, and his efforts were crowned with success inasmuch as he got a good job in the Military Accounts Department which he served for 16 months. Towards the end of 1921, Baba, as my readers already know, became a conscious Perfect Master, and it was then that

Vishnu, to his great joy and equally great surprise, learned that his friend and benefactor, whom he used to call Sethji, was spiritually as perfect as Shri Krishna. Whenever he got an opportunity to call upon Meher Baba, he embraced it, and took pleasure in worshipping him and carrying out his wishes and orders. Some time before the Master left Poona for Bombay, he sent Vishnu to Ahmednagar to serve Khan Saheb Irani in his business. It was not until November 1922 that the Master allowed him to join him at the Manzil in Bombay.

37. *Aspandiar Rustom Irani (Pendur)*. One of the near relatives of the Master who has been faithfully serving him, is undoubtedly Mr. Aspandiar Rustom Irani, who is popularly known among his fellow disciples by the nickname of Pendur, given to him by Meher Baba. Mr. Pendur, whose mother is one of the sisters of the Master's mother, was born in 1903 in Poona and studied in the St. Vincent's High School, which he left in 1919. Meher Baba has been very kind to Pendur and his parents, whom he oft used to visit at their home. They looked upon him as a noble religious-minded youth, but till 1919 were unaware of his spiritual perfection. One day, in 1919, Pendur with his aunt Daulatmai went to worship Shri Upasni Maharaj. The Perfect Master of Sakori told Pendur that his relative Merwan was not an ordinary man but spiritually as great as Zoroaster. These words of Maharaj made such a deep impression on Pendur that his already great respect for Merwan increased by leaps and bounds and his admiration for him began to border on adoration. Till he went to Quetta in 1920, he used to call upon Merwan now and then at his toddy shop with the sole purpose of paying his respects to him. When the Master left Poona for Bombay in May 1922, Pendur was still in Quetta, but as soon as he came to know that his great relative was settled at the Manzil in Bombay, he joined him there.





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MEHER BABA AT MEHERABAD, 1927

# SOBS AND THROBS

May 1927—January 1929





# Introduction

## First Great Stay at Meherabad January 25, 1925—November 26, 1926

ON January 25, 1925 Baba settled permanently in Arangaon with his *mandali*. In the course of a year and a half it flourished and grew from a small outpost to a small town, giving rise to its name, Meherabad, meaning "Meher flourishing." Under Baba's guidance a school, a hospital and dispensary, and a hermitage for lepers and the destitute came into being, offering free services to the community and staffed by his *mandali*, themselves growing in true selfless service.

This period, contrasting so sharply with the Manzil period (January 1922—April 1923) and the touring period (April 1923—January 1925) previously described in Ramjoo's diary, forms the immediate background out of which grew the Meher Ashram chronicled in *Sobs and Throbs* by Ramjoo. The flavor and essence of this period are beautifully captured by Francis Brabazon in *Stay With God* (pp. 31-32):

In January 1925 Baba settled permanently—as far as  
"permanently"  
Can mean to a man to whom the too-solid earth itself  
Is but a moving shadow across the margin of Existence-Bliss.  
In July same year he began that SILENCE which he will not  
break  
Till he speaks that Word which will release another Noah-  
flood  
Of destruction of falseness, and of His-Ark (Refuge and Sus-  
taining and

Bliss-transforming place of all that is true and useful to good) upbearing.

That same silence he returned to as was  
Before he spoke the word which was his question, "Who  
Am I?" and birthed a world of universes and a universe  
Of three worlds; spun them upon the axis of his own Name  
And groped his way through all the forms to man,  
To Perfect Manhood. The same silence, but now  
Of Knowledge-Bliss—pregnant equipoise of action.

Now he made a setting for the jewel of Selflessness, built  
A scaffolding for the House of Service: he built a hospital and  
dispensary,

A boys' school and shelters for the mendicant and the migrant  
poor.

In a model township of three hundred souls, class was abol-  
ished and creed

Each one's affair, and they who are called "untouchable"  
freely mingled.

Each served, and received service. Baba bathed the boys,  
washed clothes

And cleaned latrines. The disciples had sparse food and he  
less than they.

He had a table 7' x 5' set up by the road and three sides of it  
enclosed.

In this, at night, he wrote his Book, and continued by day  
His other activities. "Between certain hours I freely saw  
visitors.

Hundreds came to see me believing in my spiritual status,  
But most of them only sought my blessings hoping to obtain  
health

Or advancement or spiritual powers, or a good marriage  
for their daughter.

Sometimes the stream of visitors continued from morning till  
evening.

"On one occasion a man wanted to give me everything he had  
And begin a new life of renunciation and service. 'Everything'  
Turned out to be a wife and seven children. On another  
occasion a yogi

'Determined to find God at any cost,' sought my instructions.  
I told him

To wait for Him under a tree. He waited seven days; on the  
eighth

Preferred his life to God. But there were real seekers, like one  
Who kept seclusion and silence even when a cobra came into his  
cell."

The yogi bit, reminiscent of the chap who came to a Murshid  
Wanting God above all else. "Chuck him in the river"

The Master said to his disciples. They did. When he came up  
The Master said, "Shove him under." So, two or three times.  
Then fished him out. Said the Master, "What didja want most  
When you was down there?" "Air," said the aspirant. "Damn  
fool!"

Said the Master. "If yer' d wanted God I'd 'ave given yer Him."  
The Boys' School was unique in this work-ticket-education age,  
But as schools were when men were near to God: subjects  
necessary

For livelihood efficiently taught— "The target is that bird  
In yon tree. Describe it." "A bird's head with an eye in its middle,  
Sir."

"Shoot!" But most and first the pupils were unfolded into  
men of love—

In the manner of God (Akhlaq-Allah), centred in quietness  
And obedient to the seasons: equipped for planes-faring:

Men who as householders lived in abstinence—Ashram san-  
yasis—

Loving God and God in men, feeding the stranger before  
themselves,

Giving innumerable Jesus-cups of water to the thirsty;  
Keeping their servants'—if they had 'em—rest-days according  
To the sacred calendar; bathing only in cold water and always  
Before love approach with joy to their wives, worshipping Guru—  
God in form—

Longing for the fifty years age flight and the begging-bowl and  
the road.

Meherabad was your establishment in the world, Baba,  
Of the lustre of service, the brightness of casteless fellowship,  
Your demonstration that creed is encumbrance. Then you  
abandoned

The place, leaving two disciples as caretakers and took the road again.

It was later that some devotees paved with stone the ground  
Under the Box in which you wrote the world's next Bible  
And built a tile roof over it to preserve it for later devotees.

On October 21, 1926 Baba suddenly decided to close all the institutions and to dispose of them lock, stock and barrel. The paid staff were given notice. The parents of the school boys were sent word to arrange for the removal of their charges unless they were willing to leave their boys unconditionally in Baba's charge. Baba did not merely turn the destitute, helpless and homeless away, but made special arrangements for each of the residents according to his circumstances.

By November 7, 1926 all the buildings and structures except the original post office, mess quarters and Baba's Zhopdi were brought to the ground. The following day all the building materials and surplus stores were disposed of by public auction held at Meherabad. On November 25, 1926 Baba and all the *mandali* left Meherabad for Lonavla by motor lorries.

Baba gave a clue to the closing of the town as follows: "When one has to erect a big building, a temporary scaffolding is raised about the proposed building. When the building is completed, the scaffolding is removed. The school, hospital, hermitage, etc., were such scaffoldings for my real work. What have I to do with such works which are generally done these days by municipalities? When my real work is finished, I don't see any need of these scaffoldings." (Pawar's diary)

## Second Great Stay at Meherabad Birth of Meher Ashram December 25, 1926—January 1929

From November 26, 1926 until December 4, 1926 Baba and the *mandali* stayed at Lonavla, then moved on to Bombay, staying at Santa Cruz. On December 22, 1926 Arjun, one of the earliest of the *mandali* to come to Baba and the founder and leader of the school at Meherabad for the untouchable village lads, died. On December 25, 1926 Baba suddenly announced that they were all returning to Meherabad.

The school for the village children was reopened December 31, 1926, but no other of the earlier Meherabad institutions were

reopened. January 23, 1927, Baba put before the *mandali* for discussion the prospect of opening a boarding school. Discussions on the detail of the school continued intermittently throughout January and February. On February 2, 1927 Baba selected Rustom, Behramji, Chanji and Vishnu as the five chief workers for the new school. On February 4, 1927 Baba revealed the import of the new school: "This scheme of proposed education with free boarding, lodging, clothes, books, etc., is merely an inducement to enable me firstly to put as many boys as possible in the spiritual line, secondly, to give them all the benefit of my close contact, and thirdly, to mould their morals and character in an ideal way." (Pawar's diary)

On February 6, 1927 a publicity leaflet concerning the school was drafted and Baba laid down a basic condition: "Once the boys are admitted they must remain in the institution till the completion of the full course whether it may take two years or seven years, and the option of granting leave to them to go to their places in case of emergencies during the course is solely left to his own discretion in all circumstances. Otherwise, Baba conveyed, his very purpose, which was *continued* close contact and moral training, would be defeated. The boys will be made to observe a strict discipline and purity in thought and all actions in the institution, and if they were allowed indiscriminate leave they would run risk of being polluted in one way or another in company with worldly people, be they relations or friends. But once the boys passed through a long period under all the disciplines and restrictions in the institution, their character would get sufficiently moulded on ideal spiritual lines that they would remain unaffected, even when they mix themselves in the thick of worldly affairs afterwards. On the other hand, if the boys were allowed to go home and mix with worldly people in the middle of their training, there is every chance of the effect of the training being wiped out clean." (Pawar's diary)

February 8, 1927, a new agreement was signed by the *mandali* in which they promised to stay with Baba and serve in the proposed school for at least three years. On March 11, 1927, when new publicity material was being prepared, Baba declared: "I want to impress upon all the all-importance of spiritual training—this is the sole aim of the proposed institution." (Pawar's diary)

March 28, 1927: "Some applications that so far had been received from some parents and guardians desiring to put their boys in the proposed Ashram were read out. The contents were

very disappointing since the writers seemed to pay no attention to the main aim and object of the institution, which were time and again declared as prominently as possible to be the *spiritual training* of the boys. Instead of that, almost all the applicants asked as to what material occupation will be taught to the boys, or whether there was special arrangement for the touchables and untouchables separately, etc . . . . [Baba said:] 'Why not send the printed forms of the rules and regulations of the proposed Ashram to the applicants and see what comes out of it? Even if we could get 2, 5, 10 or 12 such boys who are willing and fit to abide by all the rules and regulations, a start can be made with them.'" (Pawar's diary)

Come April Baba definitely decided to open the Meher Ashram in Meherabad in May, using first the cottage near Arangaon which Kaka and his family had used as a residence. He appointed Behramji in charge of the Ashram assisted by Pendu, Chhagan, Sidhu and Vishnu. "The Ashram inmates to have no connection whatever with anybody or anything outside the Ashram boundary; not to come in contact with even the rest of the *mandali*, except for the purpose of their studies and education in the existing school, but that, too, during school hours only." (Pawar's diary) On April 10, 1927 Baba reiterated that he wanted boys of all classes and creeds at the Ashram. April 11, 1927, Baba commented further: "The education that will be imparted to the boys in the Ashram will also prove an advance towards the political salvation of India. Thus besides spiritual advancement of the country, it will be materially benefited too. These boys, at the completion of the course, will have no longer any bias or prejudice against any particular religion, as is the case these days, resulting in so much strife and slaughter all over the country." (Pawar's diary)

Ramjoo yearned to compile "all the supernatural phenomena witnessed about Meher Baba and the many direct and indirect miracles manifested by him, and to publish them in the shape of a booklet." He yearned without hope for he knew that Baba gave no importance to miracles. Yet in September 1928 the yearning bore fruit, when Baba directed Ramjoo to "write the adventures of Ali," for the writing thereof led Ramjoo to chronicle the true miracle, making "the hearts of little boys dance permanently to the divine music."

This booklet was published in India in 1929 with the subtitle "A real romance about the Meher-Ashram Institute, and the living miracles of Hazrat Qibla Meher Baba." In style and present-

tation it conformed to the traditional demands of spiritual literature in India. However, the western world 50 years later is accustomed to a different style and manner of presentation. Ramjoo himself recognized this fact and told Francis Brabazon that he expected *Sobs and Throbs* to be substantially edited. Therefore I have attempted to pare away the shell, leaving the tender fruit in its original state.

Ramjoo acknowledged the aid of F. H. Dadachanji, K. A. Afseri, S. A. Abbas (Khak) and Dr. Ghani.

Ever since the original publication of *Sobs and Throbs* there has been much speculation concerning the fate of the Ashram boys, those heart-filled dancers to the Beloved's tune. Except for Ali Akbar, whom many know as Aloba and who is one of the resident *mandali* at Meherazad, nothing has been generally known. What has been gathered is set forth as a Supplement to *Sobs and Throbs* entitled "Prem Ashram Boys." Part I of the Supplement is Ramjoo's brief description of some of the Prem Ashram boys. Three of those prominently mentioned by Ramjoo—namely, Abdulla Pakrawan (Chota Baba), Aspandiar Sarosh Irani (Esphandiar Vesali), and Ali Akbar (Aloba)—have related their stories, both of their days in the Prem Ashram and afterward, which are set forth in Part II. Five Iranians associated with the Prem Ashram and not mentioned by Ramjoo were interviewed by Dr. Farhad Shafa and Irwin Luck. Transcripts of these interviews have been published in *The Glow* magazine (May and August, 1976) and *The Awakener* magazine (vol. XVII, nos. 1 and 2), edited versions of which are included in Part III of the Supplement.

Ira. G. Deitrick

## A Gem of an Institution

MAY 1, 1927, the Meher Ashram was declared open with four Brahmin, three Maratha and three Mahar boys (all Hindus of different castes) at Meherabad, near the village of Arangaon, in the Ahmednagar District of India.\* With the advent of 14 boys from Persia, two of whom were Muslims and the rest Zoroastrians, the Persian section was opened on the seventeenth of July, 1927, in the Hazrat Babajan High School, which is attached to the Ashram. This foreign advent, as well as first-class Persian teaching, caused quite a flutter amongst the local Mogul community, and gradually the number of Mogul boys in the Ashram began to swell beyond expectations. To all appearances, the first four months were passed in arranging the hundred and one mundane details that an institution of this magnitude entailed.<sup>1</sup>

So far as an external manifestation of the Master's [Meher Baba's] internal workings for the Ashram was concerned, the first of September, 1927, witnessed the first spark of spirituality. Spiritual classes were opened that evening, and the boys began to have explained to them the spirit of all religions and the lives of divine heroes in every nation. Discourses on divinity and spirituality itself were given by competent speakers under

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\* "They have been given plain round black caps and khaki shirts and knickers to wear, the uniform dress already settled for them. Each boy is also to be provided with a cotton tweed coat which is not ready yet. Besides, each of the boys has been provided with the following, which will also be given to all those who will be admitted hereafter, irrespective of caste, creed or position: one steel trunk for their clothes and things, one towel, handkerchief and waist cloth, one blanket, two *pasodis*, one bedspread and one pillow .... Daily food is as follows: milk tea and wheat bread for breakfast, *dal*-rice and vegetable dish for dinner, two vegetable dishes and wheat bread for supper." (Pawar's diary)



the personal instruction of the Master for one hour every day.

Within another month, the Master seemed all engrossed in the Ashram affairs and began to remain there for hours together, freely mixing with the boys to the extent of actually playing, and at times eating with them. In November quite a change came about in the atmosphere; mysticism was rampant everywhere, though at the same time the secular education of the boys was never overlooked or allowed to suffer in the least.

On the second of November, 1927, the Master passed an extraordinary order. All the boys in the Ashram were strictly forbidden to speak with anyone save amongst themselves, or with the Ashram authorities. Even the schoolteachers were instructed not to talk with the boys after the school hours. On the tenth of the same month, Baba quit eating solid food and began to subsist on tea or a little milk, which he continued for nearly five months and a half, even omitting milk for some days during this prolonged fast. A week after taking to this system, he began to convey\* to the boys every now and then, through stray hints as well as lengthy explanations, the importance of love, concentration and meditation, and thus directly began to inspire the boys to divine aspiration.

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\* [On July 10, 1925, Baba commenced silence, communicating by means of an alphabet board.]



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ALI AT MEHERABAD, 1927

## The Hero

JUST at this opportune moment, on the twentieth of November, 1927, two Mogul gentlemen arrived at Meherabad seeking admission into the Ashram for the boys with them. One of them was Mr. Syed Haji Muhammad of Bombay, with his son, Syed Ali, the hero of our story, who barely looked to have seen 14 summers. The boy cannot be said to be fair, though a pair of dancing brown eyes lent an air of distinction to his round face, with a slightly flat nose, a broad mouth and a prominent chin of determination.

At first, the Master refused admission because of his recent experience with the Moguls. In July 1927, two Mogul boys, sons of a well-known educationalist of Bombay, had applied for admission. Before these two boys were admitted, the gentleman in question was distinctly made aware of all the rules and regulations, the aim and object, and the general standard of living in the institution. He accepted all these after a thorough personal inspection of the Ashram and gave a solemn promise to abide by them. But within a few days he offered to provide a special diet for the boys, saying that the food provided to them in the Ashram was not satisfactory! The Master was of course greatly displeased with this proposed breach of the Ashram discipline and with the way the gentleman broke his word of honour. The boys were dismissed. The Master conveyed, "These Moguls are word-breakers, and not to be trusted."

But Ali's father persisted in pleading for reconsideration of the Master's apparently arbitrary decision, which was twice repeated by the Master with an equal persistence. In the course of this parley, the boy did not fail to show his mettle. As if drawn by a subtle magnet, he seemed very eager to be admitted

and began to argue his own case in very intelligent and clear-cut terms. An average boy of his age is usually shy in the presence of elders and strangers, particularly if they happen to be the officers of an institution in which he seeks admission for education. The unusual pluck of the boy at once endeared him to one of the Ashram officials, Mr. Kaikhushru Aspandiar Afseri, and caused him to personally intervene and plead for Ali's admission in a very touching way. If ever the Master can be said to have a weakness, it is this: he is powerless against an appeal from the depths of the heart of his disciples. And Mr. Afseri succeeded where the very angels would have failed. Ali was accepted and forthwith admitted into the fold of the blessed, the Meher Ashram. His father was explicitly acquainted with all the relevant details of the institution, the possibilities in spiritual and secular knowledge of the boys, and the cosmopolitan life led by them. He readily gave his consent in writing to all the rules of the Ashram, including the one that the boy would not be allowed to leave the institution until the course is finished, or within five years at the least, without the superintendent's permission, which may be withheld for any period within the above limit without assigning reason whatsoever.

The boy soon proved himself a noble character and as pure-minded and as innocent as a lamb. His tendency toward spirituality and attraction towards the Master were spontaneous. From the very outset, Ali was often seen sitting by the Master whenever he could spare the time for doing so. He was not sentimental, but very sensitive. The slightest reproach was enough to bring tears to his otherwise laughing eyes. Another fine attribute of the hero was that he was not talkative. During the daily spiritual discourse, he never haggled over details or caused an unnecessary interruption to the speaker, but rather sat silently and looked here and there as if preoccupied. Nonetheless this apparent silence and childish fidgeting did not mean absent-mindedness or disinterestedness, for whenever abruptly asked by the speaker to explain what he had heard in the course of the discourse, in nine cases out of ten the boy would give a remarkable account of all that he had heard, coupled with his own comments on the subject, made distinctly and freely. In the tenth case he would say outright, "I did not understand." These particular traits of his—silence, restlessness, and fidgeting—once made his class teacher cry out, "Ali, you don't seem to follow me; what did I say now?" And lo! the boy rattled out the whole passage that the teacher had just quoted almost word for word. Because

of this very good memory, Ali seldom had to cram. He generally remembered facts and meanings by hearing and reading them once or twice. His progress in the school has been no less than brilliant. The day following his admission to the Ashram he was thoroughly examined by the school authorities before being put into the fifth Persian and first English standard of the school. Within one month, Ali began to read the well-known Persian work *Gulistan* with graceful ease, and had to be promoted to the second English standard, so good was his progress in this foreign language. At the time of writing this, Ali is in the fourth English and has completed his Persian course. Of all his virtues, explicit obedience seems to be his watchword. Twice he has been reported having wept simply because some boys would not obey the Master properly!

Then again Ali was very outspoken. Later on, when his little heart had begun to throb with divine love, he used at times to become quite a dunce in the class, but he would never try to make a secret of it. He admitted the fact frankly before his class teachers, adding one of his pet phrases, "O God, what can I do? My heart is cold!" In the same way, when he felt brilliant, as he actually is, he never felt shy in blurting out, "What a good boy I have become now, sir, haven't I?" And with all these serious qualities, Ali was not of a reserved nature. On the contrary, he freely and cheerfully mixed with all the other boys and was very active, almost to the point of innocent mischief. In fact, he was so very agile that for him to go about here and there, jumping and dancing, was as simple and easy as for a squirrel. If there is any trouble with the boys in the institution, it is the strict observance of the many disciplinary rules nowhere else enforced. The slightest breach of any rule by any boy is at once reported to the authorities concerned without an exception. And so it was no small credit that Ali was rarely reported, which shows how strictly he observed the discipline of the Ashram. Yet of all these fine characteristics, love can fairly be said to be the diamond and crowning jewel of Ali.

## The Divine Life

WE have seen in the first chapter that, just two days before the hero Ali appeared on the scene, the Master had begun to influence the boys directly to higher aspirations with constant hints and an occasional silent lecture on love. But the series of divine explanations that Baba was pleased to convey since the twenty-third of November, two days after the advent of Ali, made all the young and old who had the good fortune to be present at the time hold their breath with amazement. From that day, the separate sections of the spiritual instruction classes, such as the Gujarati, Marathi, Persian, and Urdu, were postponed. For more than a month after this date, the Master continued to convey for a couple of hours every evening these explanations, and all the boys as well as the older disciples were held spellbound with rapt attention and enthusiasm. And the wonder of it was that the Master did this merely through gestures and alphabet pointing, maintaining his grim silence throughout. Besides, he conveyed the deep subject matter as he alone can convey, in such a way that the little ones were no less interested and enthralled than the grown-ups.

They contained the most logical explanation of divinity and of the whole of creation, as far as the reach of the intellect allows, that has ever been brought to light. The suns and the moons, the skies and the planes, the ethereal, mineral, vegetable, animal and human kingdoms, births, deaths, heaven and hell, the subtle and the mental worlds, saints and prophets, and the very source of all, the Soul of souls, were described, explained, and shown by the Master as one would describe a city, explain the effects of wine, and show what is music after actually seeing, drinking and hearing them all. He would explain and elucidate

points so very clearly and logically as would carry the hearers almost to the verge of experience.

At the end of the discourse every evening, the Master in his inimitable way would draw the moral of love out of all the subjects. "Love me, and you will find me. I am ready to make you Vivekanandas and Ram Thirthas, Alis and Arjuns; the only prize asked for is love. Spirituality is offered as loot. Love alone will get the lion's share. Divinity is being auctioned; make the highest bid with all the love that you can create and command." Such was the gist of the Master's constant remarks that he kept on adding, from time to time, during and after this special spiritual class as spiritual sauce to the great divine feast that was freely being served to the lucky Ashramites. On the twenty-eighth of November, 1927, the Master even went to the extent of disclosing a part of his internal game to the boys and conveyed through the usual signs: "At first I had intended to advance you gradually in the path, but the time of the great spiritual outburst that takes place in the world at long intervals is near at hand, and so I have changed the programme. I am going to advance a few amongst you, who will be ready with love, very soon. It is not late yet. Let your hearts strive and strain to the utmost and create love and feelings for me." But amidst all such suggestions, the boys were equally impressed upon not to strain their brains. They were frequently reminded that painful attempts would not avail in creating love, whereas free attempts, made with joyous enthusiasm and boyish glee, would.

