

THE SAMADHI
STAR OF INFINITY