Besides firing their intellect with spirituality in this way, the Master directly imparted divinity to the boys through frequent embraces and pats, fondling them a number of times in a day. At times the boys were patted till they fretted and fumed with love and feelings, and out of sheer ecstasy even disobeyed the Master when asked to go away or take to studies, except the hero, who even in the fever heat of love stuck to his watchword, obedience, and never defied the Master through word or deed, as did some of the other boys amidst the sobs and throbs of their little hearts.

Within a fortnight of Ali's arrival, the atmosphere became surcharged with love in the Meher Ashram. Many of the boys and some of the grown-up members of the institution began also to look greatly changed. They became reserved and less talkative. They were frequently preoccupied in the thoughts of the Master and averse to eating, playing and sleeping. Ali led this group prominently.

To a casual observer, Ali still remained the same picture of innocent mischief and boyish activity, but when he was watched carefully, the great change in his heart was easily perceptible in many ways. Every now and then the Master's name was on his lips. His hands, too, worked with the vibrations of his heart and scribbled out his uppermost thoughts in words such as, "Meher Baba is my Master," "Aga Ali, the son of Meher Baba," "This book belongs to the humble servant of Meher Baba," etc., on his books, papers and all odd things that he came across and on which the music of his heart could be reproduced, whether through a pencil, a pen or a scratch with a piece of stone or metal. Things that belonged to the Master also seemed to have a great attraction for the boy, and he could be often seen fondling and playing with the Master's sandals, pillows, coat, etc. Unlike many of the other boys, Ali did not seem to be much attracted towards the Master's photos or engage in playing with and adoring them, but he was very keen in collecting the Master's hair, nails, and even a piece of cotton wool that he might have once used to stuff his ears with. He would treasure these up as one would treasure diamonds and pearls and constantly feast his eyes on them.

But the most remarkable point was the great attraction that Ali began to have for the Master's personality. Just as the needle would rush at the magnet when brought near it, Ali used to seek the proximity of the Master at the first opportunity, and remained by him as long as he could. Nonetheless, to a casual observer, none of this showed. However, on the seventeenth of December the depth of his feelings came to be known generally when the Master decided Ali should remain in the hospital, aloof from everyday life, till the eczema on his hand was cured. And when he was removed there, tears began to roll down his cheeks in a string of sparkling pearls. Why? Simply because he could not bear the thought of separation from the Master even for a few days. He did not, however, allow this fact to escape from his lips voluntarily. It was only when the Master argued with him for about an hour or so that the real reason for his crying came to light. His weeping did not cease until the Master conveyed to him a solemn promise that he would not have to remain in the hospital for more than two days and that during those two days, he, the Master, would go to see him occasionally.



## All Aflame!

ON the twentieth of December, 1927, the forty-first day of his fast, the Master confined himself in a double room in the near vicinity of the Meher Ashram. This room had been built in July of that year and none could make head or tail of it at that time. About six feet in length, equally deep underground and four feet in breadth, with a small flight of stairs just sufficient for a single person to pass through this crypt-like place at a time, the lower level was solidly built in lime and stone and resembled a steel safe. In place of a roof, a flat piece of wooden board was fixed over the top, closing the room in from all sides save the small opening above for the stairs. Immediately above this peculiar pit of a room, another was built of wooden scantlings, bamboo matting and iron sheets. This latter room was a bit more spacious than the crypt right below it. A door was fixed at one end of this upper room for the attendants and visitors, who were seldom let in. The room had three other openings as windows. One of these was at the back overlooking the *sadhak ashram*, a set of five separate rooms, each one just large enough for a person to lie down comfortably, wherein five of the grown-up disciples had also imprisoned themselves just a few days before the Master confined himself.

To continue the description of the Master's prison, the remaining two windows were in the front overlooking the Meher Ashram, its playgrounds and the rest of the premises connected with it. One of these was enclosed with wire netting for the Master to look through when he retired into the upper room, and the other served the main purpose of enabling him to appear before the disciples, boys and visitors, as he generally did throughout the day and also during the early hours of dawn.

The Master remained locked up there till the twenty-sixth of February, 1928. During this period of two months and eight days the Master never came out of this peculiar lock-up and usually retired for the night in the vault below.

On the same day, the twentieth of December, 1927, the Master passed another extraordinary order. "All the boys in the institution must not even be touched with the hand by anyone, including the class teachers and the school and Ashram authorities." All these were but the faint, gross indications of some powerful divine current having been let loose in the surroundings, yet not even the most enthusiastic of the disciples were prepared for the ALL AFLAME result that followed quickly.

The fire of love that was smouldering silently of late in many of the tiny hearts, within a week of the Master's self-imprisonment, began to give out sparks. Strings of pearl-like tears began to flow freely from many little eyes every now and then and without apparent reason. This much was certain: it was neither due to any physical pain or privations, nor was it due to any grief. Many of the boys on the contrary found relief and a kind of pleasure in weeping out their hearts. Meditation and concentration, weeping and crying, appealed to them more than eating, sleeping and playing. They were tears of love.

Who weeps for Love, he weeps the best,  
Who cries for else, he does not jest.

It was this fine couplet that the boys were rendering into reality and action. Even during the school recess, the boys could not help giving vent to the throbs of their hearts through soul-stirring sobs, and the school compound then presented a touching scene throughout this first week of the Master's self-imprisonment. Everywhere the huddled-up figures of the boys were found engrossed in meditation or sobbing all over the ground and in nooks and corners of the surrounding premises. Even the separation of a few hours from the Master's proximity during the school periods was unbearable and painful to these boys.

But lo! the New Year day of the Christian era, the first of January, 1928, which also happened to be the fifty-second day of the Master's fasting and the twelfth one since he confined himself, witnessed the most magnificent outburst of divinity. As if the deep-rooted divine emotion of the select few had set the rest of the boys into commotion, the majority of them began to cry openly every now and then throughout the day. But it

was in the evening that the climax was reached. All the boys in the Ashram burst into tears and began to weep and wail as if all their dear ones had been reported to be dead at the same time. For about an hour between seven and eight in the evening, this wonderful phenomenon held the onlookers simply spellbound. The shrieks and cries could even be heard a quarter of a mile away from the Ashram! Attempts were, of course, made by the authorities in pacifying the boys and ascertaining from them the reason for this outburst. But it was all to no purpose. They seemed to be all engrossed in crying and deaf to all else. "BABA, BABA" were the only words that could be heard distinctly in all this tumult. Only this much was as clear as daylight: however wildly they might have been crying, when brought in the presence of the Master, they became silent with a magical swiftness.

The following day, during the 20 minutes of recess, a similar outburst was witnessed on the school grounds, but the wonder of it was that at the sound of the warning bell for resumption of classes, it all came to an abrupt end, although the select few seemed to be still struggling to subject their hearts to the command of the Master in the shape of the ringing of the bell. After a day or two more, such collective crying of the boys ceased; yet many still continued weeping now and then for days together.

But in all this inborn and locally affected crying, the weeping of Ali was the most singular. The ache of his heart, though seemingly vibrating his very bones, brought out almost silent sobs. He never talked sentimentally or in lofty words. He neither desired spiritual advancement nor asked for divine enlightenment. The proximity of the Master was all in all to give him peace and contentment. The happiness of his heart, and the tranquillity of his mind when he happened to be near the Master, were clear even to a casual observer. At such moments, he used to look the very picture of peace and calmness.

From the second week of January, however, the Master began to avoid close contact with Ali. This "crack lover," as my friend Mr. Dadachanji likes to call him in his notes and diaries, was kept at arm's length for some time. Perhaps he was sufficiently surcharged with love to the bursting point. Although the Master avoided personal touch, he seemed bent upon keeping Ali's feelings strung to the last tune. The boy was often called to the Master only to be dismissed with a curt enquiry, instead of receiving an embrace or a loving pat as he was used to. This treatment

by the Master seemed to fuel the fire of love that was all aflame by now in his little heart. In spite of his characteristic control, Ali could not curb the twitches and twinges that flickered on his usually complacent features on such occasions. He suffered and bore all this bravely and patiently as only a true lover can bear and suffer. For a heart that is not aglow with such deep divine emotions, it is simply impossible to imagine even one-tenth of the poignancy of the pain that was caused to this brave and bold lover through such deliberate separation and intentional pinpricks of the Master. And for all that, Ali neither disobeyed the irritating commands of the Master nor uttered an undignified word to his face, much though he fretted and fumed when he got away from him.

As if to show to what extent this noble soul could go in controlling his emotion and obeying his commands, the Master on the evening of the seventeenth of January, in the presence of many other boys and disciples, sent for Ali nearly a dozen times, each time dismissing him on one pretext or the other without letting him come within his loving clasp, for which the hero was as impatient as a fish out of water. The Master himself could not help bursting into a silent eulogy of Ali that he conveyed through his usual gestures to those around him. The gist of it was: "Here is the concrete example of that noble sentiment, 'Let my head remain on the feet of my Master, even when I am in the overpowered state of love.' Ali is in the overpowered state; still he is not indifferent in carrying out the commands in spite of the tumult in his heart."

On the twenty-eighth of January, the Master openly declared Ali to be quite ready with sufficient love to enable him to be taken away from the domain of the "bound" to the region of the "free," but for a final touch from Baba!

## Beyond the Gross

JUST 24 hours after the Master made the memorable declaration about Ali's readiness, it was proved to the hilt in a very tangible way. At about 6:30 in the evening, the Master began to impart some pinpricks to Ali. In the presence of many of the boys and disciples, Ali was taunted with remarks such as, "He is very keen about his studies these days and has no thoughts for me, and is always thinking about his father." The effect was soon evident. It was the first time that Ali lost control over his heart. Much as he tried, he could not help sobbing out loudly amidst profuse tears that were rapidly rolling down his cheeks; and at this display, which was very unlike him, the boy was so very exasperated that with a jump he got away from the Master's seat and began to run at random as fast as his legs would carry him. Mr. Afseri, who happened to be standing nearby amongst the disciples, was signed by the Master to follow him, and he soon overtook the boy.

Afseri, with his excellent command over the Persian language and an inborn sympathy for these loving souls, generally succeeded in restoring the composure of Ali and the boys, but this time, for all his attempts and persuasions, he failed to pacify Ali. Therefore he had to take the boy again to the Master, who was as usual seated by the window inside the upper room. But the proximity of the Master made the hero go wild with his crying, which had by now become terrible to look at. The sobs were heart-rending and Ali's whole frame shook as if vibrating with a high-voltage electric current, while tears rolled down from his eyes in an unbreakable chain. After some time, the Master signed to Mr. Afseri to bring the boy inside. By this time, Ali was almost unconscious, and so the gentleman had actually



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CHOTA BABA AT MEHERABAD, 1927

to lift him up while conducting him inside. Scrupulously avoiding a touch of his person, the Master, however, allowed Ali to be brought very close to him and began to convey some pacifying words.

It was nearly 9:30 at night; this piquant drama had continued for nearly three hours, and, for all the Master's remonstrations, Ali seemed beyond the capability of controlling his soul-stirring sobs. On the contrary, the situation was growing more acute every minute. The onlookers were turned into statues, speechless and breathless with wonder at the sight, specially since the boy seemed to be breathing his last. At that the Master left arguing "intellect to intellect" and seemed forced to take recourse to the language of the heart. The Master gathered Ali up in his arms, patted his head, imprinted a silent kiss on his forehead, and then placed his head on the boy's heaving bosom for two or three minutes, and finished. Ali became as calm as a millpond. No sound, no vibrations, no movements. He seemed to be sound asleep! Not the slightest trace of the terrible storm remained visible on his features. For about 15 to 20 minutes, he was left undisturbed in this divine coma; then the Master beckoned to Afseri to wake him up. But here was another surprise for the onlookers. Ali would not open his eyes. When his eyelids were pulled up, the iris was found turned inward. He was looking beyond the gross.

Under the Master's instructions, several questions were then repeatedly put to him, but no reply was received. After some time, to the questions "How are you, Aga Ali?" there came a reply, "Khush" (happy), in a very feeble voice, which seemed to come from a great distance. He replied in the same way as he was asked: "What do you see?" "Baba!" "Where?" "Everywhere!"

To see everywhere that which is everywhere is happiness indeed and worth a thousand deaths, but alas! even a thousand deaths are not sufficient to gain this sight. I don't mean that Ali got the perfect sight that day. Rather it was a mere glimpse of THAT which is "beyond the gross," but all the same it was a genuine sight. To go into the details of the degrees of internal sight is not within the compass of this little book. Suffice it to say, that Ali one day will get as perfect a sight as gained by his more fortunate co-Ashramite Abdulla, "Chota Baba," [see Supplement, Part II] during this very month of January 1928, when he received the "final touch" from the Master, which no power on earth could withhold at the right moment.<sup>2</sup>

At the last reply of the boy, "Everywhere," the Master quickly signed for his removal. He was taken into the hospital and given suitable treatment for the physical exhaustion and shock that he had incidentally been subjected to and was made comfortable on one of the beds there. One of the disciples was instructed to remain awake by the hero's side for the rest of the night and report his condition. The Master himself did not retire to the lower chamber till two o'clock that night, and continued enquiring about the boy's state during those four hours. In the course of a remark, Baba was pleased to convey, "Much as I liked to leave him alone for some time, his terrible sobs forced me to give him the sight. But for that he would have dropped his body."

The next three days, Ali was detained in the hospital and kept under strict nursing. He looked well and moved about freely from the very next morning, but he seemed dazed and dumbfounded. There was a vacant look in his eyes, and he did not take food for the first 24 hours.

On the third day, the first of February, a marked change came about Ali. In place of lethargy, keen activity was seen in his movements. Often he was seen running here and there all over the Ashram ground as if in chase of something that was receding away from him, and looked very disturbed and ruffled. To a casual observer, the boy looked stark mad! In spite of it all, how very considerate he was about the Master will be seen from the following episode.

For the first time, the secular education of the boys had been neglected for some days during this upheaval of love. But on this day, the first of February, the Master desired all the boys to once again begin attending the school strictly according to the fixed timetables. Many boys at first insisted on being let alone, and some had substantial grounds to do so, considering their disturbed intellect and throbbing hearts, but all gave in after more or less persuasion. Of all, Ali had the greatest right to be exempted; since he could not think of eating and playing, or remaining at ease even for an hour or so at one fixed place, how could he even think of attending school? Perhaps he would not have been called upon to do so, without even requesting an exemption, but what a noble soul! Just because the Master would be pleased, Ali himself appeared before him and of his own accord offered to go to school. Only those who have a proper idea as to an ache in the heart and a stir in the soul would, to a certain extent, understand the significance of this sacrificial



offering. Perhaps it was this noble and spontaneous offer that made the Master's task very easy in persuading the other boys.

Now, although Ali went to school, the extraordinary condition of his heart continued to be the same, and a special watch was kept on him throughout the 24 hours. Of all his normal tendencies, eating was the one to which the boy became very averse. He did not avoid food, but he simply could not take it. So much so, that on the second of February, the Master had to feed him some rice and milk with his own hands. However, on the following night, Ali began to sleep well, and the more he slept the more conscious he became. By the fourth of February, Ali was almost his old self again, the "sight" having been cut off by the Master.

But the disappearance of the glimpse of the "beyond" brought about a violent change in Ali. The uppermost thought in him now seemed to be to run away somewhere, perhaps in search of the "lost treasure," just as he had been running after the receding "sight" recently. Once, he actually managed to run away a mile to the surrounding fields and hills, but because of the special watch kept on him he was brought back. His uneasiness grew so keen that the Master restored to him the "sight" once again, on the ninth of February, simply by passing his fingers on the boys forehead. However, the following week, Ali continued to be very turbulent and truculent. The "sight" was perhaps being flickered by the Master before being completely withdrawn pending the final touch. But his love for the Master seemed to be greatly intensified. Even while asleep, he was often heard repeating, "Baba, Baba," and once was actually found in a devotional pose lying straight on his back with both hands clasped in a characteristic salute. He looked as if paying homage to the "King of his heart," although he was sleeping soundly at that time.

It will be remembered that Ali frequently used to amuse himself with the Master's odd things, including a pair of sandals patched at a hundred and one places. To the horror of the onlookers, the boy, in a fit of feelings one day that week, suddenly snatched away a fairly big piece of the leather strap from the sandal and began to chew it down frantically. Before he could be stopped by anyone, the piece was actually gulped down!

## The Devil's Work

WE shall have to go back a little, and to remember that so far as the open manifestation was concerned, spirituality began to give out sparks at Meher Ashram in the month of December 1927, ultimately leading to the great spectacular divine outburst in the following month of January 1928. Simultaneously with the process of the divine lift, the devil also began his hereditary work, and various sorts of rumours slowly began to spread concerning the holy Meher Ashram. At first these rumours were local and generally in reference to the strange behaviour of some of the boys in the Ashram, who were all alleged to have lost their mental balance. In the absence of first-hand information from the proper authorities, a casual and inquisitive observer was honestly liable to be led astray in believing the boys had actually gone off the mark, from the way they at times behaved. But Dame Rumour soon set many a tongue a-wagging indiscriminately. Gradually not only this rumour about the boys' losing their sanity was badly distorted and greatly exaggerated to mischievous and spiteful lengths, but several other unfounded allegations were added to it.

Thus by the end of January 1928, quite a long chain of clumsy and silly but no less dangerous rumours was created round the institution. Echoes of these rumours were reported far and wide, causing grave misgivings in the hearts of many of the parents and guardians who had entrusted their beloved charges to Meher Ashram authorities. Whenever possible, on enquiries, the parents and guardians were never denied a proper explanation. Save for this, the wild rumours were treated by the Ashram authorities with the silent contempt they deserved. It is seldom worth while to pay heed to the clamouring of the idly inquisitive

world in connection with one's words and actions in the cause of truth.

Such of the rumours as any sane man would laugh at (for example, "The boys were forcibly detained in the Ashram to extract a ransom from the parents") I will severely leave alone. As to the allegations of the Ashramites having gone mad, let me point out that up to this date, there is not a single boy in the institution who has become one whit less sane than on the day he was admitted to the Ashram, though I will never hesitate in exchanging sanity for sanctity. Even Abdulla (Chota Baba), who has been made a real saint of a very high order, inasmuch as he is now in the sixth plane and worthy of not only being called a *wali* or a *mahatma*, but a *pir* or a saint, is perfectly conscious, sane and cognizant of all his actions, although in the beginning he remained, to all appearances, completely unconscious for four days.

Another rumour said an attempt was being made to convert all the Ashramites into the Zoroastrian faith since the founder belongs to that religion. The founder of the institution is no doubt a true Zoroastrian, and so perfectly true that he is no less a Christian, a Muslim, a Hindu, a Sikh, or a Jew; in short, he belongs to every religion, cult, yoga and philosophy that tries to teach divinity in any form and through any medium. He is "religion personified"! What sent the majority of the Mogul parents into a fit of the blues was the rumour that all the Ashramites were forced to pay obeisance to the Master to the length of placing their heads on his feet, which amounts to a *sijda*. I do not belong to that school of thought in Islam that forbids the *sijda-e-tazima* to one's spiritual guide, and for me there is no better prayer carpet than the august feet of Meher Baba; but I emphatically deny this charge that any boy, least of all a Muslim boy, in the Ashram is forced to bow down to the Master. On the contrary, it is on record in Meher Ashram that the Master had in the beginning advised all the Muslim boys only to "kiss his hands" whenever they felt like paying him reverence, and this system had continued for a long time. But the boys themselves were not satisfied with it, and just as they were not forced to bow, they were also not forced to desist from it. Divine enthusiasm knows no law. That great and widely revered Perfect Master, Hazrat Ali Ahmed Sabir Kalyari, has been reported to have once danced round his own Master, Hazrat Baba Farid Ganji Shakar, chanting the following lines:

Should I call thee Ka'aba, the Sacred Shrine, or the Prophet, the Messenger Divine; or art Thou the Koran, the Word Sublime, or God Himself on earth?

The phraseology of love is so overpowering for speech as to make me distracted!

Apart from the individual explanations conveyed personally to the respective parents and guardians at the time of admitting the boys, the aim and object of the institution has never been made a secret. The early announcements that appeared in almost all the well-known newspapers of the country about the opening of this institution were made under the headlines of "An Ideal Spiritual Educational Institution" and the like. And though spirituality remains the paramount object of this institution, secular education is not the less efficient for it. On the contrary, the progress of some of the boys of this Ashram in the matter of worldly education may perhaps constitute a "world record." Probably the reader would think it to be a very sweeping claim, but I would substantiate it with a couple of examples.

One, Duttoo Sav, a Hindu boy of 15 years of age, began to learn English in the Hazrat Babajan High School from the alphabet, and within ten months only, he came up to the sixth standard English! Not that he was all of a sudden placed in this standard, but that he was promoted gradually in the space of ten months. And I would like to add that with all other boys of his standards, he, too, was strictly examined by competent teachers before being promoted to the higher standards (the curriculum of the Bombay University being strictly followed).

As a second example, I would cite the case of my own son, Muhammad Usman (Dadu), aged nine years. For two years before being admitted to the Meher Ashram he attended one of the first-class schools in Poona, besides getting private tuition. Without going into the details, I would say this much: that in two months at the Ashram he made progress that he had not done in two years there. I suggest no miracle, although the progress is undoubtedly miraculous, but to illustrate the efficient teaching at the Ashram. And no wonder; for the average hundred boys of the school there are no less than 20 competent teachers, of whom three are graduates and seven undergraduates of the Bombay University, besides many non-matriculates. The majority of them worked not only for the sake of ordinary duty but with the prime object of rendering direct service to the Master, and therefore they put their heart and soul in their

duties. Over and above the daily school periods for five hours, the boys are made to study for nearly three hours every day, while extra tuition is also given to the very promising ones amongst them. In short, the institution provides a rare chance for the boys to cultivate and develop their respective secular and spiritual faculties to the full.

To return to the theme proper, these rumours gave rise to the possibility of some of the boys being taken away from the Ashram before their terms were finished. This was a very deplorable prospect, and where the boys who had been affected with love were concerned it was also dangerous. To be suddenly removed from an atmosphere in which their hearts had become harmonized was likely to impair their health and intellect. The reader may well imagine the consequences, if perchance Ali had been taken away on that fateful night the twenty-ninth of January.

Perhaps it was to precipitate the impending troubles, or to ascertain precisely as to which of the boys were likely to be taken away, or it may also have been meant to make an impression upon the guardians likely to go back on their sacred promises—whatever the reason, the Master, in the first week of January, advised the authorities to take from the parents and guardians of all the boys in the Ashram afresh, on duly stamped bonds in place of the existing plain agreements, their free consent and promise to leave the boys undisturbed for five years. Steps were immediately taken, and matters began to take a new turn. Some parents were found steady enough to stick to their words and honour their promises; they readily corroborated their original agreements by signing the new bonds. Some did so after great persuasions and explanations. Some asked for time to consider the matter, and a few began to show open hostility to their own words of honour. Thus the divine atmosphere of the Meher Ashram began to get affected with the devil's working, and somehow it was felt that a rift in the flute was imminent.

The expected happened very soon. Just as the Master had begun to convey through the usual signs about sending a representative of the Ashram to Europe to invite the Christian West to participate in the divine loot, on the twenty-fifth of January, two of the Hindu boys of the institution were taken away by their respective parents without paying any heed to importunities and persuasions. Two days later, yet another four Hindu boys were forced to leave this fine institution by their respective guardians. The thirtieth of January witnessed the exit of the

first Muslim boy being snatched away by the "devil" in the shape of prejudices that, for all the explanations of the authorities, could not be dislodged from the minds of his guardians. The advent of February did not improve matters. On the very first day of this fateful month another Hindu boy was made to miss the opportunity of his life and was taken away from the "fold of the blessed." These rapid exits caused no small consternation amongst the Ashram workers, yet happily, so far as the affected boys were concerned, there was no definite sign of any trouble. On the contrary, the question for some of them, including Ali, was already decided.

On the twentieth of January, the authorities received a letter from Ali's father, in reply to their request for a fresh bond of agreement, saying, "The boy is yours . . . entrusted to your charge with full faith . . . no objection to your training him as best as you think." And what a coincidence! The reader will remember that on the same day, the twenty-ninth of January, that this letter was written, Ali began to see "beyond the gross."

By this time, Mr. Rustom K. S. Irani, the eldest son of Khan Saheb Kaikhushru S. Irani of Ahmednagar, and one of the Master's earliest and beloved disciples, was instructed to prepare himself for a visit to England and a few countries on the continent, to personally invite the youth of the West to take advantage of this unique institution, the Meher Ashram. Accordingly, Rustom finished all the necessary arrangements and returned to Meherabad, on the sixteenth of February, 1928, to report the same to the Master. But the very next day, the "devil's work" brought out its results!

## The Result

THE devil played the trump card on the seventeenth of February, 1928, the ninety-ninth day of the Master's self-imprisonment, fifty-ninth day of his liquid-fasting and twenty-sixth day of remaining only on water. Rumours had at last penetrated even into the Mogul community in right earnest.

The elder brother of one of the most promising of the Mogul boys in the Ashram, Muhammad Hussein, appeared on the scene that morning, with trouble glistening grimly in his eyes. In place of his usually smiling face, remarkable civility, and respectful enquiry for the Master, he greeted the Ashram authorities with this curt sentence, "I have come to take away Muhammad Hussein." It was a simple sentence, yet enough to send a shiver of horror into the hearts of the authorities concerned in view of the boy's fine readiness for the reward of love from the Master. The more they tried to explain to the man, the more silent and reserved he became. "I simply want to take the boy away from here" was the only thing heard from him in reply to every argument. He would not even say what his supposed grievances and complaints were.

For that poor boy, Muhammad Hussein, the advent of his brother was the appearance of the "Messenger of Death." Holy horror was too visible on his twitching features to be missed even by a casual observer. Still hoping against hope, the Ashram authorities somehow detained the enraged brother the whole day with a view that perhaps he might get cool enough after seeing for himself the Ashram life, and might express his objections. But all this proved of no avail. The man remained adamant to the last. It was as if, in the language of the Holy Koran, God had sealed all his faculties against reason and truth.

Much as all wished to avoid the final blow to the poor boy, there was no escape from it. The man was conducted near to the Master's seat and Muhammad Hussein was formally handed over to him in the presence of many other boys and disciples at about eight o'clock that evening. The boy was all sobs with a dreadful look in his eyes, as if he were not entrusted to his brother but to a butcher to be taken away to the slaughter-house. But none was prepared for the awful scene that followed immediately. As a final bid for freedom, Muhammad Hussein suddenly shook himself off from his guardian's grasp and began to run away as fast as he could. It was Mr. Afseri who succeeded in overtaking the poor and innocent fugitive and once again brought the violently struggling figure of the boy to his brother. The latter was, by now, simply a beast to look at; with eyes red and dilated, chest heaving like the very bellows, teeth clenched firmly and fists ready for any emergency, he took a panther jump at the poor boy. The devil in him was aroused! And he caught hold of the boy's collar, shook him as roughly as if he were an overfilled bag of flour, and began to drag him away as one would a dead dog. Even this did not satisfy the enraged Mogul; the brute in him made the usually good man go to the length of slapping the already helpless boy. The spectators were simply stupefied and stood like statues, with horror and indignation. But for the Master's august presence, there were a few who, for all the laws and penalties, would have converted the "mad Mogul" into a bag of broken bones. Still, for all the discipline, one of them could not help crying out, "Behave, and be human in handling that poor soul!" "Alive or dead, I am going to take him away" was the only answer gasped out by the man who went on half-dragging, half-lifting the struggling boy.

It was only when he was seated in the carriage holding the boy securely that at last he blurted out his complaint! The meditation and kissing of the Master's feet by the boy were his chief complaints. What flimsy grounds to create all the row about! I feel more pity than indignation for the man. Had he conveyed this earlier I am sure the Master would have granted his request and even forced the boy to desist from this practice. However, it was too late. But in spite of all this hum-drum, the love-mad boy was sane and brave enough to convey a parting message to the Master in the very presence of his fretting and fuming brother. They were simple yet touching words, "Tell Baba I am being dragged and driven away. I won't forget him, but



convey to him my last weeping words: not to forget his promise to me." Tears were freely rolling down the eyes of all those who witnessed the result of the devil's work. And the Master? Yes, his bright brown eyes were also shedding pearls, perhaps washing away the sins of the Mogul along with those of the others of his category.

Kabir says:

Kabir is weeping at the sight of the grinding mill of the world which is going on merrily, since none (of course excepting those lucky few who stick to the Central Pin = Perfect Master) remain safe between its two externally moving rollers of life and death.

The master did not retire for rest throughout that night and continued weeping silently for a long time.

Along with a few others of his kind, Ali remained by the Master till about midnight, weeping for the lost comrade; then the Master asked them all to go to sleep. All including the hero obeyed the command and retired to their respective beddings. But for all his efforts, Ali could not sleep that night. As if haunted by a nightmare, he was very restless and tossed himself to and fro on his bed. At two o'clock in the morning, the night watchman could not help reporting his condition to the Master, who at once instructed Mr. Afseri to go and ask the boy to stop worrying and sleep soundly. But Ali's prophetic reply simply took Afseri's breath away. The boy seemed to be in a trance and on hearing the message exclaimed, "What strange scenes do I see? What strange sounds do I hear? Oh! It is all the din and dust of city life!" And in spite of repeated attempts, Ali could not at all sleep that night. Somehow, the boy began to feel his own stay in the Ashram in jeopardy. And many shared with him this thought. In spite of his father's recent letter, all felt now that where these Moguls were concerned, promises and agreements were but mere scraps of paper, and they remembered the Master's early words: "These Moguls are word-breakers, and not to be trusted."

The following day, the eighteenth of February, was the Master's thirty-fourth birthday, but in spite of the usual celebrations, it was felt to be very gloomy and dull in comparison with previous records. The Master began to remain very reserved and preoccupied. His attitude towards the selected boys was also changed, and they were begun to be kept at arm's length. Did

he cease loving them? Certainly not! On the contrary, Baba showed no less concern for them than before, as is clearly apparent from the following incident.

On the nineteenth of February, when someone chanced to utter the name of Ali in the presence of the Master, he at once conveyed through signs, "Oh, why do you remind me about him! Now that his name has reached my ear, better call him here." The moment Ali received the call, for which he was perhaps eagerly waiting at the time, he came scampering towards the Master and simply fell into his arms! The Master sent him away after giving him a hugging embrace, and, as if nothing had happened, resumed the discussion that was going on before Ali's name had crept in it!

The twentieth of February witnessed a great consternation at Meherabad. Mr. N. C. Talati, one of the Master's disciples in Bombay, wired that day that Ali's father wanted him back. Enough! The deviltry had reached its zenith! Excitement, conferences and confabulations took place between the Master and the disciples and amongst the latter themselves about this reported breach of promise on the part of Ali's father. The most important point in the Master's declaration was this: "If Ali goes, everything goes; I will come out of confinement and break up the whole institution!" How very strange! Just for the sake of a single boy, the whole of this ideal institution was to go to the dogs. And the disciples have had sufficient experience of the Master's workings to believe that he meant every word he said. To break an institution, if it serves the purpose, is not stranger than Swami Vivekananda's remark about dying a million deaths if thereby he could serve one individual.

However, two of the disciples offered to go to Bombay and try to bring Mr. Haji Muhammad round, and the Master allowed them to do so. The following day, the twenty-first of February, a telegram was received from this pair from Bombay, "Successful. . . ." That one word, "successful," gave relief to many an aching heart. But this relief was greatly marred by the black clouds that once again appeared at Meherabad in the shape of some more Mogul parents, with their typical black turbans, the very next day. They sang the same song: "We want to take away our boys." But unlike Muhammad Hussein's brother, they talked some sense. Their only objection was that they feared the boys here will lose their religion. Besides explanations and arguments, the authorities, under the Master's command, offered that one of them, who seemed to be an educated and religious

Muslim, should become the religious teacher of the Meher Ashram and teach the Muslim boys of the institution the ritualistic side of Islam, and that as a compensation he would be paid 150 rupees per month, the same he earned elsewhere. What more could one desire as a proof of the institution's or its founder's bonafides in the matter of the alleged attempts at spoiling their hereditary faith? In spite of it, although they were greatly impressed with all the arguments, they took away three more boys from the institution.

But the matters did not stop here. Just another day, and lo! it was Ali's turn to get some shocks. On the twenty-third day of February, the business partner of Ali's father came to Meherabad early that morning to take him away. However, this gentleman proved himself a rational being. He admitted having heard undesirable rumours and demanded explanations thereof. He gave a patient hearing to all that was explained to him and verified all the statements of the authorities through personal inspection of the Meher Ashram during his stay that day, and then declared himself fully satisfied. He did not only leave Ali alone but also entrusted the two boys that were with him to the care of the Ashram authorities, besides promising to persuade his partner, the father of Ali, to let Ali remain here.

## Snatched Away!

IT was expected and yet unexpected. The worst did come to pass—Ali was snatched away!

It was on Saturday, the twenty-fifth of February, 1928, at about 7:30 in the morning that the Ashram authorities got the surprise of their lives. The arrival of Ali's father was announced. In view of his partner's departure on the preceding day with a good impression and a promise to persuade him, he was at least not expected to turn up so soon. But as it was, they had crossed each other while journeying to and from Bombay, and thus unhappily Mr. Haji Muhammad missed the intended good opinion of his rational partner about the Meher Ashram. However, the gentleman was at once conducted to the Ashram and was shown round the new school premises and given some unsolicited explanation about the alleged rumours. He did not seem to be in an agitated frame of mind like Muhammad Hussein's brother, but he looked equally determined to carry away the hero. The authorities succeeded in persuading him to take some rest in view of the overnight journey before entering into the heart of the burning question of the day.

Thus, when he got refreshed with a few hours' sleep and had some food, negotiations were opened with him at noon. Mr. Afseri was the chief speaker on behalf of the Meher Ashram, and he argued the case well. The discussions went on for nearly four hours. The offer for an Islamic teacher for the religious training of the Mogul boys in the Ashram was repeated, with the additional liberty of the selection of the teacher being made by the gentleman himself. He was also offered every help and compensation to shift the avenue of his business to or start a new one at Ahmednagar if he liked to do so, to facilitate his

visiting the institution from time to time to see that all went well with his son.

By four o'clock the devil was on the point of being defeated, as the gentleman seemed at last to have been brought around, and Mr. Afseri went to draft the bond for his signature. But what did he find when he returned? Another Mogul gentleman was present there with Ali's father! The former had perhaps come to Ahmednagar by the afternoon train, and just as Mr. Afseri had gone to fetch the fateful bond, he had joined Ali's father. The newcomer, in the absence of the explanations of the authorities, was naturally very prejudiced and no less determined in taking away his own boys from the institution than Ali's father was in the morning. They had enough time to discuss the matter between themselves, and so no wonder that Mr. Afseri felt his heart missing some beats at this unexpected sight. And his fears proved only too true. Ali's father had fallen a victim to hearsay again! Taking his courage in both hands, Mr. Afseri, although he had already talked for four hours, once again tried to meet squarely the opponent who unfortunately seemed to have greatly prejudged the issues. The atmosphere had by now become very tense with excitement. Many of the Master's disciples began to saunter about the room in which the fateful conference was going on, throwing sly glances at the occupants as if to read their intentions. Hopeless and hopeful were the only two words that played about the lips of almost all those who could manage to pick up a word or a sign now and then.

It was nearly sunset when negotiations with the stubborn Moguls were broken off. The devil had triumphed! The boys, including the hero, were to be taken away! Of all the actors in this exciting drama, Mr. Afseri was the most deeply affected. How sincerely he had tried to knock sense into the prejudiced Moguls could be seen from the fact that at the end of the parley he went into a swoon and remained unconscious for some time! His troubles were well rewarded with that expressive sentence that the Master later on conveyed, "None has worked harder than him (Afseri) in the cause of Truth."

While describing his characteristics, I have said that Ali was not sentimental and that he had the least element of show about him in all his words and actions. No better proof of this fine trait could be cited than the way he behaved himself on this troublesome day. Unlike other boys who would cry and did cry under such circumstances, Ali managed to hide his volcanic feelings behind his unruffled face, which all could see was as calm

as a millpond. Lest one may ascribe this to despondency or lack of sufficient feelings, I will show how really desperate he was. In the afternoon, when Mr. Afseri had chanced to come to the Ashram office for the bond, he had encountered Ali on the way. He cannot say to this day what made him ask the boy, "What have you got in your pocket, Ali?" save that it was a silent command from the "all-watching" Master. Ali simply dived his hand into one of his coat pockets and brought out an innocent penknife. Afseri was on the point of walking off. But the question had gone directly home. Ali could not help blurting out, "This is the final argument that I have reserved to take recourse to while talking out the question of my stay with my father!" "O God! Am I dreaming?" thought the bewildered gentleman. What iron determination! And how keen a desperation this boy of 15 summers had nurtured!

The matter was at once reported to the Master, who, in anticipation of the unfavourable decision, then strictly enjoined upon Ali never even to think of violence of any kind against anyone, including his own self. Since implicit obedience to the Master's commands is his watchword, this order of the Master has proved more than enough to restrain Ali to this date from such extreme steps like the one he had under contemplation that afternoon. Besides the order, the Master also gave him this promise: "If you are taken away, I will either come out of my confinement or break up the institution."

It was dusk when Ali was conducted down to his father. The poor boy was dumb with grief, yet there was neither a tear nor a twinge about his apparently placid features. Still, those who had an inkling of his kindling heart could not miss the glassy look about his eyes. A surging storm was being bravely checked in them. Without creating a scene or offering a clumsy and ineffective resistance, Ali silently obeyed his father's commands, and was soon whisked off in a carriage. Many pairs of glistening eyes remained glued to the gradually disappearing twinkle of the vehicle's rear light as long as it could be seen.

Gone! The leader of the little lovers was at last lifted away. There were many hearts that weeped and many souls that sobbed that night at Meherabad. To say the atmosphere became dark and deserted or grim and gloomy is still like begging for a better description of the awful state of affairs at Meherabad.

After the hero's departure, it was for the first time that the Master enquired as to how many days had passed since he had confined himself and left off eating. True to his promise to Ali,

the Master had already begun to think of coming out. Did it also mean the closing of the ideal institution? There was no end to the conjectures made by many of the disciples, but none could foresee what was to happen the following day from the remarks conveyed by the Master. Here is the gist of his silent signalling: "I have gone very weak; I will come out and commence eating; the purpose has not been served. Ali is not in loss in the least, but I am. It will all have to be done afresh!" But the most significant words conveyed by the Master were: "None should touch my person for ten days under any circumstances, unless specially ordered otherwise."

Now let us turn to our hero for a while. Before reaching the railway station, Ali tried twice to effect an escape through the ingenious tricks of asking the carriage to be stopped on one pretext or the other. Once he actually managed to go in an adjoining field, but his guardians were no less watchful, and the boy did not succeed in getting free from their grips. At the station, just as the train was about to move, Ali tried again. Quite unconcernedly, he slipped out of the carriage, and as if to help his father's companion into the compartment, Ali tried to put him off his guard. But that shrewd gentleman was not to be caught napping. Perhaps he guessed Ali's intentions, and just as the train began to move on, he was careful enough in gently pushing Ali into the carriage before he got in himself.

The railway line, at about the third mile from the Ahmednagar station towards Poona, passed through the very heart of Meherabad, where the colony was situated at the time. Perhaps it was due to the near approach of the object of his heart, or that there was no longer any chance left him of an immediate escape, that as the train began to gather speed Ali found the curbing of his emotions becoming too much for him. Yet to avoid an open outburst, the hero leaned out of the carriage window to give free vent to his sobs in order to drown them amidst the noise of the fast-moving train. And lo! in a brilliant halo of lustre, he began to behold the Master.

What far-reaching power! Without a touch, a glance, or even close proximity, the Master was able to give the sight to Ali as a parting gift of love from him. And this proved a very effective consolation to Ali in his hours of trial, since, in the boy's own words which he conveyed later on, this sight used to help him much in checking a complete breakdown whenever he felt like weeping out his heart during his painful separation.

## Six Days of Separation

The First Day (February 25, 1928)

THE overnight atmosphere of gloom and distraction continued throughout the day. The Master began conveying remarks since morning about coming out of his long confinement and commencing to take food. During one of the many discussions held between the Master and the disciples and amongst themselves about Ali, two of them made a bold offer to approach Ali's father in spite of all the happenings and try again to bring him round. The Master gave his consent and allowed the pair seven days of grace in which to arrive at a final conclusion. Accordingly, the two gentlemen left for Bombay in the afternoon.

In all the six years of my close contact with the Master, I have often marked a great peculiarity about his actions and words. But this day, I daresay, would beat them all. On the one hand, he continued instructing the authorities concerned in continuing all activities as usual, as if nothing untoward had happened; he even sanctioned many costly alterations and additions to the existing premises of the Ashram and school, and asked the authorities to make fresh purchases and involve themselves in various commitments in this connection. In the same breath, on the other hand, he ordered another group of his disciples to prepare for the close-up of the institution, lock, stock and barrel! Thus the contrary workings of these two groups began to come into operation simultaneously from this day to the great bewilderment of the rest. And this state of affairs continued for the following five days when both sides were ready for the fateful final command to be issued at the expiry of the seven days of grace.

It was exactly 45 minutes past five that the Master at last



stepped out of his confinement after 127 days of rigid self-imprisonment. But for the black clouds of Ali's going away, the Master's coming out amongst them no doubt would have been a direct outburst of glorious sunshine for the boys and disciples. Still, there was no lack of enthusiasm. The Master was soon conducted down the hill on which the Meher Ashram was then situated to Meherabad proper in a gaily decorated rickshaw.

One of the Master's seats at Meherabad is situated along the public road under a neem tree in the shape of a huge box-like wooden room, near the sacred fireplace called *dhuni*. A *dhuni* is a small round fire pit generally maintained about the seats of Hindu and Muslim saints alike, though its maintenance alone does not imply that one is a genuine saint. This particular *dhuni* was always fed with round logs that generally smouldered. They were never likely to give out a flame even when violently disturbed. Just as the Master's rickshaw passed the *dhuni* on this particular day, it suddenly burst out into a distinct flame! I witnessed this extraordinary phenomenon, as I chanced to look at it just at the right moment. Many others also remember having seen it. There was no one close to it just then, and the moment the rickshaw passed onward that peculiar outburst died down immediately, leaving no traces of any chemical disturbance. It was found smouldering as usual, giving out an almost imperceptible smoke.

After passing a few minutes here and there, enquiring of the various disciples as to how they were faring, the Master retraced his steps and going round the *dhuni* sat down opposite it, quietly, for about 15 minutes. Just before getting up from there, he was pleased to enlighten the disciples with a very suggestive hint, "The *dhuni* has just conveyed to me a message, 'Continue and go on with the work!'"

Although, as mentioned above, the dual workings of "making" and "unmaking" of the institution had to continue for five days, that hint was sufficient for many of the disciples to take for granted that the institution for the present had passed through the danger zone and would be continued.

A telegram was received from the pair who had undertaken to achieve the impossible and had gone to Bombay the other day. It contained a single word, "Hopes," which gave a happy surprise to those who heard it.

#### The Second Day (February 26, 1928)

The Master was indisposed throughout the day, but towards the evening he was marked to be very restless. For a few minutes

he would retire into the lower crypt-like chamber only to come out again. Going down, coming up, standing, sitting, sleeping, reclining and, in fact, every minute changing his position and pose, the Master kept on conveying through feeble signs that he was dying! He looked every inch a man breathing his last. By sunset there was a peculiar vacant look in his half-closed eyes, and his hands and feet were cold and almost limp and lifeless.

#### The Third Day (February 27, 1928)

Another telegram was received from Bombay as follows: "Ali much distracted. Syed (his father) angry. Community against." The previous message of hope was thus shattered, and with it many castles in the air built by the enthusiastic disciples tottered down. But in the case of the Master, it was quite the contrary. He was found to be in a very pleasant mood, and even went to the length of allowing his little lovers to dress him as Shri Krishna. Nay, the Master also conceded their request and sat for a snapshot with the fantastic dress on.

#### The Fourth Day (February 28, 1928)

Whatever little hope still flickered in some of the most optimistic hearts about the return of the hero was extinguished on receipt of this telegram: "Seen Syed. Boy not sent. Starting tomorrow night."

#### The Fifth Day (March 1, 1928)

The day's post brought a plainly addressed envelope for Mr. Kaikhushru Afseri. It contained a few touching lines from the hero. It was written in Persian and is preserved to this date as a treasure by Mr. Afseri. The following is a free translation of the same:

O Meher Baba!

In the service of Aga Kaikhushru Aspandiar;

I beg to tell you that since the day they carried me away, I am in a sad mood, and feeling desolate and dejected.

On the night that I sat in the train, I was seeing Baba amidst a halo of lustre! And throughout that night, whenever I felt like weeping, this sight helped me to maintain my

composure. In the morning, we arrived at Bombay. They carried me to a bath, and applied *hina* to my humble hands which were always kissed by Baba. I wept at the time, but they applied the *hina* on my hands forcibly. Since then, to this date, I cannot eat my food. At night too, I cannot sleep before twelve or two o'clock.

Tell Hazrat Baba I will come after four days. In awake state I always see Baba, also while sleeping I see Baba in a halo of light.

O Kaikhushru! May I give my life for you! Be enjoying the Meher Ashram atmosphere on my behalf! Come to the help of a poor soul, a wretched creature in the eyes of all in the world.

By God! If I had two rupees, I would have come to Poona, at least to be nearer to Baba.

Read these lines to Baba:

The apex of the Highest Heaven is your abode;  
The home of Truth is your resting place;  
The world is illumined by your divine light;  
Your erect and graceful stature is like the garden cyprus;

With a touch of your hand, the dead have been restored to life.

This is because of the power of resuscitation you have;  
From the heat of the fire of your love

I am ever boiling like a pot of water; even if my bones decay,

Your love will never be effaced from my soul.

### The Sixth Day (March 2, 1928)

The unsuccessful pair from Bombay returned to Meherabad this morning, dejected and defeated. In spite of their best attempts and persuasions, they reported that not only Ali's father but many other prominent members of his community also opposed Ali's return. The boy's return was impossible. Throughout the day, the Master looked all absorbed in the thoughts of the hero, and even when the principal of the school approached him for certain instructions, the latter got a curt reply, "Do as you like."

It was the last day of the seven days of grace. Ali must return on the following day or the whole of the institution would cease to exist. The group of workers in charge of the "un-making" department got the tools for the wholesale demolition ready. The majority of the disciples did not even dare think of the morrow. All had failed. Will the Master do it himself?

To the great bewilderment of all, the Master instructed one of the two disciples that had just returned from Bombay to go there again, and in the face of all the reported fierce antagonism, to try once more to bring round Ali's father. This was very peculiar, inasmuch as there was not a single individual who could see any possibility of success. Even the gentleman concerned could see no chance of any good coming out of this move. But merely for the sake of obeying the Master's command, he left Meherabad in the evening to catch the night train to Bombay.

At about 9:30 at night, quiet contrary to his usual practice of retiring to his seat, the Master suddenly walked up to the school premises, went into the classroom which Ali used to attend, and sat over the very seat that the hero occupied when he was here. The Master remained seated there for about 15 minutes in a very contemplative mood. Mr. Afseri, who was near the Master, says that he could not help feeling at the time that although bodily the Master was there, internally he was elsewhere. A sort of vacancy about the Master's eyes during those few minutes was unmistakable!

## The First Wonderful Escape

ALI'S letter that I have reproduced in the last chapter speaks volumes about the pangs of separation that the hero suffered during the days of his forced stay in Bombay. The most noteworthy point in this connection was the boy's wonderful and horrible abstinence from food for six solid days! Of all the facts that I had gathered for this narrative, this was the only one that raised doubts in me about its exact correctness. To leave no possibility of a doubt, with the Master's permission, I questioned Ali personally about it on the eleventh of October, when the boy calmly and in an unconcerned matter-of-fact tone corroborated my notes. In all those six days, this enigma of a boy had taken only two cups of tea, one egg, and two slices of bread. But there is a little story about how he took even this much nourishment. The egg, he said, was actually forced down his throat, perhaps with the idea that once his vow of strict vegetarianism was broken, he might get free of the inexplicable "influence" of the Master, or perhaps it might have been administered as an antidote to cure him of the alleged infidelity to his religion, since I know of a section of orthodox Muslims who are prejudiced enough to hold that merely the abstinence from animal food is a violation of Islam. The two slices of bread were taken by Ali on the night he escaped, in the enthusiasm of the near prospect of reaching the Master again. Thus, really speaking, Ali had remained on only two cups of tea during this memorable six day separation. If one fasts just for 24 hours, one would get an idea as to what it means for a healthy 15-year-old boy to go without food, and in such a way.

Ali's father was naturally so exasperated and nonplussed with this inexplicable abstinence of the boy, that once during these

six days, in the presence of many people, he took a big knife in his hands and, with a threatening gesture, commanded Ali to partake of food, particularly meat and eggs. But besides his usual mettle, Ali had the divine fire of love blazing merrily in his little bosom. What did he care for knives and swords? "Kill me; I won't!" was the only answer that this exceptionally brave boy gave out unflinchingly to his angry father. At this, somebody was wise enough and had sufficient presence of mind to gently but firmly take away the knife in the midair from the angry man's clasp. But even this convincing proof of his son's great devotion and love for his "Ideal" failed to open the eyes of the father.

The gentleman tried another way. One of the prominent leaders of his community and some elder relatives and friends were brought in, in the shape of an awe-inspiring deputation to Ali. Some were fat, some were red, and some had bloodshot eyes and thundering voices in this group. The finer element amongst them first tried to bring round Ali to their way of thinking with many soft words and tempting offers, but they failed. A few amongst them then used threats, but without success. Then the trump card was played. One amongst them, who had remained at Meherabad for some time, but through selfish motives had had to beat a sorry retreat, was brought forward to spit out his spiteful bluster against the Meher Ashram and its august founder. Of course, considering Ali's education, age and then mental agitation, the boy could not reply point to point, surrounded as he was by so many pairs of unsympathetic eyes. Yet one of his replies, "that fellow is a d— liar," uttered with the conviction of inborn Truth, simply took the breath out of all those present!

In spite of these threats and temptations, not to speak of the various other allurements that a city like Bombay is full of, Ali remained firm and unshaken, and proved to the hilt his divine love for the Master. Besides being despised, laughed at, and subjected to many petty harassments by his relations, the six days of his life in Bombay during this period were no better than those of a prisoner. He was never left alone. Wherever he went or sat, there was somebody to watch over him. Even at night the father kept a vigilant watch over the boy, and kept awake when Ali slept. Or if he felt himself very sleepy, he used to lock the door of the room carefully inside before retiring.

On the night of the first of March, Ali had a very wonderful dream. In this dream, Ali found himself on one of the platforms

of the Victoria Terminus, the terminal station of the G.I.P. Railway at Bombay. A train was ready there to steam out of the station, and the sign of "Madras Mail" was prominently displayed about it. "At last! The right moment has arrived!" thought the boy in the dream, and he began to run to board the train. But it was too late. Before he could get in, the train left the platform. Horrified at this failure, he simply dashed into a person that he dreamed was standing by, and then turned to see who he was. To his great surprise, Ali saw it was none other than the Master himself! Stupefied, Ali stood like a statue and began to stare at the Master, who told him, "Don't you know the Madras Mail leaves at ten o'clock?" and with this short but very suggestive sentence the Master disappeared! This time, Ali's horror in the dream knew no bounds. With a half-stifled scream he sat up on his bed, only to realize that it was but a dream! His ever-watchful father was at once by his side, and enquired as to what the matter was, adding, "You have been very noisy and restless just now in sleep." But in spite of the great excitement that this realistic dream had caused him, Ali did not lose his presence of mind. He was wise enough not to make his father the wiser for the dream, and he shook off the inquisitive old man with some suitable answer.

Of course he could not sleep after that dream. The Master had clearly given him a hint in it, as if to say: "It's time for you to think of the return." Nay, even had shown him from which station, by what train and at what time to start! From this moment, Ali became all the more restless and distracted in the dark hours of separation. "How to escape?" was the uppermost thought with him now. It was as if the Master had added fuel to the fire of separation by conveying to him hints to come back without providing an opportunity to do so. "How am I to escape from the constant watch over me, not to speak of want of money; I haven't a single *pie* on me?" Such and the like thoughts began to race through his already reeling head. But "the darkest hour is nearest the dawn" has often been proved to be true. That very evening, Ali got what he wanted. The Master had also provided a practical opportunity.

It so happened that on this particular evening, the second of March, Ali's father found it necessary to go out on some business, and he left the boy under the charge of his partner at one of his tea shops. Now, as luck would have it, this partner after some time felt like going for necessities. "Whom to leave in charge of the counter?" was the only question that affected

him. Of course there could be none better than the son of his partner for this purpose. Not knowing what had been going on in Ali's mind since that morning, the gentleman asked the hero to take charge of the counter in his absence. "Collect the money carefully," he shouted over his shoulder, and was off! The moment the poor unsuspecting partner was out of sight, Ali dived his hand in the cashbox, and slipped all the loose coins that he could gather in his small fist into his coat pocket, snatched a book lying there with the other hand, and shot out of the shop like an arrow. He only took breath again when he had reached a fairly safe distance and then counted what he had been able to take from the cashbox. It was about three rupees and ten annas. "Not much, but enough for my purpose," said Ali to himself. But he could not account for the book that he had in his hand, and still holding the same he proceeded.

Did he come straight to the station? No. He remembered his lost comrade Muhammad Hussein! Ali knew he was running a grave risk, but the brave boy faced it. He went straight to Muhammad Hussein's place near the Crawford Market and found him. Alas! Like Ali, the former was also under a strict watch. Consequently, Muhammad Hussein's brother would not leave the two chums alone. Ali began to think rapidly and got an ingenious idea. Talking at random, as if killing time, although for Ali every moment meant freedom or bondage, the boy took hold of a match box and, as if "fidgeting foolishly," he scribbled out these words, "I am escaping. Coming?" Then through another successful ruse, Ali managed to pass the matchbox to Muhammad Hussein. The latter did not require to be told further. He had already guessed Ali's intentions, and so glanced at the dramatic message at the first opportunity. But through a half suppressed signal came the answer, no.

Poor boy! He did not find it possible; or perhaps—who knows?—he might not have liked to endanger Ali's own prospects of escape through delay! By this time, Muhammad Hussein's brother's suspicion was aroused a bit, and just as Ali was on the point of walking away, he asked, "Where are you off to, Ali?" and fixed a searching stare on the latter's face. But Ali again proved that he had plenty of pluck about him. He at once assumed an unconcerned look, and blurted out, "I am going to my cousin's shop near Victoria Terminus, and see, here is the book that I want to show him!" Even that book had served some purpose!

Instead of going to the cousin's shop, Ali came to the booking



office at the Victoria Terminus Station and booked himself for Ahmednagar. Inexperienced as he was, Ali found it difficult to locate the platform from which the Madras Mail left, and were it not for the dream, he would have certainly missed the train. Lest that might happen, as it did in the dream last night, Ali was cautious not to lose a moment in getting into the train, although there was plenty of time on hand. Feeling insecure, he managed to enlist the sympathy of a fellow passenger and kept himself well under cover of the latter's luggage till the train had passed Kalyan, the first halt.

Throughout that night—the night on which the Master occupied Ali's seat in school as described in the last chapter—Ali remained wide awake, looking through the open window of the onrushing train, heedless of the cold and cutting winds. It was as if his eager and longing eyes were trying to shoot through the yawning space to drop down on the lotus feet of the Master.

## Truth Tells

THE dawn of the third of March smiled on Meherabad, but there was hardly a face that was smiling that morning. It was the last day of the seven days of grace. There were many who thought it was the last day of the Meher Ashram's brilliant but short life. None cared to look at the figure of a boy hastening up the hill in all earnest at about 7:30 in the morning. The figure went straight to the Master's seat, without even exchanging a single word or glance with anybody. Needless to say, it was the hero!

For all the violent beats of his heart, Ali was considerate enough to remain quiet and collected by the main front window of the Master's upper room, taking every care to avoid disturbance to the Master, who had not yet come out of his retirement. It did not take long for Mr. Afseri to find out Ali's presence there, since he was one of the attendants over the lovelorn boys and was generally required to be present near the Master's seat early every morning. Afseri simply went mad with joy at this unexpected sight of the hero, whom he succeeded in persuading to accompany him to the dining hall. "Let me see Baba first" was the gist of all that Ali could say then. The boy looked the very picture of a fish out of water for the sight of the Master. "You will see him presently," Afseri assured him, "but take a little refreshment." There was no need for the boy to say he had been fasting all these days. His sunken eyes and haggard looks were enough to disclose the fact. Ali obeyed his teacher's word and partook of a little from the bowl of cream offered to him, evidently to please his very kind teacher, rather than to enjoy it himself. The news of the hero's return spread in the whole of the colony faster than the wind and caused many a

heart to take a sigh of relief. At about eight o'clock, the Master came out of his retirement. My pen is simply powerless to describe the touching scene that followed. I would say this much, that for about half an hour, the "Master of Divinity" and the "Slave of Love" were one in each other's arms!

However, when it was generally known that Ali's appearance at Meherabad was due to his having taken "French leave" and was not the result of his father's common sense and fidelity to his word of honour, the presence of the hero was not considered to be a very happy one. He could not yet be considered as having returned to the Meher Ashram, but was taken simply as an uninvited but very welcome guest of the Master. The main question was still in the balance, and the Master too continued conveying the threat that "If Ali remains, all remain; if he goes, everything goes." Yet, for the time being, the immediate black clouds over the colony were dispelled, as no time limit now remained fixed for the dismantling of the noble institution.

The Master went beyond the expectation of one and all in according a rousing reception to Ali on this memorable day. First of all, the boy was presented with a fine and rich embroidered shawl to be put on his shabby dress, since the Ashram uniform could not be given to him in the absence of his father's consent. Then Ali was garlanded and taken round the school by the Master, who kept him all the time by his side. At dinner time, the Master made Ali and some of his other little lovers sit around him, and fed them all with his own august hand, just as a proud mother would feed her happy children. Ali, of course, got the lion's share of the Master's attention. Morsels of food made specially rich with the addition of fresh butter were shovelled into the hero's mouth by the Master almost to the point of overfeeding him.

By this time, the only sombre point marring the happy situation had faded away in the shape of a yellow envelope—it contained a telegraphic message from the gentleman whom the Master had sent to Bombay only a few days earlier: "Ali's father willing to sign!" i.e., sign a fresh bond of agreement to let Ali remain in the Meher Ashram for a fixed period. The boy arrived here, and the Ashram emissary reached there just in time to strike the iron when it was hot! After the receipt of the telegram, the atmosphere became all the more cheerful and bright. The Master, too, seemed to have become quite free of his concerned looks regarding the future, and when one of the disciples suggested the possibility of an eleventh hour failure,

the Master only smiled and made signs that "it's alright now."

In the evening, the Master once again allowed himself to be dressed fantastically in the guise of that picturesque but no less perfect Hindu Master Krishna by his little lovers, just as he had done on the twenty-eighth of February, the third day of separation, (as if by way of rehearsal for this very occasion) and went round the colony keeping Ali prominently by his side. The Master even went to the length of taking off the "crown" and placing the same on Ali's head for some time. Then again, for an hour or so, Ali himself was transformed into a fairy-tale picture by the Master, who made him put on some multi-coloured brocades and led him round the playground, where the rest of the Ashramites were enjoying their recreation. In short, throughout the day, the Master and Ali were found together side by side, and the latter was constantly eulogized by the Master in the presence of all.

The next day, the question of Mr. R. K. Irani's proposed visit to Europe, which had been shelved during these few tumultuous days, was put up for discussion, and the gentleman was finally instructed to finish up the arrangements for setting out on this memorable mission.

Although Ali had returned, and once again there were prospects of the revival of the divine blaze of love, yet that something had gone seriously amiss in the Master's internal workings could not be denied. One of the Master's earlier remarks in this connection, "It will all have to be done afresh," led us to think that the mishap caused in his workings through the untimely forced exit of Ali from the institution almost amounted to a complete disruption of them. Hence, no wonder that along with the holiday atmosphere on this day—fourth of March, the second day of Ali's return—the boys and disciples were greatly pained at the sight of the Master's inexplicable yet very prominent fits of agonies. Now and then the Master looked as if he were suffering from some terrible internal shocks, since otherwise there was no sign of any physical illness about his august person. The two most prominent and the most terrible of such peculiar "fits" were witnessed at about 3:30 in the afternoon and at nine o'clock at night. Each of these shocks lasted for about 45 minutes, and during these periods, the Master seemed to be almost in the grip of death and was seen simply writhing in pain all the time from an unseen malady.

That same evening, when almost all had retired for the night, the long-expected gentleman, Ali's father, at last turned up.

There are very few who know what transpired on that fateful night. In spite of all that had happened and all that he heard, Mr. Syed Haji Muhammad proved no less unreasonable than he was on the day on which he snatched Ali away from the Ashram. Again it was Mr. Afseri who had to grapple with this personification of silly prejudices for six solid hours that night. From 11 o'clock that night till the early hours of the dawn, the duel of words continued between the two. This time, Ali's father complained that it was owing to the Ashram authorities' tutoring and underhand tricks that Ali had run away from him. But he could not prove that, simply because it was a pure falsehood and imagination, based on rumours and prejudiced conclusions.

In the end, the stubborn unreasonableness of the gentleman was too much even for the patient Afseri. He gave up further reasoning and persuasion with a final remark, "For God's sake, take away your son. We have had enough trouble about him. Neither the Master nor the institution, nor anyone amongst us—the workers—are out to gain anything in the least from the boy's presence here; on the contrary, it is for his own benefit that we have been trying so strenuously. No good will come out of his forced stay here." And concluding this last sentence, he actually walked away from the place to report the breakup of the negotiations to the Master. However, these simple but true words hit the mark. This time it was Ali's father who had to play the part of a pleader. He at once sent somebody in the wake of the exasperated Afseri, who was already halfway to the Master's seat. The latter came back, but was now on the war-path. "What do you want? Why did you call me back?" were the two curt enquiries with which he greeted Ali's father, in place of the polite pleadings and persuasions that he had almost exhausted during the last sitting.

Ali's father seemed to be struggling between two opposite emotions, and in this excitement it did not take long for him to blurt out one of the real causes underlying his insistence in taking Ali from the Ashram. "I believe," said he, "there is nothing wrong here, and that you mean good for my boy, but you don't know how that — of — taunts me and talks about this institution." "What a pity," cried out Afseri, "that just because a good-for-nothing busybody talks nonsense, you forget to use your own common sense!"

It was now nearly five o'clock in the morning, time to get up for the Ashramites including the hero, who had been sleeping

all the while quite unaware of the trouble going on for his sake. His father at last signed the stamped bond, agreeing not to remove Ali from the Meher Ashram for one year under any circumstances. After this happy ending of the all-night conference, Mr. Afseri went to report the same to the Master, and, as expected, found him waiting patiently in the upper room. The Master had remained seated the whole night and only retired to the lower chamber after having heard Mr. Afseri's final report!

Truth tells! But has to suffer too.

As soon as the first morning bell made the Ashram boys come out of their beds, Ali was given the good news. But still it was a task to persuade him to see his father. However, he was conducted down the hill and presented to his father. At first, the latter tried to bluff him and said some harsh words, but Ali remained calm and collected and in no uncertain terms denied any tutoring and tricks on the part of the Ashram authorities. "Father, I like to stay here" was the main burden of his song.

With the departure of Ali's father that same morning, the atmosphere became once again normal, and preparations for a picnic party in celebration of the happy occasion were begun in right earnest.

The following day, the sixth of March, according to the fine prearrangements, the Master, boys, teachers and disciples, all drove in specially engaged motor buses to Happy Valley, the most scenic spot around Ahmednagar, about 15 miles from Meherabad.

It is rightly remembered as the "Aga Ali day," and a great holiday it was, specially for the boys. They were allowed the freedom of playing and strolling all over the beautiful valley throughout that day. Besides a special dinner and supper, the boys were also treated with tea and dainty eatables in the afternoon. But the particularly delightful events were when the Master personally led the boys for a ramble through the hills twice that day. He sprinted and scampered here and there with the boys as if he were actually one of them, and set many a thrill of boyish glee into their little hearts. Thus he proved his Perfection from yet another point of view, which is so pithily conveyed by Swami Vivekananda in these fine words: "The true Teacher is he who brings himself (from the height of God-realization) down to the level of the student, sees through the student's eyes, hears through the student's ears." But this delight was greatly marred by the apparent mishap in the evening when the Master set out for the second ramble. After going for about

a mile right through the heart of the valley, he suddenly became very indisposed. Before anyone could even guess as to what had happened, the Master was all limp and almost solely superconscious.

It appeared to be one of the Divine "fits" with which the Master seemed to have been affected now and then since Ali was snatched away. But the present one was far greater in severity than the previous ones, inasmuch as the Master had actually to be carried back to the travellers' shelter on the disciples' shoulders and came to normal state long after sunset.

From the seventh of March, 1928, the atmosphere once again became quite normal at Meher Ashram. Mr. R. K. Irani left Meherabad that evening for Bombay, whence he proceeded to England on the tenth of that month. But with all this, quite a lull came over the place in the matter of divine conflagration, which no longer was there. Not that the hearts already affected were cooled down, but the spectacular conflagration gave place to silent smouldering, which again remained restricted to a particular few without affecting others, as it did in the month of January.

Baba commented, "These sparks of love that have been sprinkled can never be put out. Some kindling through personal efforts is necessary. Once kindled sufficiently, instead of dying out, it will go on increasing automatically without one's even thinking about it, and to such a pitch that one affected with it will desire nothing save the cooling down of his heart. Just see Ali Akbar. Now you will understand what he means by often repeating, 'I don't want God. I don't want anything. Only cool down this all-consuming fire in my heart.' To cool this heat or fire means to render the person unconscious, and this is the intermediate state between 'heat' and 'light.' But I am not going to cool it down just yet. The last stage, 'light,' means, after becoming unconscious they (those who are burning with the heat of love) will see the light of love, and when they become conscious again (after gaining the final Sight or Experience), the light of love will remain, but the heat of love of the first stage will vanish away automatically. No more sufferings and agonies then. That is what is going to be done in due course of time. Let us see what comes out of the 'Message to the West.' Of course, no more spark sprinkling now. Another way. Turning the eyes of the newcomers (giving them the light of love without making them pass through the heat of love) simultaneously with the old ones at the time of giving the final touch through the link

of a boy amongst these little lovers. Ali is the link through whom newcomers will also get the light of love."

Sometime in the same month, I also remember having heard the Master conveying these words: "Now at least for two months all will go on as usual as it was in the beginning of the Ashram—play, school, studies, etc. No spiritual demonstration. I will not let an outburst happen in the meantime."

If we also remember the twice-quoted remarks of the Master, "It will all have to be done afresh," it seems clear from Baba's words above that the "final touch" towards giving the lovers the light of love is withheld for certain reasons, including the "devil's work" and awaiting the result of the invitation to the West. Although no new love-sparks sprinkling would be done, yet, since the final outburst was untimely checked, the final process would have to be done all over again, as it had been done in the month of December 1927.

Yet at that time none could catch the significance of the remark "doing it afresh" in the deep sense in which it was meant, as the following chapters will show.



## The Inevitable Reaction

AFTER the seventh of March, 1928, the spectacular demonstration of love had ceased at Meherabad. Hence the atmosphere naturally became very dull, and Meher Ashram looked what a worldly institution of its kind would to a spiritually-minded person, for all its fine surroundings, tip-top arrangements and comforting facilities. Moreover the occasional sidelights and glimpses of that which is unfelt and unseen through the body, which the select few got now and then from the Master during the full blaze of the love season, had also ceased. Nevertheless, the fire of love went on smouldering silently in the boys' little hearts. Of course it was often explained why a gap for a certain period was quite necessary pending the arrival of the "right moment." Yet the agony in their hearts often, during this gap, proved too much for them to bear! Hence, impatience and distraction ruled supreme. Many of them at times would go to the length of biting themselves, tearing their clothes, crying loudly, running away, refusing to come near the Master and even directly disobeying him.

Once during this period, one of the most intelligent and at the same time deeply affected students, a Hindu boy of about 16 named Lobhaji, was brought before the Master by his attendant after getting him back from a random escapade. The Master patted him and once again tried to convey to him to wait for some time for getting his internal thirst quenched. After lengthy explanations, Lobhaji could blurt out but one word, in reply to the Master, and it was a very powerful no. Not only did he utter this negation, but gave such a shake to his head at the time, as if he meant to make every part of his body to produce an echo of his emphatic no. "Alright, don't wait so long; I will

give you. . . next week," conveyed the Master. But again Lobhaji's head shook sideways, without even bringing out that piquant no. "Well, if you are so very keen, be sure to get the Sight tomorrow. Never fear. I will give it to you for a certainty," again conveyed the Master through his fast-moving fingers on the alphabet card. And this time Lobhaji's sphinx-like silence was broken. "I want the Sight today, now, at this moment" were the simple but emotional words that came from his twitching lips!

Even the ideal of the institution, the hero, could not keep his fine record of obedience untarnished during this reactionary period, and was marked disobeying and behaving rudely with the Master on more than one occasion. But still even in his disobedience, Ali proved himself quite unlike the rest of the crowd. Of course all repented their disobedience to the Master as soon as they regained their composure, but Ali's remorse used to be very singular. One evening, at the impulse of the moment, Ali openly rebelled against the Master, but the following morning his pillow was found actually drenched with tears of repentance and remorse. Nay, the night watchman reported that Ali did not at all sleep that night!

But the Master had to suffer no less than his little lovers through this disheartening gap in the workings. Besides hours of botheration in explaining and bringing round these boys, he also had to put up patiently with their rough behaviour, with the result that his well-worn black coat—made out of a rough blanket—which is the only one that the Master is pleased to use since 1922, was torn to shreds and had to be repatched at many places since he did not think it necessary to change it, and does not to this day. Once these crack lovers, in their enthusiasm, accidentally overturned the Master's rickshaw when giving him a ride to their hearts' delight, whereby causing many a scratch and abrasion to the Master's already weak and frail person, due to the prolonged fasting.

The reaction itself, besides whatever other reasons the Master might have, justified the necessity of splitting the Meher Ashram into two separate sections, as was done on the twenty-fifth of March, 1928. The love-sick and the other promising boys were isolated from the rest, and formed the new division aptly named the Prem Ashram, or the "Abode of Love." The difference between these two sections of the Meher Ashram is in certain details only. For example, the quarters of the Prem Ashram are next to the Master's seat, whereas the Meher Ashram proper is some distance from it. Again the Prem Ashramites are gov-

erned by special rules which allow them to occupy themselves in divine contemplation most of the time. All the same, they are made to pay the necessary attention to their physical well-being and secular education. A certain period in the evening is fixed for their daily recreation, when they, like the rest of the Ashramites, enjoy outdoor games, or whenever circumstances allow, go for a walk with the Master himself.

In spite of these special privileges and close contact with the Master, on the twenty-fifth of April, 1928, the reaction amongst the boys went so high that the Master had actually to threaten the *premi* (loving) boys with a close-up of the Prem Ashram, and some actual steps were taken towards merging the same into the Meher Ashram proper. But eventually they were pardoned by the Master with a serious warning, after one and all of them had bitterly wept, regretting their unruly conduct.

## The Two Masters Meet

JUST at the right moment when the reactionary feelings were wildly rampant, as if to comfort the impatient little lovers like Ali, the Master of the Master herself turned up at Meherabad.

Hazrat Babajan of Poona, who holds India-wide reputation and prominence, and who is one of the two Masters of the Master, paid a visit to Meherabad on the first of April, 1928. It is rightly remembered as a red-letter day at Meherabad.

Hazrat Babajan had been staying at Poona for the last 25 years, and but for frequent drives around the city cantonment and the suburbs of Poona, she has never been reported to have left that place during all those years. The first time that Her Holiness was pleased to go out was to visit, to quote her own words, "the place of my child."

A week prior to this all-important event, the Master had received a letter from one of his disciples at Poona to the effect that "Her Holiness is constantly remembering Ahmednagar and referring to 'Her child' and perhaps may come down one of these days." Yet no one was prepared for this great, pleasant and inspiring surprise! It had never before happened in the Master's short but already eventful history that either of his great Masters had ever paid him the unique distinction and privilege of a visit in person. To the best of my information, a God-realized Master's coming all the way to his or her perfect pupil's place is perhaps unparalleled in the spiritual history of the world.

At about 11:30 that morning, a car came sweeping along the road and stopped just by the Hazrat Babajan High School. Hazrat Babajan graced that car. "Send a chit to my child soon" were the simple words that Hazrat Babajan let out on arrival. But they were enough to send a thrill of miracle into those who

knew the circumstances prevailing then at Meherabad. Since the Master had imprisoned himself over the hill near the Meher Ashram, a practice had come into vogue to announce visitors before allowing them into the Master's presence. And this used to be done through printed slips specially got ready for this purpose, according to the following specimen:

MEHERABAD

Date:.....

Visitor

Name. ....

Address .....

.....

On this slip, the name of the visitor, the place he or she hailed from, the duration of the proposed stay and the purpose of the visit used to be scribbled in by the Meherabad superintendent, or the one acting for him at the time, and forwarded to the Master for further instructions. Mr. F. N. Driver, better known as Padri, one of the Master's earliest and trusted disciples, happened to be the acting superintendent on this occasion. His keen sense of humour caused him to act quite literally to the great Master's command, and he just noted down "Hazrat Babajan from Poona" on one of these slips and at once forwarded the same to the Master.

The effect that this slip, when it reached the Master, caused among those present there, was dramatic. Many were speechless with mixed feelings of pleasure and wonder, and some appeared to be staring blankly, as if trying to make sure whether it was only a dream or an actual reality.

But none forgot the peculiar action of the Master that very morning, which now showed that at least he was quite prepared for this happy event. Probably the same moment that Hazrat Babajan had left Poona at about 15 minutes past eight that morning, the Master here at Meherabad had left off using his sandals for the first time.

He went down the hill, without using the now inevitable rickshaw, and stopped on the other side of the railway line, which divides the boundaries of the Meher Ashram and Meherabad proper, about 50 yards from the spot where Babajan's car was stopped, and ordered all the boys and disciples to pay their long due respects and love to his own Master. The Master kept

standing all the time that Hazrat Babajan was pleased to stop there.<sup>3</sup>

In the course of many remarks and discussions that the Master had with the disciples after the departure of Hazrat Babajan, he also conveyed, "This is the most eventful day of my career." By way of paying a return visit, the Master went to Poona the very next day. Those who accompanied him easily paid their respects to Hazrat Babajan as she was already present near her usual Bund Garden seat at morning. Thus, after a very long time, the Master had left Meherabad bodily for an outstation, a move that proved a forerunner to his contemplated change from Ahmednagar.

Just a fortnight after this memorable visit of Hazrat Babajan, the fasting that the Master had continued without a break from the tenth of November, 1927, just before setting the Meher Ashram all aflame with love, was now tightened and heightened with additional self-imposed restrictions from the fifteenth of April, 1928. However, this intensifying of his apparent asceticism soon proved to be the last flickering of the dying lamp that goes out with a bold flame. Within a few days, the Master began to let out hints that if a certain number of persons offered to remain on fast for a certain period, he might reconsider his decision of remaining without food. This was enough to set the disciples, and specially those attached to him through inborn love, to bestir themselves into action. Mr. K. J. Dastur took the lead, and soon succeeded in making him come to definite terms. "Two hundred persons should observe a fast for 24 hours, and then I will take food," dictated the Master.

Accordingly, on the twenty-fifth of April, 200 persons remained completely without food, save water and tea without milk, for 24 hours. The Master too followed suit, and took only a few sips of the same tea that day. The fast terminated on the morning of the twenty-fifth, but the Master would not take food. "Let me serve you all first with the food and then I will partake of it myself" were the noble words that the Master conveyed in an unconcerned matter-of-fact tone. It was about nine in the morning that for the first time, after five months and 15 days, he took a few morsels of solid food (curry and rice).

## The Transference to Toka

MANY of the Master's disciples knew that a drastic change of affairs was signalled when Baba said, "It will have to be done afresh." Yet no one amongst them thought at the time that even the surroundings would have to be changed and that a fresh site for the Meher Ashram was necessary, until the Master took them by surprise one fine morning, on the seventh of May, 1928.

Amongst the visitors to the Master that day was one Mr. Abdullah Haroon Jaffer, a furniture merchant and estate agent of Poona. In the course of his stray talk with the Master, the gentleman suggested the chance of a fine site at a bargain in Poona which would make an ideal site for the Meher Ashram. It was a bolt from the blue for those present, when the Master readily fell in with the suggestion and conveyed, "Yes, I would like to change the site now."

Those who have come sufficiently in contact with the Master know what his mere word means despite costs and consequences. One would even think twice before changing one's residence in the same city, but not so for the Master. His apparently off-hand remark in connection with the changing of the whole colony of about 400 souls from one station to another tended to make it a certain fact.

Preparations to enable the Master to have a personal look at the suggested site were immediately set on foot. As if the spell of a fixed stay was broken with the recent visit of Hazrat Babajan, the following day (eighth of May), he set out for Poona at about 4:30 in the morning. The visit proved a very significant one. Abdulla (Chota Baba) who had been kept all aloof and isolated since he became enlightened, was for the first time taken out

on this trip to Poona. That very morning, Hazrat Babajan started from the other end and reinspired Meherabad with her august presence for the second time. It was as if the two Masters had exchanged their respective positions for a few hours!

During the time the Master inspected the site at Poona, Hazrat Babajan blessed the boys and disciples at Meherabad with pats and caresses, specially to those love-afflicted ones who were feeling ill at ease through the Master's short absence.

On their respective return journeys, both Masters started almost simultaneously from the two opposite ends, since the two cars passed each other just half-way between Poona and Ahmednagar.

The site at Poona did not appeal to the Master. However, "Shifting the Meher Ashram from its present surroundings," he conveyed, "is imperative now after the Old Man's (Babajan's) second visit."<sup>4</sup>

Navsari in Gujarat, Daman in Portuguese India, and Sinhgad, the famous fort of Shivaji near Poona, were the three spots that came under discussion as the probable places whereto the institution might be shifted.

On the fifteenth of May at 4:30 A.M. the Master left Meherabad to visit the proposed sites in a motor car driven by Mr. R. K. Irani, who had since returned from England. The party went straight to Sinhgad fort and inspected the site there that its owner Khan Bahadur B. D. Padamji had recently been generous enough to place at the Master's entire disposal. But it did not meet with his fancy mainly because of the very heavy rainfall and the inconvenience of climbing the great height for the parents and guardians of the boys who might come to see them. "Otherwise," conveyed the Master with a wistful look around the beautiful surroundings, "this is an ideal site. It is my old place."

From Sinhgad, the party went straight to Bombay to catch the Gujarat Mail, but they arrived there three hours too late. "We won't go now," conveyed the Master. "Let Chanji (F. H. Dadachanji) proceed to Gujarat in the morning and report. We shall return to Meherabad tomorrow." Accordingly, the Master set out on the return journey the following noon.

By the time the party began to ascend the famous Bhore Ghats between Campoli and Khandala, it was nearing sunset, and the fine scenery of the towering hills was at its best. The sturdy car—a Hudson Super Six—had so far stood the strain of so many miles well, save for a slight relaxation in the pulling power of



her six-cylinder engine since the beginning of the return journey from Bombay. But as it was still going on merrily, Mr. R. K. Irani did not care to look at the slightly sputtering engine and let it go on at top speed over the mountains, when unexpectedly he had to put it in second speed. Even this was found insufficient after some time, and the engine had to be put in the first speed. The powerful six-seater car, with an overload of about ten persons with their bag and baggages, somehow managed to climb the mountains almost halfway, but here it suddenly slackened, then stopped a moment, and before anybody could think what to do, it just began to roll back!

The situation was one of touch-and-go! Just a few yards and there was a yawning chasm below. The car continued rolling back for all the attempts of Mr. Irani to stop it by pressing the foot brake, which also was found in disorder. Of course there was the hand brake, but in the excitement of the moment, Mr. Irani forgot to use it, and I very much doubt that it could have averted the impending calamity at that critical stage, considering the heavy load of the vehicle. The situation became simply hopeless, and the difference between life and a horrible death was by mere inches. Two or three of the party managed to jump out, but the rest, including the Master, had to remain in the car to face the situation. However, at the right moment, the Master simply leaned on one side of the car, pressed it down with his hand, and it stopped dead there and then!

The party climbed the remaining hill partly on foot and partly in the car, in small numbers by turns. But between Talegaon and Shelarwadi, about 20 miles from Poona, the car went through another ordeal. This time it was due to a huge tree that was lying across the road, invisible in the dim headlights of the car. With a crash and a lurch, amidst the splintering noise of the glass screen that went into small bits, the car came out safe and sound. It was only when they had safely come out of this death trap that the party realized what a close shave it was. On the contrary, none of the occupants got as much as a scratch, while the engine went on humming and spinning merrily, enabling the car to cover the remaining miles with a vengeance. But when the party reached the railway station at Poona, they saw in the bright light of the station lamps to what extent the car had been damaged. Besides the broken glass screen, the mudguards and radiator bonnet were badly twisted, while the fine radiator crest had disappeared completely. Immediately after the radiator was refilled and the party had some refresh-

ments, the Master ordered the journey to be resumed in the dead of the night.

Thus within 48 hours of the start, at daybreak on the seventeenth of May, the Master was back at Meherabad. Still he would think of no rest till the question of the new site was decided. Discussions about the same continued, when someone suggested the name of Toka. The moment he heard about the possibility of an ideal site there, without any consideration for the physical fatigue of the last exertion, the Master left Meherabad again the same evening for Toka, a village about 50 miles from Meherabad.

Simply at a cursory glance of the site, the Master not only approved Toka, but the very next day set all the external machinery at his command into motion to acquire the necessary land for the whole of the colony of Meherabad, which was to be shifted there. "Arrange the details soon," was one of his commands to the Meherabad authorities, "so that we can shift there before the monsoon sets in." The way the Master and disciples worked day and night, and the speed with which the whole of the Meherabad encampment was removed, is a story by itself. Simultaneously with the unmaking of the camp at Arangaon, the new Meherabad was in the making at Toka. So there was no wonder that within 15 days of the approval, on the third of June, 1928, not only the whole colony was completely transferred to Toka, but almost from that very day the normal life and daily routine were also resumed there. And very soon the once thorny, uneven, and barren jungle-like place was transformed into a fine and ideal colony. Whatever vital reasons he might have for this dramatic and costly transference, the hurried selection of the site by the Master appears significant from many viewpoints.

The half-sleeping village of Toka, situated midway between the historical and mystical cities of the Deccan, viz., Ahmednagar and Aurangabad, is very poor in material progress. The only sign of modern civilization about its rustic surroundings is the solitary little red postbox that hangs by one of the half-broken village gates. But on the other hand, the place is exceptionally rich in its picturesque and charming scenery, situated as it is on the junction of the two rivers, Godavari and Pravara. The grand bathing steps along the Godavari, with numerous flights of stairs and bath seats, arcades and balustrades, whisper history to one in a contemplative mood. Toka and the junction of Godavari and Pravara, owing to their unique situation, are recognized

by the Hindus as the Allahabad and the Ganges of the Deccan, respectively. But since the railways have shortened the distance to the original Ganges and have brought within reach of all many other places of pilgrimage, Toka has lost its onetime popularity. It is worthwhile remembering that Swami Ramdas and Hazrat Sai Baba of Shirdi, both of whom bear a close spiritual connection with the Master, passed a good period of their lives in the vicinity of Toka.

## The Mission to the West

WE already know that Mr. R. K. Irani left Bombay for England on the tenth of March, 1928. One of his letters, received from London on the fourteenth of April, conveyed a very disappointing picture. He had found that, even amongst the poorer classes in England, the careers of the youngsters were pre-settled by their parents, unlike that of an Indian boy, who is generally educated without any prearranged plan in the early stages of his education, and thus is easily available for any kind of training. Then, naturally, he found that it was a country where Illusion ruled supreme and materialistic ideas held sway. And those who talked of spirituality generally meant psychic phenomena, or discussed the subjects of divine illumination, God-realization, truth, experience, as lightly as one would do geometry and geography, without knowing that the spirit underlying those terms could actually be realized, experienced, seen, heard and felt. In short, Mr. Irani was used to hearing and found through experience that Europe, for all its brilliant streets, well-decorated shops, and vast and magnificent network of railways, etc., was comparatively very poor in the matter of spirituality in its real sense. No wonder he found the disseminating of Truth to be spade work there!

The cable received from him on the sixteenth of April at Meherabad said, "Some success, task difficult," while a subsequent letter contained a reference to a certain inconvenience. It was, therefore, finally decided to recall Mr. Irani without going to other countries on the continent as was originally arranged, and the following cable was dispatched: "Don't bring boys. Return." In the meantime, Mr. Irani had met with an eleventh-hour success, and had almost arranged to bring some boys, but in face

of this order he postponed his scheme, and, leaving instructions to local agents, returned to India. After his return, he succeeded in getting the Master's sanction to call those boys, and even arranged for their passage, but eventually they were not allowed to come. The West had failed to respond to the divine call, so far as it concerned the sending of the boys to the Meher Ashram. Since bringing the boys for the Meher Ashram was apparently the all-important purpose of the mission, it can be said to have proved a failure.

But the following incident shows that it is not so. Mr. Irani himself was unconscious of the real significance of his visit at the time. He was often ridiculed for the peculiar life he led, since throughout the voyage and his stay in England, Mr. Irani had been ordered to remain only on bread, butter and tea!

In the darkest hour of his disappointment in England, Mr. Irani one day received a peculiar message. On the face of it, it was an ordinary letter, over the signature of a certain Mr. X, coming from Portsmouth. But the peculiarity was its contents. The writer mysteriously acknowledged the receipt of Mr. Irani's message and invited him for an interview. With all his wits about him, he could not remember ever having seen or heard of any Mr. X, not to speak of sending a message to him, during his short stay in England. He naturally thought it to be a postal mistake and went to all the Iranis that he knew of in London at that time, but none came forward to own the mysterious message. He therefore went to Portsmouth, according to the address given in the letter, at the appropriate time. It was Mrs. X who greeted him at the place and assured him that he was expected, and said that Mr. X had gone to the station for the purpose of receiving him. Nay, she even left him all to himself and went out to call back her husband so that Mr. Irani might not have to wait long. He had not to remain in suspense for long, as Mr. X soon walked in and introduced himself.

After the usual formalities were over, the gentleman dimmed the light and began to talk as if he were exchanging messages on a wireless apparatus, although he had nothing of the sort about him. In a low and impressive tone, Mr. X began to thrill his already stupefied listener with the following words: "I see the Master. It's two o'clock in the morning in India now. (Here he exactly described the Master's seat near the Meher Ashram.) Other eastern Masters of his (Meher Baba's) stage are not easily accessible and don't like to be disturbed at such an hour, but his seems to be of a very loving nature. I have just told the

Master that — will not allow the boys to be taken to India. But the Master replied there is no power on earth that can come in his way; he is not very keen about getting the boys. He wants to lay the spiritual cable between the East and the West. Up to now, the East is looked after by the eastern Masters, and the West by western Masters. He wants to join both these sections; and that is the reason why he sent you (Irani) here. You are carrying with you, without your knowledge, a sort of wireless connection, and it affects all those whom you meet."

## History Repeated

WITHIN ten days of the transference to Toka, the Master commenced conveying hints about reverting to fasting and self-imprisonment as before. Pending the erection of new premises for the Prem Ashram, the inmates of this section were lodged in a separate hall, adjoining the Meher Ashram proper, some distance away from the Master's seat.

However, it was on the first of July that refanning of the flame of love began. On that day the spiritual classes that had during the past two months been postponed were reopened for the Meher Ashram boys.

On the fifth of July, the Master actually remained confined to his boxlike seat by the *dhuni* and partook of nothing save water for the next 24 hours. But the very next day he came out and began taking food as usual, conveying, "This particular spot is not suitable for the purpose." Of course, the love-sick boys, who were greatly reassured with the near approach of the moment for the "final touch," showed great concern at the unexpected coming out of retirement of the Master. However, he restored their confidence with the following words: "Don't be impatient. You won't be able to 'digest' it so soon. I will surely make you the envy of all!" But within the next 24 hours he proved that, besides the spot being unsuitable, there were other reasons for his unexpected exit.

On the seventh of July, 1928, suddenly as a jack-in-the-box, none other than Ali's father once again cropped up with a pretty fine yarn. He said he had recently heard in Bombay that the Master had absconded, and all the Ashram boys had gone raving mad. But the very sight of the progressive state of affairs at Toka was enough to set his fears at rest, and it did not take

long for the Ashram authorities to give him complete satisfaction. He returned to Bombay at ease the following day, after seeing his son quite sane and safe.

From this time onward, the Master once again began to get all absorbed in the affairs of the little ones. Not only the Prem Ashram boys, but all the rest began to be impressed with spirituality in various ways.

The beginning of August witnessed almost a craze for divine contemplation amongst them. Leaving aside the lovelorn boys, many in the Meher Ashram too were reported to be getting up voluntarily hours before the morning bell and sitting for meditation. Some of them even rose as early as one o'clock in the morning and sat unmoved and quite engrossed in contemplation of the Master.

Just in the thick of the revival of this spiritual atmosphere, Ali's father all of a sudden presented himself at Toka for the second time. Nay, he was once again on the war-path! "I want to take Ali with me" was the same old song on his lips. Since he had already caused enough trouble to the Meher Ashram and its authorities, and had on more than one occasion gone back on his word of honour, he naturally felt ashamed to ask for Ali's withdrawal directly. "I want to take the boy home for a few days and will bring him back soon," he said. But the authorities compelled him through logical objections to come to the point, and leave off the tricks. While thus disposed, he could make no secret of his having been influenced by a certain "gentleman," whom I call here Mr. J.

This J had stayed at Meherabad before this for nearly a year, enjoyed the Master's hospitality and taken full advantage of the H.B.H. School. During this long period he used to behave like a great devotee of the Master. I remember clearly that, as early as the month of April 1928, in the course of some discussion, the Master had conveyed, "This J is not what he appears—he will prove a traitor."

Through certain selfish motives, Mr. J suddenly began to appear in his true colours after shifting to Toka, and found fault with everything there. The Master, when he got an open charge of faithlessness proved against J, summarily dismissed him on the twenty-first of July. And naturally, after that, the young man began to poison the minds of the Mogul community against the institution and its authorities with unfounded falsehoods, which resulted in this latest appearance of Ali's father at Toka.

The authorities still tried their best to bring round Ali's preju-



diced father to the right point for two whole days and nights. But the man remained adamant and would listen to no rhyme or reason. The authorities, therefore, on the strength of the stamped bond, simply refused to allow the boy back unless the gentleman made good the costs of the boy's education and maintenance to date. Of course this demand was not made with the object of really getting the just compensation from the gentleman, but rather to strike home to him the consequences of his hasty conclusions. Ali's father went away, but not to Bombay. On the fourteenth of August, he was reported complaining to the local police, who referred him to higher authorities, and then for the following few days, he remained very busy in trying to bestir the machinery of law into motion in support of his case.

Thus once again the devil and Divinity were at loggerheads with a vengeance! On the one hand, Ali's father was trying to call the law to his aid; on the other, the Master was busy instructing the boys in the law of love. The short period of five days during which all this happened was very remarkable. The revival of the spiritual atmosphere was again almost at its height. But unlike the last violent manifestation, the present outburst was singularly silent, although no less strong. Instead of the weeping and wailing, the majority of the boys of both sections of the Meher Ashram developed a peculiar divine insomnia, which was at the same time quite harmless. Some of the Prem Ashram boys hardly slept at night or during the day, even for an hour; yet for all that they looked no less active, bright and cheerful than those few that slept normally. From this time onward, for several days, the Master had made it a rule to call at the school, and, during the recess periods, interview each of the boys reported as keeping awake for meditation, enquiring as to how he fared for the loss of sleep; and after conveying an encouraging word, pat or embrace, would let him go. Besides the inmates of the Prem Ashram, no less than 27 boys in the Meher Ashram were noticed getting up as early as two o'clock one morning. In spite of this serious insomnia, through the Master's grace every one of them was able, in defiance of the law of nature, to discharge his daily duties without a flaw in the school, the dining hall and on the playground.

But history was to repeat itself on the nineteenth of August. Just in the midst of a prize-distribution gathering, in connection with the previous day's holiday sports, at five in the evening the Ashram authorities were served a legal writ by Ali's father,

demanding the boy back. This gave rise to a keen discussion between the Master and the disciples for nearly two hours. The latter were divided into two groups, the one advocated the law to take its own course, and the other thought it advisable not to proceed further, and hand over the boy at once. Strangely enough, the Master sided with the last group, and it was finally decided to give up the hero!

Consequently, besides Ali, some other Mogul boys were also handed over to their respective guardians, who were accompanying Mr. Syed Haji Muhammad, at about 7:30 that same evening. Gloom overshadowed the touching scene at the time when the Master conveyed the following words: "Ali is the best amongst those given up today. The poor boy will suffer much. However, these sufferings for my sake will bring him nearer to me. If he is still allowed to stay, so much the better. If he goes mad with the suffering, they themselves (Ali's father and relations) will bring him back to me. Even if he dies through these shocks, which his relations are persisting in causing to him, he will come unto me. He has one thing—love, and very intense love—that none can rob him of."

## The Second Bid for Freedom

AFTER this second forced exit of Ali from the Ashram, to all appearances no hitch was perceptible in the atmosphere. On the contrary, the divine outburst of feelings and enthusiasm amongst the boys was gaining ground by leaps and bounds. Besides, the Master ceased to show the great concern he had displayed on the last occasion, and no attempt therefore was made to get Ali back from his father as before, although the Master never seemed to have forgotten the hero and his position as the leader amongst the little lovers.

Baba continued inspiring the rest of the boys, and within three days of Ali's going away, on the twenty-second of August, he suspended all the rules and regulations of the Meher Ashram for about a month for all the boys who might be near him or his seat. None of the boys were, according to this order, ever called away from him, or restricted from going to him whenever they liked. Consequently, the person of the Master, when he happened to be out and about, was a sight for the gods to see! It was like a Christmas tree surrounded by a crowd of little ones, each trying frantically to reach it and grasp at its inviting branches, full of sparkling toys and novelties. But since this "tree of knowledge"—the Master's person—had but only four branches and twenty twigs in the shape of hands, feet, and fingers, the strain and pulls it had to bear against scores of hands grasping and pulling at it may better be imagined than written! Of course, there were no toys and novelties about the Master's person, but in their place, his sparkling brown eyes, his rosy lips parted in a loving smile disclosing some of his pearly teeth, his golden and shining ringlets, and above all his genial temper were enough to madden them with joy! And such onslaughts

of his person by the boys were so frequent that the Master was often seen playing a sort of a game of hide-and-seek with them, while going from one place to the other in the surroundings of the Meher Ashram.

On the twenty-eighth of August, the Master came out from his retirement as early as three o'clock in the morning, and personally inspected the many little ones, who were sitting in meditation at the cost of sweet sleep, which can only be judged by one who has had the experience of being disturbed from it at such an hour! By this time, some of the Meher Ashram boys can fairly be said to have gone mad after the Master and his photos, which were now in great demand. They were not satisfied with the large variety of the Master's photos that were already in stock and which had been freely distributed amongst them, but insisted that the Master appear in many fantastic garbs and get photographed in them. The Master, too, went much out of his way during this period, and condescended to fulfill the peculiar fancies of these enthusiasts and let himself be photographed in many postures and dressed as he had never done before.

The unprecedented extent to which the enthusiasm went will be judged from this surprising event: on the fifth of September, as early as 11 o'clock at night, some of the boys tumbled out of their respective beddings and ran straight to the Master's seat. The night watchman and those of the disciples that were still about were simply held spellbound with surprise, but in the face of the recent suspension of rules, none could stop the boys from going there and calling out loudly for the Master to come out. Those who believe can alone derive the significance of disturbing a Perfect Master in this way and at such an hour.

The Master not only came out, but instead of taking the boys to task as was expected by some, he patted them and conveyed some reassuring and encouraging words, though, of course, from that moment he enjoined upon them certain rules, which also forbade them to disturb him again in this way.

From the tenth of September, the Master once again resumed the much expected fasting program, and began to subsist only on a quarter of a cup of milk twice a day.

It is time we turn our attention to Ali. I am not sure about the date of Ali's second bid for freedom, but, when I asked him about it later on, he said, "I remember it was about 20 days after they took me away," which nearly coincided with the day on which the Master recommenced fasting as stated

above. On that particular day, Ali was sitting sadly outside his father's tea shop near Khetwadi, Bombay, resting his head on his seething bosom, contemplating his painful situation. It was nearly sunset. Although his father was not there, one of the partners was keeping a watchful eye on the boy, and since Ali had already given a slip last time, this partner was very careful and, so far, had proved a man not to be easily caught napping. For all his constant thoughts of an escape, the boy had failed to get an opportunity.

A friend of the gentleman who kept watch over Ali happened to call upon him at the moment and began to talk with him. The latter had first proved himself alive to the possibility of his missing Ali in the interesting *tete-a-tete*, and he asked Ali to come in. Without any particular scheme in view, the boy quite innocently said that he preferred to remain where he was, and the gentleman was good enough to let the boy have his way, but continued to call out his name at regular intervals. For some time, the situation became very comical. Every few minutes the watchful Mogul would cry out, "Ali, where are you?" "Are you there, Ali?" and so on, and the boy also used to shout back as being there, till, at last, Ali was tired with this humbug, which was the last thing he could put up with at that moment, and so the last reply he shouted back was also a mild protest: "Of course I am here; why do you call me again and again?"

But Ali was not in the least prepared for the results that his protest brought about. Four, five, eight and even ten minutes passed, and there was no more call! Ali suddenly felt an impulse; he shot a sly glance into the interior of the shop. The two men were busy in their conversation, perhaps engrossed in their favourite topic, the glories of Persia! Quick as lightning, Ali came to a decision, and with equal swiftness put the same into action. With a bound he was off, and began to spring from house to house and corner to corner, keeping himself under cover through the muddy lanes and by-lanes of Khetwadi. This time, the boy was well prepared in the matter of funds, and already had a ten-rupee note neatly tucked in somewhere about his clothes. Being instinctively aware of a chase, he came straight to the Victoria Terminus station, booked himself for Ahmednagar, and at the first opportunity, jumped into the same old Madras Mail!

Preoccupied with the thoughts of picking out his pursuers, Ali forgot to keep himself under cover and was sitting prominently by the window of a carriage. In the fever heat of the

moment, he missed spotting the person that he dreaded most, and thus failed in the very purpose of his look-out. Somehow, his father happened to come unnoticed by the carriage in which Ali was sitting.

Ali saw his father just in the nick of time, but it was too late. Their eyes had met! Within that fraction of a second, Ali's heart called out for the Master and asked for protection. Since the call was from the very depths of a highly strung soul, the Omnipresent Power was equally swift in responding. With a great sigh of relief, Ali found out that in spite of seeing him, his father had not seen him! The gentleman passed on looking for Ali in other carriages.

Within a few minutes of this miraculous event, with a sharp whistle that sounded as the sweetest music to Ali at the moment, the train began to move out of the great terminus. From the moving train, keeping himself well under cover, Ali tried to locate his father, and found him with some other Moguls talking excitedly along the receding platform. "Wire-telegram" were the only words that reached Ali's ears. He thought that perhaps they still suspected his presence in the train and were thinking of sending telegrams to the authorities for his arrest. Naturally he expected trouble at the next halt, and so the poor soul remained under cover until the train had passed out of Kalyan. At the junction of Dhond, to his great horror, Ali found a confounded policeman much interested in him, yet somehow the hero succeeded in easing the suspicions of the representative of law and managed to proceed further. Lest the station master at Ahmednagar might have been telegraphed to, the boy took great pains in slipping off the platform as far as possible unseen and unnoticed, and succeeded in arriving unchallenged at the city motor stand to get a lift in one of the public motor buses that run daily between Ahmednagar and Toka.

Forgetting that there are many a slip betwixt the cup and the lip, Ali thought that he was at last out of the woods when he took his seat in one of the buses and lost himself in the thoughts of the Master.

However, the driver of the bus became suspicious about him, and, on the pretence of taking tea, quietly entered a Mogul tea shop near the motor stand and informed the proprietor, who happened to be a friend of Ali's father and knew the situation well. The latter at once hurried to the spot where Ali was quietly seated, all engrossed in the thoughts of the Master. Ali became dumbfounded and motionless and lost the balance of

his mind for some seconds at the sudden sight of the Mogul. The gentleman gently but firmly caught hold of Ali's sleeve and led him to his shop, where soon a telegram was received from Mr. Haji Muhammad authorizing the very gentleman to detain Ali until he came over there himself. True to this telegram, Ali's father shortly turned up at Ahmednagar and took away the poor boy to Bombay.

## The Chapter of Many Events

ON the fourteenth of September the Master seemed to be very indisposed. One of the new candidates, a Hindu lad named Tukaram, insisted upon the Master transferring his suffering to him. It was only when the Master gave a solemn promise to get well in two days that Tukaram got pacified! It was due to this promise, as well as to the great insistence of the other boys, that the Master took a little milk on the sixteenth of September after remaining five days on tea without milk.

While passing along the Master's seat—the Meher Manzil—one morning during this time of outburst of spirituality amongst the boys, I chanced to find him seated there surrounded by the boys, and so I went in to pay my usual respects. The first question that the Master put to me was, "How does my face look?"

"Quite as usual," I replied.

"Still," he conveyed, "last night was a terrible one for me. Throughout the night my temperature was about 105 degrees. My limbs have gone limp, the back is all sore, I could not rest even for a second last night. Had you been in my place, you would have dropped your physical coat (body) through the suffering and pain!"

Then abruptly changing the subject, the Master turned to one of the youngest boys there, named Pundit, and conveyed, "Tell me what you want: God, freedom, paradise, motor car, toys or anything else that you would like the best. This is the right moment. Ask and it will be given you, instantly!" Much as I have become used to hearing lofty sentiments from little lips, I was not prepared for the startling reply that this boy on the right side of eight gave:



"I want your sufferings to cease!" was all that the little Pundit could speak very modestly.

Another peculiar incident about the Master, of which Ali was apprized through a dream in Bombay, as will be seen later on, was that he remained without his daily baths and change of linen for a period of 18 days, ending twenty-first of September, 1928.

Although the opening ceremony had been gone through as early as the first of September, the Master and the selected boys did not occupy the new premises of the Prem Ashram and Baba's adjoining "new seat," named Meher Manzil, until the twenty-third of September, 1928. The delay was occasioned in a most interesting manner.

About this time a great scarcity of rainfall was felt all around Toka, to such an extent that according to the prevailing customs amongst the Hindus, the local villagers in general and the farmers in particular indulged in all sorts of ceremonies and rituals, which included a whole night procession around the town, with all the tom-toms that it could command. But all to no purpose! The atmosphere continued to remain as dry as dust, threatening the farmers with famine.

The Superintendent of the Meher Ashram—Behramji Fardoonji Irani, one of the chief disciples of the Master—in the course of a conversation on this question with the village Police Patel, happened to advise him to approach the Master with their prayers for rain. The gentleman at first paid no heed to Behramji's casual remarks, but, probably when all the possible avenues of hope had been fruitlessly exhausted, he thought better of it.

On the morning of the sixteenth of September, the village Police Patel at last approached the Master in company of some of the other villagers and humbly solicited his blessings for a good shower. Possibly because the prayer had originated through the suggestion of one of his beloved disciples, the Master readily granted the boon and conveyed, "It will soon begin to rain now."

Within less than an hour of this reply of the Master, clouds began to gather over Toka, and the bright and hot morning suddenly went cold and dark. Nay, a few minutes more and it began to rain!

And it was not a passing shower! Almost the whole week it rained cats and dogs at Toka, greatly inconveniencing all the inhabitants of the Ashram, housed as they were in temporary structures which were not constructed with thought of such an

extraordinary downpour. But the peculiar and rather humorous point about it was that, although the Master conveyed that he wanted himself and the boys to shift into the new premises of the Meher Manzil and the Prem Ashram, he would not do so until it stopped raining!

Twice it was decided on such of the evenings as promised a dry day on the morrow to bring about the occupation of the premises, and both times the matter was shelved, as it did not stop raining. At last, the Master gave the following decision about this occupation on the twenty-second of September in these words: "If there is no rain tomorrow from dawn till two o'clock in the afternoon, the boys and I will shift into the new quarters; otherwise the question will be put off for a month or two."

The boys and many amongst the disciples could not help getting greatly disheartened at his strange declaration, and particularly with the prospect of another gap of a month, or two, that it held. "But," then the Master added, "if all of you feel so much about it, pray with heart and soul and it will not rain tomorrow!"

The fateful dawn of the twenty-third of September came, and there was no rain. Yet the stray black patches of threatening clouds hovering over Toka reminded Behramji of the Patel's part in the matter, which made him send for the Patel. The excessively wet weather had already played havoc with the old Patel's failing health, and although he was laid up with fever and cold, he obeyed the call. "Have you had enough water now?" was naturally the first question with which Behramji greeted the sick man, who acknowledged in no uncertain terms the bountiful blessing of the Master, and added, "But to take full advantage of this blessing in our fields, the rain must stop now." "This is just what we want," said Behramji, "and so I suggest that you should again present yourself for the Master's service and appeal to him to get the rains stopped."

The Patel readily fell in with this advice, but while requesting the Master for the stoppage, he was found to be very hesitating lest the monsoon might completely terminate there and then, and so was careful enough in asking, "We would please like to have a dry atmosphere now, but of course it must rain again after a week or so for some days." The Master smiled, probably at his guarded prayer, and was pleased to convey, "It will stop raining now, and you will also get some more showers after a week as desired by you."

And just according to these words, not a single drop fell that day till two o'clock, with the result of the occupation of the

Meher Manzil and the new Prem Ashram. From that afternoon the atmosphere remained dry save for an occasional stray shower till about a week, when it again rained sufficiently to satisfy the inhabitants of Toka.

The new premises seemed mysterious, as since the day they were occupied, none save certain disciples and workers had been allowed access thereto. No sooner one would enter the colony from the river side, a mere stone's throw from the banks of the ever-sparkling Godavari, than a compound enclosed with bamboo railings about 30 yards in length was prominently visible amidst the cluster of green trees and bushes. About ten feet away from the bamboo railings, there was another one, made of bamboo mattings fixed against rafters, six feet high, which enclosed the rest of the inner compound from all the four sides, giving an inner space of about 30 x 30 yards shut out from onlookers. One of the two peculiar structures that jutted out from the inner compound was the original "box seat" of the Master, which, since its removal here, was occupied by Chota Baba. The other, right in the middle, was (and probably will remain for a long time) the Master's new seat, the Meher Manzil. It is solidly built in lime and bricks, with a peculiar dome as a roof, having three windows on three sides and a door facing the riverside. It is 7 x 7 feet in space. In the inner compound on the eastern boundary were the Prem Ashram quarters, divided into 32 rooms, each 7 x 4 feet with a three-foot passage in the middle. On the western side was the Master's inner seat, made of bamboo matting, adjoining a special fireplace. The rest of the well-paved space provided the playground and open-air meeting place for the inmates.<sup>5</sup>

Six days after the occupation of the Prem Ashram, a letter was received from Ali in Persian, a translation of which is reproduced here:

Bombay, 24th September, 1928

Respected Kaikhushru,

I will be coming in the next three or four weeks, but will not take the 'Nagar line, as the people there as well as the police know me. But if I come within two weeks, will take the Aurangabad line (i.e., via Manmad and not Dhond). But I will never take the 'Nagar route, or I may go on to Upper India. By God, the Love of Baba would not lessen a whit in my heart even if my head be cut off! If opportunity presents itself, I will surely come as you will

see. Either I will take poison or will come to Baba. O God! I do not know what to do all these days and how to escape, as my father and three other persons are on constant watch upon me, which Baba already knows.

Please speak to Baba on my behalf.

He, who deprived me of union with my Beloved, may his heart be the target of thousands of sword slashes.

I have kissed this letter as it is to reach your hands.

If Baba so ordains, I may come soon.

At present, this humble servant is staying near Pydowni, behind the Chowki.

One more was received from Ali previous to his second bid for freedom, but is untraceable. The main gist of it was a pathetic appeal to the Master, inviting a swift death either for himself or his father as the only way out of his sufferings!

Just to provide a fresh example of how, on flimsy grounds though in good faith, these Moguls have been causing so much pain and privations to their own kith and kin, another little hero of the Meher Ashram is introduced here. It will be remembered that on the day Ali was taken away on the strength of a legal writ, some others had also been given up. One of them, Abdul Wahab, aged about 12, had returned long since to Toka after passing through many painful privations for his small age.

The same day that the letter from Ali was received—twenty-ninth of September—the brother of the boy turned up once again, and took poor little Abdul Wahab away the second time. However, he could not help remarking, "Personally I like the boy to remain here, but I cannot bear the taunts and remarks of my co-religionists against me on that account."

Within two or three days, Abdul Wahab's brother again came to Toka, to the great surprise of the Ashram authorities, and began to demand him. It transpired then that the plucky little boy had once again given the slip to his brother the very day they had reached Bombay, but he—the boy—had so far not returned to Toka. In order to convince the gentleman the truth of the situation, the authorities suggested to him to stay till such time as the boy returned, when he could take him back. But the perseverance of the boy was too much for his brother's prejudices, and he went away, saying, "You keep the boy now when he returns, and inform me about it." And lo! the very next day Master Abdul Wahab returned to Toka all smiles. A telegram was at once sent to his brother apprizing him of the boy's return and in reply the authorities received this letter from him:

Bombay, 9th October, 1928

Dear Sir:

I am in receipt of your telegram. I became very glad when I knew that my brother is there with you. At present keep him with you and teach some education. Kindly inform me about his knowledge, health and how he is getting on now, at your earliest convenience. Give my best compliments to Mr. Kaikhushru Saheb, to my brother and all.

I am, dear sir, your most  
obedient servant

(Sd.) Ali Akbar

Abdul Wahab related his adventures during his latest bid for freedom. "After we reached Bombay, perhaps in order to tempt me in forgetting all about Baba, my brother bought me a fountain pen, a pair of fancy eyeglasses, a toothbrush, a belt, a pencil sharpener and other odds and ends. In the evening, while going home, my brother suddenly remembered to buy some salt. Leaving me standing opposite a tobacco shop, he went to a grocer's shop nearby. Shouting behind my back that I was going to get a whistle, I began to run from one lane to the other, which the Nul Bazaar locality is so full of, with my brother's vain protest ringing in my ears, asking me not to go. In the excitement of the moment, I came face to face with some members of my community who knew me well, but I managed to give them the slip by hiding myself in the gutter. Then I came to Victoria Terminus, but through fear of being traced out, I could not think clearly as to what to do next. However, I slipped into a local train and came to Byculla. From there I again went to the Terminus. Then from there once again I came to Byculla. This time I went to the third-class booking office, and unintentionally the word Nasik escaped my lips in reply to the clerk's enquiry as to what ticket I wanted. Quite automatically I was hustled onto a platform where someone told me in reply to my enquiry, 'This is the train for Nasik.' I got into this train and really found it was bound for Nasik and beyond.

"I got down at Nasik and began to walk about in a certain direction without any idea of going to Toka, but simply to avoid being traced by my brother. After walking some miles, I came across a motor bus and requested a lift to the next village. The driver asked eight annas, but eventually I settled with him for six annas, and thus came to the village. There was a hill with some buildings on the top near this village. I thought I was near Ahmednagar, and that perhaps this may be the site of Me-

herabad. So I began to climb it. However, I soon found out my mistake. The hill proved very steep and full of holes and cavities that frightened me, while the building at the top turned out to be only a Hindu temple.

"I retraced my steps, but while I was coming down, it began to rain heavily. I got drenched to the skin, and in the hurry to get under cover, I began to run towards that same village. But I soon found myself in a bush full of thorns. In spite of my best attempts, my soles got pierced by many of the thorns there, until I encountered a farmer who was good enough to lead me to the main road. After reaching the village, I took stock of my cash and found that I had only ten annas left. Out of these, I bought parched rice and gram worth two pice, and thus appeasing my hunger a bit, I came to Nasik in a motor bus, paying eight annas for the lift. Here I made enquiries as to how to reach Ahmednagar and was informed to go via Manmad. On the way, a policeman caught hold of me and began to threaten me with arrest, on suspicion. I succeeded in shaking him off by offering him the pencil sharpener that my brother had recently bought for me.

"From Manmad, I began to walk along the railway lines toward Ahmednagar and reached the station of Ankai on foot. Here I was puzzled as to which line to follow, since one is also going towards Aurangabad from this station. Somehow, after making myself sure that I was on the right track, I proceeded from Ankai and walked a distance of about three miles. Here my physique failed me. The two pice worth of rice and gram that I had taken during these 24 hours were not enough to stop me from feeling very hungry and run down. I could not help dropping down there and then and going to sleep along the railway lines. The rush and rumble of a passing train awakened me soon, and food was the only thing I began to yearn for now. So I retraced my steps once again towards the station of Ankai.

"On the way I met a man; I offered him the anna and a half I had in exchange for something to eat. The man insisted on seeing what else I had upon my person, and selected the fountain pen in the lot, and offered a piece of bread and a promise to smuggle me in the train for 'Nagar in exchange for that. Of course I struck the bargain, and in return for that blessed pen got bread and a little chutney which I devoured greedily.

"In the meantime, another man turned up and offered to give me some more bread, and when I fell in with his suggestion, the first man again joined us and advised me to present the

eyeglasses I still had with me to the former. Thus, in exchange for the eyeglasses I got a fresh piece of bread. By this time the train for Ahmednagar came into the station of Ankai, and, true to their promise, those men smuggled me into a third-class compartment. I arrived at Ahmednagar, where I managed to get shelter and food for a day or two before coming over here."

What a tremendous attraction the Master's loving personality holds for these little ones to make them go through such dare-devil situations!

On the morning of the third of October, the Master suddenly set out from Toka for an apparently aimless spin in a motor car. The Master particularly included Ali Akbar (another Mogul boy who is deeply in love with the Master, hence nicknamed Majnun by him) in the party accompanying him.

From Toka, the party went straight on to one of the Master's sincere disciples, Mr. Satha, at Ahmednagar, where they halted for some time and took refreshment. About noon they left for Nasik. On the outskirts of Ahmednagar, near the tomb of the well-known saint Bapu Saheb, the car crossed another one. Her Holiness Hazrat Babajan of Poona graced this car. Probably the Master had come to Ahmednagar to meet his own Master. And the words of Count Hermann Keyserling, "The significance of an event must not be judged by those professed intentions that accompany it, but rather by its results," quite fit in with this event!

On the fifth of October, the Master returned once again to Ahmednagar at 1:30 in the afternoon, and again graced Mr. Satha's place near the Cotton Market, where it was decided to halt for the rest of the day and then proceed to Aurangabad the following morning.

A special seat was found to be gracefully prearranged for the Master in the house, but mysteriously, the moment he sat upon it, he got up and betook himself to the little garden in front of the house where he took his seat on a chair. In a second, the mystery got automatically unravelled. A car came dashing along the road adjoining this garden and stopped at a little distance away from where the Master was seated. Again Hazrat Babajan was occupying this car! Thus the two Masters had crossed each other twice within 48 hours at Ahmednagar, each coming from a long distance for some purpose best known to themselves. However, the Master conveyed this much: "Babajan has come again, and I have now become free," and cancelled the original program of staying there the whole day. Accord-

ingly, the party once again started that same afternoon for Aurangabad. It was nearly dusk when they crossed the river Godavari and entered the Nizam's dominion, and stopped there within a distance of a mile from Toka. Here the Master instructed Ali Akbar (Majnun) to retire, and then sent for Chota Baba and Mr. S. A. Abbas (Khak), one of his deeply devoted Muslim disciples. But accompanying this pair, there came the least expected and most welcome person. It was none else but Ali, the hero!



## Love Triumphs Again!

LOVE had triumphed again. Almost the same hour that the Master had conveyed the words, "I have now become free," at Ahmednagar, Ali had suddenly turned up at Toka!

After taking him to Bombay at the end of the dramatic and unsuccessful second bid for freedom, his father had put Ali in a night school in Bombay near the J. J. Hospital, so that he could personally keep watch over the slippery customer of a son during his schooling. As was likely to happen, in view of the boy's love, distractions, and pangs of separation, he could make no headway in this school. His class-teacher could not help taking him for a regular dunce, and often used to threaten him with reports to his father regarding his great disregard and carelessness for the lessons.

Although Ali now did not remain without food completely as he did during the first short separation of six days, a slice or two of bread, a little butter, and tea every day were the only things that kept him going during this prolonged separation.

The only enjoyment that the boy now used to indulge in daily was to buy some flowers, worth six to eight annas, and lovingly put them over the cash box of Imam Husein in his father's shop. Many Muslim houses and shops have special boxes in which spare money is collected from time to time in the name of a saint, and then disbursed after ceremonies on this saint's birthday or death anniversary. Although Ali has not ceased to revere the great Muhammad—on the contrary, unlike the majority of his community, he also recognizes the illustrious Muhammad as one of the Perfect Masters of his age—and as the worthy spiritual aspirant that Ali is, he used to put these flowers on the box with only thoughts of Hazrat Meher Baba! He knew

well that his hostile surroundings would never allow him to remember the object of his heart in any other way, and so the love-lost yet very intelligent little boy devised this fine, and at the same time most significant, way out for his feelings.

Besides various other attempts that his father made in bringing round Ali to his own orthodox point of view, he once again tried to overawe Ali with pompous dignitaries and awe-inspiring officials, when he took him forcibly into the presence of the President of the Community and the Persian Consul at Bombay. Even that traitor J was timely arranged to appear on the scene, but all their arguments, threats and temptings once again proved fruitless. The inborn love in Ali made him face all of them bravely and unflinchingly.

In spite of all his desires for an escape, the last eleventh-hour failure had made Ali pessimistic in that connection. The exact date is not remembered by the boy, but from his surmises it was on the twenty-first of September, the day on which the Master took a bath and had a change of linen after 18 days, that Ali saw a brief but very significant dream! He dreamed that night that the Master was dressed in dirty and torn clothes (during this peculiar non-bathing period, the Master's apparently unclean white robe was also torn a bit) and looked at him very eagerly and invitingly!

This little vision was enough to thrill the hero with fresh energy and hope for the third attempt, and the letter, dated twenty-fourth of September, already reproduced in the last chapter, speaks the rest of his plans and feelings in this connection.

The very day that the Master left Toka, Ali finally decided also upon an escape which he effected the next day. Thus on the fourth of October, according to the deliberate plan which included a good sleep, the boy, for the first time during this second separation, went to sleep soundly at ten o'clock that morning in his father's shop near Pydowni, Bombay, after carefully instructing a servant to wake him up at 12. Punctual to the instruction, the servant roused him up. The next item of this peculiar program of the boy was to take a bath, change his clothes and do full justice to bread and butter. And Ali, after refreshing his strained nerves with a long last sound sleep, went through all the other details, as above, to the last particulars.

Those concerned were very pleased with this remarkable return of Ali to normal life, unsuspecting the venturesome intentions underlying this light activity. "I want to go to the Carnac

Bunder shop," said he to the guards placed upon him by his relentless father. Finding the boy so sweetly reasonable that day, they readily consented, but were careful enough to accompany him. Thus the boy, whom a certain section of the Indian Penal Code had reduced into an abject slave, began to walk under the strict surveillance of his constant guards towards Carnae Bunder.

In spite of an inborn optimism, the boy now suddenly felt a shock of doubt regarding his success, and so he went straight to a bookseller's shop and bought a copy of the works of Khwaja Hafiz.

In order that the reader may appreciate this strange act of Ali, I think it necessary to introduce Khwaja Hafiz Shams-uddin Shirazi, that Perfect Master and great poet of Persia. The name Hafiz needs no introduction in the world of literature as a poet, but he is also popularly believed to be a saint in the Muslim countries. However, there are very few who know him as one of the Perfect Masters of his age. There are many who have tried to attribute spiritual significance and mystical meanings to his rich poetry, but according to the Master, Hafiz had laid bare all the seven spiritual planes in his odes for those who—again in the words of the Master—have got the "third eye," "eye of the heart," "inward sense" and the "eye of the soul."

The commonest miracle attributed to this great Master in many countries of the East is the accurate power of predicting events and unravelling mysteries that is believed to be possessed by the book of his divine poem, *Divan-e-Hafiz*.

According to one of his life-sketches written by Mirza Faizulla Khan of Rehlu, when a dispute arose over the performance of religious rituals in connection with Khwaja Hafiz's own funeral, the contending parties agreed to abide by the answer that his own *Divan* would give out. And when the book was opened at random, lo! it contained two lines which so fit that it appeared as if Hafiz had prewritten them for this very occasion! Since that time, he came to be known as "the tongue of the hidden or invisible."

Amongst the Mogul emperors of India, Humayun and Jehangir were great believers in Hafiz and the predictions conveyed by his *Divan*. The copy of the *Divan* which they used to refer to for this purpose is still preserved in a library at Bankipur. It bears some references as to certain foretellings, together with the dates of their own royal handwritings.

After purchasing the book, Ali sincerely invoked the help of

Khwaja Saheb and opened the book to set his sudden shock at rest. The *Divan* foretold success! All his misgivings disappeared into thin air at this divine prediction, and the hero resumed his prearranged tactics.

He had already created a great confidence in his guards, and the purchase had added another good impression upon them. Thus the more reasonably he behaved with them, the greater freedom the guards allowed to Ali. They perhaps thought the "black magic" had at last outrun its course, since it is on record that even these orthodox Moguls are fully alive to the great effect of Love on the boys, but their age-long prejudices have made them attribute it to "black magic," and consequently many queer tales have penetrated into Meherabad about the funny antidotes experimented upon the poor souls, making their sufferings more piquant. Abiding his time carefully, Ali somehow managed to get ten minutes of freedom from surveillance, and in the space of this short time, at last, he managed to reach the Victoria Terminus!

He had timed well his escape, and so had not to wait long in suspense, as soon he boarded the Nagpur Mail. The fast train dashed out of Bombay. Ali still held the *Divan-e-Hafiz* tightly clasped against his heart, as if it were a charm against unexpected accidents. But within a few minutes' run of the fast-going train, just as it passed the new Sandhurst Bridge station, Ali got a shock. It was, however, a very pleasant one.

All of a sudden, the Master had restored to him the "sight"! Ali began to experience the state of unity in diversity. "In every object," the boy later on told the writer, "I saw the Master!" For instance, if he looked at a tree, in every leaf of it he beheld none but his Beloved Baba. No wonder that in this state of bliss and ecstasy, he found no longer any use for the book he had so long in his hands, and without meaning any disrespect, the boy soon hurled it clean out of the onrushing train.

Ali left the Nagpur Mail at Manmad junction and took the train for Dhond. He got down at Belapur, the nearest but out-of-the-way station to Toka, and managed to get a lift in a motor bus for Nevasa, which is the chief town of this part of the district and is only a few miles from Toka. So far all went well with him, and the "sight" too remained unchanged, but as soon as he arrived at Nevasa, a local Pathan recognized him and began to accuse him of having absconded again. "No, I have not absconded; my brother is with me," replied Ali to the threatening Pathan, contriving to gain time and avoid an immediate arrest.

"Where is your brother?" persistently enquired the very suspicious Pathan. For a moment the boy was nonplussed. But he quickly thought of a plan, and said, "My brother is coming via Ahmednagar, and you will presently see him."

At least, till the buses arrived at Nevasa on their way to Toka from Ahmednagar, Ali thought he had succeeded in avoiding an arrest. Perhaps he had thought of giving the slip to the Pathan at the right moment. But now another nightmare loomed large before Ali. What if his father were to come by one of those buses?

So when the buses came, Ali slipped away in the surrounding bushes on one pretext or the other, and began to watch for the dreadful advent of his father. But instead of his father, the boy saw, with a sigh of relief, that one of the passengers was Mr. K. J. Dastur. As luck would have it, the gentleman happened to be returning to Toka that very day after a short private visit to Bombay, thus providing the "brother" for Ali to point out to the inquisitive Pathan.

There was no demonstration on the return of the hero this time, just as no attempts were made to bring round his father. After seeing Ali, the Master proceeded towards Aurangabad, sending the hero back to the colony. But the party did not actually reach the destination; for certain reasons, the Master returned to Toka the following morning, sixth October, after passing a night under a wayside shelter.

## Fresh Flow of Spirituality

WE have seen that unlike the disturbance caused in the Meher Ashram at the first forced removal of Ali, in the course of the second separation, neither the Master looked worried, nor the great revival of the spirit of love and devotion amongst the boys suffered in any way. On the contrary, the second blaze of the spirit of spirituality, particularly in the original section of the institution, went on soaring higher and higher, and produced many a new candidate for the Prem Ashram section.

But it was the return of the hero that proved that even the second period of his absence was not without consequences, since from the very next day of Ali's arrival, the Master adopted quite an unprecedented course of working. He became lost to all save the Prem Ashram.

For ten days and nights, from the fourth day of Ali's return, the Master did not even step out of the Prem Ashram boundary! From dawn till dusk, save the hours of 12 to two, throughout the dark cold nights, the Master was seen working with a vengeance for the Prem Ashram inmates, and at the same time continuing the fasting system that he had adopted since the tenth of September. Thus, without taking food himself, Baba served out all meals to the inmates every day. He did not like to discuss, even for a few minutes, subjects other than the Prem Ashram, as was evident whenever the different workers approached him for advice on some urgent question concerning other affairs of the colony. But he used to give lengthy discourses on love, on God, on the spiritual path for hours together to the Prem Ashram boys, twice, thrice and even four times a day. Besides, he used to instruct them on various methods of med-

itation and concentration suitable to individual tendencies.

A God-realized personality never sleeps. There is nothing like sleep for him. But a Perfect Master takes rest all the same, that is, goes into the "resting state," which is a point just between the sixth and seventh spiritual planes. But during the period mentioned above, the Master seldom took rest. He would keep moving amongst the boys all throughout the night, seeing for himself how they followed the instructions, and helping them whenever necessary. Again, when the boys engaged themselves in recreations or secular studies during the day, he would constantly remain in their presence and take an equally keen and lively interest in all their games and studies. During the short intervals, the Master would make the boys sit around him and enjoy with them divine songs, through Urdu, Persian, Marathi and English records of famous singers on the gramophone. In short, Baba used to remain all absorbed in the affairs of the little ones for every second of their time, and thus always gave his physical presence before one or the other or all of the Prem Ashram boys.<sup>6</sup>

It was a novel atmosphere, as it was only in the evening that the rest of the Meher Ashram boys and other disciples and devotees could see the Master, when they were allowed to come to him to pay their usual daily respects. Even then none of them would be allowed to stay after 8:30 P.M. Thus the hitherto unchallenged privilege of every disciple to call at the Master's seat and sit beside him whenever he liked to do so, provided he was off duty, was for the time being suspended. Consequently, the half an hour or so at their disposal every evening was hardly sufficient to enable the large number of the disciples and devotees to go through the formalities of paying their respects, and so none had the feeling of having enjoyed the inspiring company of Baba. Nay, even this half an hour's grace to the disciples did not appear to have been allowed by the Master quite freely, as he generally seemed to be preoccupied and at times unconscious of the surroundings in the gross sense.

The bodily seclusion of the Master within a fixed limit was not a new experience for the disciples. Even whilst remaining in a small room for 108 days last year he, however, was accessible to anyone at any time, and thus he continued making his presence felt amongst all and also kept on taking interest in the rest of the affairs. But this time the Master seemed to have secluded himself in the spirit, too. And, therefore, when he came

out of the Prem Ashram boundary and partook of food after 42 days on the twenty-third of October, it made no difference in the atmosphere.

Although now he began to move about freely, he might be said to have maintained his retreat all the more rigidly, because, two days prior to his coming out, he had entrusted sole powers of administration of the colony and all its affairs to Rustom Irani. All the inhabitants were ordered to obey Mr. Irani in all matters, and forbidden to approach the Master under any circumstances. Even the new administrator, Mr. Irani, himself was forbidden to speak on any affairs of the colony with the Master, and was ordered to manage affairs according to his own discretion.

Thus divesting himself completely of the administration of the colony and getting absolutely free from all engagements from the twenty-third of October, the Master continued working exclusively for the Prem Ashram for one month. Consequently, it was no wonder to hear great changes toward spiritual advancement having come over the lucky inmates. One meal a day and three hours of sleep at night proved to be sufficient for most of them for maintaining their physiques in a prime condition, without feeling that they were undergoing any privations.

It must not be supposed that they devoted their entire time solely to meditation and thus kept themselves drugged with concentration so as to forget or lose the normal craving for food and sleep, or that they created any unnatural stupor within them.

If the Master inspired them to meditate with all the seriousness at his command, if he delivered before them the spiritual lectures with serene solemnity, he was no less cheerful and convivial in encouraging them to enjoy their daily recreations. With beaming eyes and smiling expressions, he used to take the boys every morning to the fine bathing steps along the river Godavari, where they were taught to swim. He did not only encourage, but would insist upon them all having a go at a dive and enjoying a dip. Even Chota Baba, a fine swimmer himself, played no small part in training the boys to swim. With a will and vim of his own, it did not take him long to make them all swim gracefully in the Godavari. Consequently, when ripples were seen in the river, ripples of boyish joy and glee were also heard freely in the air about the spot where the Prem Ashram boys enjoyed themselves.

In November, the Master again struck a new note. He began



to complain constantly about the climate of Toka for a number of times a day. It was a fact that, with the advent of the winter, the climate began to get decidedly nasty. The majority of the boys of both sections of the Ashram and a good many disciples were attacked with cold and cough, which would yield to no treatment successfully. The remarks repeated by the Master now and then in this connection forewarned most of the disciples about some still more drastic changes. And so, when the Master openly announced, on the eighteenth of November, his decision to remove back to the original site of Meherabad near the village of Arangaon, only a few were surprised at it. But the fact that, except the selected boys, all the rest were to be sent away to their respective places on vacation, appeared very strange. However strange be the command, the disciples have had enough experience and are convinced of the selfless motives of the Master to obey him first and ask questions afterwards. Accordingly, steps were at once taken to comply with the Master's wish. All the boys except the Prem Ashram inmates were offered to betake themselves home, pending the completion of the new arrangements at Arangaon. Under normal circumstances, it is doubtful whether even a few of them would have preferred a holiday at home to the Master's company, but the recent withdrawal of the Master for a month from amongst them had also prepared them for the separation, and the majority readily fell in with the suggestion. The same day a batch of seven boys went away. The following morning 18 more followed suit, but it was in the evening that the real reason of this upheaval came to light.

Ali's father appeared again at Toka to claim him! That he did not come earlier, he said, was due to ill health, and so his silence for a month and a half was no consent. On the contrary, he declared his firm resolve to take Ali away. There was no longer any legal or moral binding; still the authorities tried to induce the gentleman to leave Ali alone, but it goes without saying that no persuasions could succeed, and the gentleman took him away for the third time, on the twentieth of November.

It now becomes as clear as daylight that the unprecedented fast workings of the Master in the Prem Ashram were really a race with time to achieve certain internal results before Ali was again taken away, and that the Master was prepared in advance for this third exit of Ali.

The number of boys on the eighteenth of November, 1928, was 102, as follows:

<i>Hindus</i>	<i>Muslims</i>	<i>Zoroastrians</i>	<i>Christians</i>
11 Brahmins	5 Deccanis	6 Parsis	1 Indian
1 Jain Marwadi	6 Moguls	26 Iranis	
1 Sonar	2 Bhoris		
15 Marathas	2 Cutchis		
2 Shimpis	5 Foreigners		
1 Purdeshi			
15 Mahar-Mangs			
<u>3 Chambhars</u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
49	20	32	1

## The Pulsating Impulse

IN 20 days after Ali's third exit, as if by a magic wand, the Meher Ashram was completely re-established at its original site near the village of Arangaon, and the general situation was restored to its previous condition in every detail. The only important change was with regard to the secular education imparted therein, viz., instead of the matriculation examination course, English alone was decided to be taught to the Ashramites, the spiritual side being, of course, maintained without any change. The parents and guardians of the boys who had been sent home on leave were communicated with and asked to send in their boys, provided they had no objection whatever to this change.

The popularity of the Meher Ashram in general, and the attraction it possessed for its inmates in particular, became clear: in spite of being left completely free from the direct influence of the Master and enjoying a holiday at home without any disciplinary restraints, the majority of the boys literally began to rush back to the institution at the first opportunity. And their parents and guardians showed no less confidence towards it, as, despite the great change effected in the material side of the training at the Meher Ashram, they nevertheless willingly allowed their boys to rejoin it.

It was therefore no wonder that each day in the second week of December saw a number of youngsters returning to Meherabad with their guardians or their written consents.

But instead of the boy whose presence and absence meant so much to the Meher Ashram, it was his father who came rushing to Meherabad on the thirteenth of December in search of Ali, who, he said, had slipped away!

After being taken away for the third time, Ali was put into

a school near Sandhurst Bridge at Bombay under a constant and careful watch and ward. In spite of it, he managed to slip away in the afternoon of the twelfth of December during a recess period, and the site of the school helped him to make short work of his dash for the Victoria Terminus. Not knowing at what moment he might get an opportunity for an escape, Ali had well studied the railway timetables, and so finding the Poona Express ready by the platform, he at once decided upon a plan. In order to get as many miles as possible between himself and Bombay, he came by this train to Lonavla, which is a hill station 80 miles from Bombay. Passing a few pleasant hours as a welcome guest of one of the local disciples of the Master, he came to the station to board the Madras Mail which leaves Lonavla at about 12:45 A.M. But for a single carriage, all the other third-class compartments in the train were found to be overcrowded, and so he jumped into the former. He was naturally in the best of spirits at this juncture. When a fellow passenger enquired as to what station it was, Ali literally shouted out that it was Lonavla. But at the same moment, he happened to see to his horror his own father in the very compartment, trying to locate the direction from whence came the familiar voice! Of course Ali was out of the carriage with a bound through the opposite door, landing on the other side of the train, and under the cover of darkness made good his escape.

It was therefore no mystery that Mr. Haji Muhammad did not find Ali at Meherabad that day. Probably it was due to sheer exasperation that the gentleman, before beating a retreat, asked the Ashram authorities to readmit Ali in the institution when he returned, and also gave a fresh promise not to disturb him again.

Having escaped from the grasp of his father in the nick of time, Ali preferred to remain at Lonavla for another 24 hours, and arrived at Meherabad on the following day to hear the good news that once again his father had consented to let him remain in the Ashram. His father was duly informed about his arrival and readmission to the Meher Ashram.

But the most remarkable return to the Institution at this juncture was that of Ahmed Muhammad, one of those boys who had been taken away with Ali on the nineteenth of August from Toka. In spite of their best attempts during four months, his relatives could not succeed in making him forget his Baba. To the contrary, on Sunday, the twenty-third of December, Ahmed

had suddenly a great impulse to return to the Master. The way in which he put this impulse into action provides a fresh tangible interpretation to his love for Baba.

Without providing himself with bedding, food or money, he simply started off for Ahmednagar on foot on that very day. He began by selling the three silver buttons on his shirt for three annas to a stranger, and came to Dadar by tram, paying one anna as the fare. With just those remaining two annas and the clothes on his body, he set out on the tramp in the scorching sun of that Sunday afternoon. He had walked about 12 to 14 miles when it became quite dark. Being quite inexperienced, he did not think of stopping at a village in time, and had thus no other alternative but that of passing the night where he was. Thinking a tree to be safer, he climbed one along the road and made himself as comfortable under the circumstances as possible. It goes without saying that he did not at all sleep soundly throughout the night, since a branch of a tree to lie on, the clouds in the sky as the only covering, and the lone spot on the highway in the wintry night, is not quite a comfortable situation to induce sound sleep. On the contrary, the very fact that the boy could somehow pass the night under such circumstances speaks for the motive force behind this apparently offhand venture on his part.

The bullock carts, as is well known, generally begin to move about very early in the morning, and are, as a rule, the first to rumble on a road. Hence it was still very dark when some passing carts announced the dawn of a new day to Ahmed. He climbed down from his perch and began to follow the carts. By sunrise Master Ahmed reached Thana. Having only two annas about him, he dared not spend more than two pice for breakfast, and so had to satisfy himself with a few cold crisp biscuits and a handful of water. Thus refreshed, this little lover of Baba continued his tramp. Nearing Panvel, a Muslim innkeeper, taking pity on the lonely and haggard looking boy, offered to help him by getting him a lift in one of the passing motor buses. But as he still had sufficient energy to carry on, he politely, but in no uncertain terms, refused the offer. At noon, he reached Panvel. Though very hungry, as needs he must have been after walking for so long, and having had no food save those few biscuits during the last 24 hours, he had to remain content with two pice worth of sweets upon viewing the contents of the poor purse. A little rest under the shade of a tree, however, made him take to the road again.

When to the lack of food, want of sleep, and absence of many more comforts which a human being requires in the ordinary course of his life, the scorching sun was added, Ahmed found it too much for his great determination after having walked some eight or nine miles more. His soul still wanted to strive on, but after all, that soul was caged in a small little body that could stand the strain no longer. He began to appeal for a lift to every motorist that passed, though it was all a cry in the wilderness. But perseverance succeeds. The tenth car, which stopped in response to his hoarse shout, belonged to a European gentleman going to Poona. Grasping the helplessness of the boy and his apparently hopeless task of covering the rest of the 63 miles to Poona on foot, the gentleman was kind enough to bring Ahmed in his car to Poona. This was something beyond the wildest dreams for Ahmed to reach Poona so soon. And this God-sent encouragement infused new energy into him to face another cold night on a starvation diet consisting of a handful of nuts which he bought for one *pie*. First he tried to sleep on a bench along a public road, but the cold winds sent shivers through his poorly protected body, and so he made himself as snug as possible in the corner of a building and somehow passed the second night, half dozing and half sleeping.

At daybreak on Tuesday, Ahmed picked up his courage to start again on the tramp. It was now nearly 40 hours that he had not partaken of any food worth the name; still his first thought was to pay his respects to the Master of his Master, Her Holiness Hazrat Babajan of Poona. He also knew the grave risk he was running by going to Hazrat Babajan's place, as there are a number of Mogul tea shops in that vicinity; still he wound his way as cautiously as possible and came near the seat of Hazrat Babajan. Her Holiness was to all appearances sleeping at that time, with the coverings well wrapped all round her person. But the moment Ahmed quietly bowed towards her from a distance, she gave him a look of love by suddenly taking her august head out of the coverings. No sooner Ahmed had experienced a wonderful thrill of a miracle, than Her Holiness put herself under cover, and to a casual observer went to sleep again. Here was another encouragement for the little lover to go on with his labour of love. Now he bought a little bread for two pice, and started from Poona eating the "breakfast" while walking on towards Dhond along the railway lines.

About the twelfth mile, probably to avoid the monotonous atmosphere of the railway lines, Ahmed again took to the public road. But the impulse that brought him on this public road seems

more to have been a subtle inspiration from the Master, who wanted to provide him with food, as Ahmed very soon overtook an old man on the road going along the same direction. He was an old Hindu, and Ahmed was a little Mogul, but the psychology of human affinity under circumstances of common suffering and hardship knows no man-made laws. The two became friends. The old man, being experienced, soon decided to halt for the hottest hours under the shade of a tree. He not only induced Ahmed to follow suit, but also made him share his bread and chutney freely, and thus, after 48 hours, Ahmed got something substantial to eat. In the afternoon, this queer pair started again. By dusk, they reached a village where the old Hindu, after advising Ahmed to take shelter in the village mosque, went away to some other place. Ahmed was allowed by the mosque people to sleep in the premises, and thus he got a good shelter on the third night. Still, through lack of covering and bedding in the cold of the night, he could not sleep well, and it did not require an effort on his part to get up long before the sun rose over the village.

With a number of dogs barking after him, and fumbling here and there in the dark, Ahmed somehow reached the main road, and began his tramp again on that Wednesday morning. He felt very hungry that day, as he had had only a spare meal since he started on Sunday, and consequently found the tramp very trying. He tried to get a lift once again in the passing motor vehicles but none helped him. And perforce the poor boy had to take recourse to the tamarind trees along the road. Eating the leaves and the tamarinds, he somehow walked about 16 miles and reached the railway station of Patas.

He found himself dog-tired and as hungry as a wolf. Still after a little rest, through sheer force of will, he walked six more miles along the railway lines and reached the station of Dhond. He tried to sleep on the platform benches of the station and forget the great fire of hunger raging within him. But as was likely to happen, he could not rest, far short of getting a nap. For the first time he could think of begging, and approached a Muslim gentleman with a request for some food. The latter at once conducted him to the refreshment room, and ordered rice and curry for him. He surprised his benefactor by preferring to partake of only tea and bread in order to avoid meat. Thus refreshed, Ahmed fell for the first time into a sound sleep in the warm atmosphere of the station premises. But he was not destined to enjoy it for long. Soon a policeman came along and drove him out of the station. Ahmed passed the rest of the night

under a staircase near the station, where the Master comforted him with his holy presence in a dream.

On the following morning, Thursday, while he was enquiring for the road to Ahmednagar, someone suggested to him to go by train, without a ticket. But he evaded the suggestion and continued the tramp along the railway lines. He kept on walking for the whole of that day in the sun without food and halted at a wayside station, which he reached by sunset. Hence no wonder that he felt very hungry. However, he had no need to beg again for food. An old lady on the platform, probably a passenger waiting for the train, provided him with an unsolicited square meal.

Having been driven from the platform in the dead of the night at Dhond, Ahmed again thought of a tree to sleep on. But he soon had to climb down on account of a nightmare which made him think that a black snake was about the tree. It was then nearly midnight and the cold screeching winds were too much to bear in the open air. So he tried to make a fire. He gathered up some straw and dried leaves about the place, but to his great disappointment found that the matches he had bought at Thana would not ignite through wear and tear. In such a situation, he dared to take refuge again on the station, where happily he was allowed to pass the remainder of the night.

On Friday, the sixth day, Ahmed restarted on his sacred journey at daybreak. Eating the millet plants from the adjoining fields whenever he felt a great pinch of hunger, he kept on walking briskly till he came in sight of the Meher Ashram, which was still some miles ahead. He once more begged—not for food—but for some flowers from a gardener. The Master is not only well known but is held in great reverence by the surrounding village people, and thus when the gardener came to know for whom the boy wanted the flowers, he presented Ahmed with handfuls of wild roses. The lovelorn lad forgot all about his great fatigue and hunger in the joy of preparing a "crown" out of those flowers for the "King of his heart."

And thus it was nearly sunset, and the Master was seated amongst some disciples near the very crypt of a room in which the Master had confined himself last year, when a boy suddenly crept in unannounced, and before anyone could even recognize him, had fixed a wreath of roses on the golden ringlets of his Beloved! I, for one, could not place the haggard and hollow-eyed face in my memory at the moment, until I was actually told that it was Master Ahmed!



## Messengers of Love

WITH the re-establishment at its original site once again, all began to go on well with the Meher Ashram. Be it said to the credit of the Meherabad authorities that, in spite of such a drastic change from one place to another, the school remained closed only for a single week. Although on account of the change brought in the curriculum, it no longer remained a "high school," yet the Hazrat Babajan English School could boast now of a debating club, which enabled many of its little members to give expression to their thoughts, though not quite in correct English, unflinchingly before their teachers and fellow students.

The Master also resumed taking interest in all affairs as usual, and brought his "retreat" to an end. He began moving about freely all over the colony, and through his usual gestures, "spoke" with the disciples and visitors whenever they approached him. The boys of the original section also got the pleasure and benefit of his august presence amongst them every evening. Yet for all that, the Master continued paying the lion's share of his attention to the Prem Ashram inmates.

The most remarkable point about the Master's working for the Prem Ashram boys during this period of one month was that he began to cleanse their latrines from the seventeenth of December. The only person that he allowed to assist him in this task was his younger brother Jal, who is not only one of the chief supervisors of the Prem Ashram but also as keen about and interested in it as being next to the Master.

Thus to the future saints in the Prem Ashram, who were taught humility in words, this so-called menial and by no means pleasant work of a sweeper that the Master did also taught humility in deeds, besides serving whatever other spiritual purpose the Mas-

ter might have had in view. It might be added that such work on the part of a God-realized personality is rare but not unparalleled; to give a recent example, Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa is also said to have worked as a sweeper.

The reader might have marked the peculiarity that since its inception the institution went through a complete new phase almost every month or 40 days. Hence when the Master began to let out hints at the beginning of the new year, 1929, about going on a walking tour and closing the Meher Ashram completely but temporarily for some time, it did not seem so very strange to most of his disciples. Yet it can fairly be said that none were prepared to see the hints turned into actions so soon as the twelfth of January. Not only did the Master announce his final decision to act upon his hints, but actual preparations were completed the same day to send away all the boys of both the sections of the Ashram, including those who had come from Persia, to their guardians' places on the following day.

I was naturally very much puzzled about the question of Ali. That after all the trouble, when his father had at last allowed Ali to remain in the Ashram and given a fresh promise not to disturb him again, he should be sent back to his father's place, appeared to me quite unthinkable. When I went up to the Ashram the following morning—the morning of the fateful thirteenth of January—the Master himself conveyed to me, "Aga Ali's father has again taken him away only a little while ago. You can see now that the closing of the Ashram has some connection with Ali!"

The first thought that crossed my mind was to remember the ringing words of the Master, "These Moguls are word-breakers and not to be trusted." What better example could one cite as to how irreligion is practised by many in the name of religion! Some of the orthodox Moguls think it irreligious to allow their little ones to enjoy the grace of a God-realized personality who is above all religions. But alas! They conveniently forget the injunction of the Holy Koran, "The believers are . . . those who are keepers ... of their Covenants" (Sura xxiii. 1,8) "and fulfil the promise" (Sura v. 1).

Now, in the light of this episode, there was no mystery surrounding the end of the Meher Ashram. It rather reminded us of the words of the Master, conveyed some 11 months ago, viz., "If Ali goes, all go!" And it really so happened that Ali was really the first to go out of the Meher Ashram on the morning

of the thirteenth January, while all the rest followed him later on the same day.

A word as to the sorrow and pain the little but real lovers of the Master felt at the thought of the separation will not be out of place here. It has been truly said that "angels have all love but no pain."

And what is this pain about divine love that is only destined for the human beings? It is the pain of separation, or in other words the restlessness for union, which even the angels do not possess! It is unbearable and beyond description, yet a loving soul can bear it. Some of the boys did feel this pain whilst bidding a touching good-bye to the Master that day, but they exhibited sublime submission to his divine command, instead of the spirit of reactionary revolt that they used to display in the primal state of their love.

Some of them were perhaps separated to enhance their love through the love-pain of separation; some had reached the stage that no longer needed the physical contact of the Master; some have since been recalled; but all the Meher Ashram boys of both its sections as a matter of fact were that day let loose over the country with a "silent message" of divine love that will sooner or later speak of itself.

# Notes

## Note 1 Pawar's Diary

A glimpse of activity in the first four months of the Meher Ashram can be gleaned from the following excerpts from G. L. Pawar's diary. I have loosely grouped the diary entries into four topics.

### A. ENTRY OF NEW STUDENTS

May 19, 1927

Burjor

A young boy came upon the scene in a pitiable condition. He looked covered with dust and dirt and half-starved, with a cotton shirt and a piece of cloth tied round his legs as his full dress. He looked every inch a Muslim beggar, but upon enquiries he declared himself to be a Parsi, although he did not have the sacred thread upon his person. The boy was conducted before Shri [Baba] who cross-questioned him through signs and alphabet pointing. In broken sentences and amidst tears the boy conveyed that his name was Burjor Sarkari, that he had been badly treated by relations and friends, and was penniless and homeless and craved for a shelter. It was also quite clear that he was not quite frank in his replies and wanted to hide something. However, Baba's cross-examination led him to admit his having been in Poona recently, and so Shri sent for Babu Cyclewala and enquired if he knew anything about the boy. As luck would have it, Babu at once recognized him as the boy whom Sailor [one of Baba's disciples] had some time ago placed

in the service of a Parsi gentleman in Poona, having taken pity on his helpless condition; but the boy had not worked there properly.

This explanation took the boy off his guard; he at once admitted having pinched 13 rupees from the cash box of his last employer and then travelled here and there in Bombay and Nagpur before coming here. In spite of his follies, the young boy seemed to be in a very pitiable condition and did not fail to evoke Shri's sympathy. At first Baba advised him to go to his last employer, make a clean breast of all mischief, and after making a clean breast and after getting his free pardon, to come here and then shelter would be given to him. But the boy was all tears and sobs at the prospect of going back to the place where he had no doubt committed a theft, fearing arrest by the police instead of a pardon. Shri let him cry for some time, thus clearing his breast of the suppressed emotions of fear and repentance. Baba then gave him some figs to eat, and ordered him to take a bath, put on new clothes that would be given to him and dine to his satisfaction. Thus within a short time, quite a new boy stood before all, looking a typical Parsi youth with the usual sacred thread and a pair of neat and clean trousers and a shirt on. Once again Baba asked him through signs whether he wanted to stay here or go to Poona to secure pardon for his last mischief. This time, Burjor seemed quite calm and composed and replied that he would do what Shri would tell him to do. So finally Shri decided to let him remain here, and instructed Abdulla to approach the boy's last employer with Sailor and secure his pardon for the boy's faults, and also to find out if there was anything very serious against him.

May 21, 1927

The much awaited letter from Abdulla with the promised details came today. At three in the afternoon a meeting of the selected members of the *mandali* was called together to hear and decide what to do with the boy. It now transpired that he was lately employed at Messrs. Ardeshir & Sons Mineral Water Works at Poona. Out of sympathy for a poor homeless boy, the employer had been good enough to provide him with board and lodging and clothes, plus a decent pay of 25 rupees in cash. For some time, Burjor worked hard and pleased his masters so well that they placed him in sole charge of one of their retail shops in the city. But here he went wrong. One day, without

informing his kind and good employers, the boy not only ran away but also took with him 35 rupees from the cash box in the shop.

Abdulla wrote that when he approached the employers, he found them very angry with the boy and firm in their decision to teach him a good lesson. Besides the theft, the boy was so inconsiderate as to take away the keys to the shop with him, and thus the shop had to remain closed for a day. After some discussion, the *mandali* agreed with Baba that at the most the boy was "silly and a fool" and not "dangerous" as stated in the telegram and perhaps may improve if given a chance here. Otherwise, had he been really cunning with criminal tendencies, he would have either decamped with a larger sum or gradually pinched away small sums from the daily cash which was in his sole charge, instead of losing such a comfortable and respectable job and risking police pursuit for the sake of 35 rupees. It was decided to let Burjor remain here.

But all the same, Baba sent for him and then threatened him outright with police custody unless he made a clean breast of all his past actions. This time, the boy gave out a clean confession of his guilt in full details which quite agreed with the contents of Abdulla's letter and thus showed that he no longer tried to hide anything from Baba, although he did so very hesitatingly and amidst profuse tears. At the end of his confession, he made a pathetic appeal to Baba to save him and keep him in his shelter. As was already decided, Shri conveyed to him a pardon and the permission to stay on here, but warned him through signs never to think of any mischief even while dreaming! "You may manage to avoid the detection of a crime elsewhere, you may succeed in running away from any other place, but this won't do here. I will fish you out, even if you hide yourself in the very depths of the earth; *there is no place where my eyes cannot reach*. Not only that, but if you do anything wrong here, you will instantly become a cripple." This was one of the remarks that Shri conveyed to Burjor during the discussion. Further, by way of an example, the case of Bal was repeated before him by one of the *mandali* under Baba's order.

July 3, 1927

Quite unexpectedly, Aga Baidul turned up at Meherabad this morning with the 14 boys that he had brought with him from Persia. Two of them were Muslim and the rest Zoroastrian. The

luggage with them was all the more surprising as it consisted only of a small bundle of bedding, a curiously shaped earthen water jar and a few miscellaneous things that would hardly fill a small trunk. Yet the party consisted of 16 souls coming from such a long distance. Poor souls! They seemed to have had a very rough time, but their strong constitutions stood them well in this trying journey. In spite of having a rough sea during the voyage in the Indian Ocean, save for two or three of the boys suffering a little through sea-sickness, all looked the very picture of health. Word about their arrival was at once sent to Baba, and before he arrived the party was photographed. As soon as Baba saw them, he embraced each of the boys and the two gentlemen accompanying them. They were served with breakfast and then conducted to the Ashram.

Another surprise of the day was an application from a Bhori Muslim merchant of Bombay seeking admission to the Ashram for a boy of his own community and relationship. It was all the more remarkable since the gentleman's letter attached to the application spoke very highly of the possibilities and plan of training young boys in spirituality at Meher Ashram. The institution is thus rapidly turning into a really cosmopolitan affair. At this growing popularity of the Ashram, in the course of some remarks Baba discussed the question of building permanent premises for the Ashram as well as the Hazrat Babajan High School over the hill for up to 25,000 rupees and commencing the work in October next.

This evening, a cricket match was arranged among the Ashram boys which came off very successfully and provided a novel sight to the boys who have come from Persia.

July 24, 1927

Baba's Brothers

Behram and Adi [Baba's youngest brothers] came to stay here from Poona this morning. The latter is to be admitted in the Ashram, and the former to work as Bua Saheb's [Behramji's] assistant.

July 28, 1927

Bhori Boys

The Bhori gentleman has per his recent application brought Master Sadikali for the Ashram. The gentleman was allowed a personal inspection of the Ashram and its various departments,

and he was much pleased with all the arrangements, rules and objects of the institution. The boy was admitted in the Ashram after his guardian had duly filled up the necessary forms and agreement. Before leaving Meherabad, the gentleman earnestly wished that many from amongst his orthodox community may follow suit.

July 29, 1927

Mohon Shahane sent a Maratha boy from Kolhapur today for the Ashram but as the admission forms were not duly signed by his father, the boy was temporarily sent to the branch Ashram.

## B. DISCIPLINE

May 20, 1927

### Ashram Discipline

The Ashramites were found a few minutes late in coming to the school this morning and when this was reported to Baba, Shri ordered a fast for them all. The authorities were instructed not to give supper to the boys this evening and tea the following morning, as they had intentionally got late through loitering and playing while on the way to school.

June 7, 1927

### Novel Punishment

In spite of pain, however, Baba did not miss playing an active part in the daily programme. One of the Meher Ashram boys named Homi was reported to have disobeyed his teacher Misal and behaved mischievously. When Shri heard of it, he got the boy slapped by each of his companions in the presence of all the boys of the Ashram by way of a punishment as well as a lesson to the rest.

June 11, 1927

### The First Revolt in the Ashram

Perhaps finding the Ashram discipline to be too hard for him, Rashid K. Irani, a boy from Karachi, disregarded some of the rules. When he was taken to task for it, he declared he wished to leave the Ashram. Shri willingly consented to his withdrawal,



and ordered arrangements to be made to send him to Karachi this very evening. One of the *mandali* prepared to accompany him to Bombay and see him off safely on the train for Karachi. However at the right moment, to the surprise of all, Rashid came round by himself soliciting pardon and requested to be allowed to stay. Baba again granted his request, but took his promise on sacred oath, that he will never again repeat a similar scene and will observe all orders and instructions to the letter.

### C. BABA'S CLOSE INVOLVEMENT

May 23, 1927

Hard Work by Shri

Baba went to the Ashram twice, both in the morning and evening, and worked for nearly six hours there in arranging and improving the various details of the institution.

The newly arranged Gujarati section in the school was opened today and as previously appointed, Chanji and Padri assumed the duties of teachers in these two new classes, the fifth and the sixth Gujarati, respectively.

Dhake, who had been home on Sunday, resumed his post this morning in time, but after seven, he was marked by Baba going towards the house. Shri caused him to be called back and conveyed to him that it was imperative that strict punctuality be observed in the school affairs; that before the school began at 7:30, he should personally see that everything was quite ready and in order; all the timetables, boards, etc., must be in their proper places before the school began.

A note was written to Adi at Ahmednagar under Shri's instructions to arrange to supply three blackboards and some other necessary things for the school, with this special order, "Make a record by supplying these things before this evening." During the school hours from today, Baba's seat was removed to the principal's office.

June 1, 1927

Persian Tutions Commenced

The parcel of new Persian books from Bombay was opened this morning when Shri personally sorted them out along with the old ones already brought into the Ashram by Rustom. The latter was also appointed to teach Persian grammar three hours

every week to the boys concerned. Similarly Rao Saheb [Kai-khushru Afseri] was instructed to coach the boys in Persian text for one hour every day. As a further example as to how deeply Shri takes interest in even minor affairs here, the need of an office boy for the principal's office did not escape his attention, and Shankernath was duly fixed up for this work.

June 16, 1927

Joint Prayer

The following couplet was composed by Baba to be jointly recited by the Ashram boys daily at the appointed hours:

Hari, Paramatman, Allah,  
Ahuramazd, God, Yazdan, Hu.

It was raining very heavily all through the night, and the *mandali* were put to great inconvenience by shifting their bedding from corner to corner through the leakage in the roof. Even in the morning it was only when Baba sent some umbrellas that the *mandali* could go to the school for duties, but they were severely reproached by Shri for the slight delay. However, the school was opened as late as eight o'clock this morning as the Ashram boys were conducted down the hill, each under the cover of an umbrella. In the course of stray remarks, Baba conveyed an explanation on rain in its origin.

June 17, 1927

Bua Saheb and Pendu were severely taken to task by Baba on account of a tile accidentally getting dislodged and falling inside the Ashram hall, causing slight injury to one of the boys.

June 18, 1927

In spite of the apparent purpose of enjoying a quiet day all by himself in coming over the hill, Baba formed a nice plan for the Ashram. In view of so many boys who are expected to join the Ashram, instead of spending a large sum in building new premises near the existing Ashram in the bungalow, Shri discussed the question of removing the institution over the hill and utilizing the big tank premises. Necessary and suitable alterations to the same were then decided for, and Dr. Ghani was instructed to carry out some of the work.

## D. ACTIVITIES—MISCELLANEOUS

May 17, 1927

## Curriculum

The meeting of the school teachers and workers duly came off at the appointed hour at eight this morning, and the following matters were decided after prolonged discussions:

1. In view of the different castes and creeds of boys that are already in the Ashram, it is advisable to have a common language as a medium of instruction in the school. And so, after the fourth English and onwards, English is to be the common medium of instruction here.
2. Only the Persian and the Sanskrit are to be taught as second languages.
3. For the Optional in the School Leaving examination, all students must take "English General" as optional.
4. In the classes below the fourth English, the medium of instruction to be in Gujarati, Marathi and Urdu vernaculars.

And according to these resolutions a Gujarati class was also arranged, as for so long Marathi was the only vernacular medium of instruction here, and Padri was appointed as a teacher for this new class.

May 24, 1927

## Library

At 2:30 in the afternoon, Shri sent for Rustom, Chanji and Dhake at the Ashram to make a selection of books for the Ashram library from the lot that Rustom had brought from his house to be presented to the Ashram recently. This selection committee was greatly surprised to find that there were already about 200 books in the library on many different subjects, and were no less impressed with the fine arrangement there. All the books were found neatly arranged in different sections under respective labels such as religious, spiritual, historical, romantic and miscellaneous, with a complete list in a small booklet attached to each section. It took them, the selection committee, three or four hours to make the new selections and lists and arrange them in the library. In the meanwhile they were also served with tea. After the selection of the Ashram library was

over, the remaining books were brought back and added to the school library at Meherabad.

June 14, 1927

Instructions

After some discussion, Baba decided today that Rustom and Kaikhushru should accompany him at eight o'clock every night to the Ashram to serve as interpreters from the first of July, as from that day, he would commence conveying special spiritual instructions to the Ashram boys.

June 28, 1927

New Ashram Premises

A new class—seventh Gujarati—was arranged to be commenced from the first of July for the boy who was admitted into the Ashram today. Some changes in the school schedules were also made to start July 1. New books were received and distributed among the boys today. There was also a parcel of books from Mr. S. M. Desai of Navsari as a present for the Ashram library. It is a fine collection. Some of the books from this lot were added to the school library.

The work of addition and alteration to the tank premises and also the erection of extra premises on the hill for the Ashram to be removed here is now nearly completed. The stores and kitchen were removed today to the new quarters on the hill.

Baba played brilliantly in the cricket match played this evening. After the *arti*, sweets were distributed to all and Shri passed some time amongst the *mandali* playing a few games of draughts as well as talking on different subjects through usual gestures. While doing so, Shri showed much concern for the party of boys coming from Persia and the trouble and inconvenience they might have been put to through their detention at Bushire.

June 29, 1927

The *New York Times* was sent an article today about the Meher Ashram for publication.

Preparations for the removal of the Ashram over the hill are in full swing. Baba again played hockey with the boys. A quarrel took place among the Mahar boys and for the time being Baba

drove them out of Meherabad to strike home to them his displeasure.

June 30, 1927

The day was observed as a holiday in celebration of the removal of the Ashram on the hill. A few games of *atya-patya* were played the first thing in the morning near the school and then all went over the hill where milk tea was distributed.

For some time Shri conveyed interesting explanations on spiritual subjects, when again a cricket match was played before dinner. In the afternoon, all were provided with sweets and tea, and devotional songs were also recited over the hill.

July 1, 1927

Hazrat Babajan High School

Arrangements having been completed to impart secondary education according to Bombay University curriculum, the school was today named Hazrat Babajan High School. Accordingly the final timetables and rearrangements of the classes in the school were carried out by Dhake and Chanji under Baba's personal supervision.

Those boys who are not deemed fit at present to be admitted into the Ashram, but all the same are allowed to attend the school and also provided with board and lodging, used to stay in the house with the rest of the *mandali*. However, today they were separated from the *mandali* and handed over in charge of Rao Saheb. Arrangement for their stay was made in the bungalow recently vacated by the Meher Ashram boys and staff. Excepting for food, which they have to come here and take with the *mandali*, separate arrangements have been made for their bathing, playing, study, etc., according to fixed rules and timetable, very much like those in force in the Ashram proper.

Besides looking after the various arrangements that had been made in view of all these changes, Shri also participated in a game of hockey played by the Ashram boys.

July 4, 1927

Sports and Games

Baba discussed questions about sports and games this evening when the talk chiefly centered round a proposed tennis court

here. It was also decided to prepare a nice cricket ground over the hill and then call for outside teams and play big matches on suitable occasions. Drifting in the topic about the future, Baba conveyed, "I shall have to remain six months on water. When I do so, know that I will speak. I am going to lock myself up, but all the arrangements about the Ashram, etc., must be ready before I do so. There will be a spiritual outburst here. Many sages already know about it."

### Notes 2-6 Remarks by Espandiar Vesali\*

2. As far as Mr. Pakrawan [Chota Baba] is concerned, when he was in an unconscious state for the third day, the hospital happened to be empty, so I took the chance and went inside and approached him. I asked him, "Mr. Pakrawan, do you know me?" Laying in a semi-unconscious state on the bed, he opened his eyes, looked at me and said yes. I asked him, "Who am I?" He said, "You are Baba." There was a little match-stick nearby. I picked it up and showed it to him and asked, "Do you see this? What is this?" He said, "It is Baba." Whatever questions I asked him, he always said only "Baba." He saw nothing but Baba.

3. In the middle of Christian year 1928 Hazrat Babajan came to see Baba at Meherabad. Baba stood 100 metres distance away directly in front of Hazrat Babajan. Everybody came to have Babajan's *darshan*, beginning with the men. Then it was time for us, the children who were in the school, to have *darshan*. For three or four minutes we were cheek to cheek with Babajan and then *darshan* finished. Hazrat Babajan would put her cheeks next to the Prem Ashram children's cheeks, but only theirs and not the men's. She would take our faces and put our cheeks next to hers and then after a while she would let go.

4. Hazrat Babajan always refused to be called a woman. She was Father Jan.

5. In the summer season when it was very hot, Baba had us move to Toka where the climate was better. There, there are

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\* Excerpted from an interview with Esphandiar Vesali recorded by Irwin Luck and Dr. Farhad Shafa in Kashanak, Tehran, 1975.

two rivers which join each other and become one. Baba built a house called Meher Manzil there at the junction. We were all staying in rooms made out of bamboo mat. During the summer months when it was hot, we would live there in Baba's proximity. One day Baba invited all the children from the Prem Ashram into his own room. We all went and sat all around Baba's room. As we were sitting there, my attention was suddenly drawn to Baba lying on the bed. I thought to myself in my heart, "Is it true that God also sleeps?" Just as this thought entered my mind and was passing through my mind, he opened his lower eye and looked at me in such a way that no one else noticed. He looked at me for a little while and then closed his eye again just to let me know that he was awake and not asleep. He slept for another ten minutes and then got up. They brought in a gramophone and they started to play spiritual songs. After this we went back to our own rooms.

6. While we were living in the Prem Ashram, when they would serve us, the children, lunch, they would first sing this chant: Hari, Parabrahma, Allah, Ahuramazd, God, Yazdan, Hu. They would repeat it five or six times until the food would be all prepared and ready and then they would eat. Most of the time Baba himself would come and serve the food with his own hands. Whatever we wanted to eat, he would serve us with his own hands. One day Baba took some food and made five or six of us sit around him and he fed us like feeding food to babies. He would make morsels with his hands and put it in our mouths and this is how one day we had our food.



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MEHER BABA AND PREM ASHRAM BOYS, 1927





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MEHER BABA, ALI AND CHOTA BABA AT MEHERABAD, 1927



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MEHER BABA AND PREM ASHRAM BOYS AT TOKA, 1928



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CHOTA BABA AT MEHERABAD, 1928



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MEHER BABA AND MANDALI AT TOKA RIVER, 1928

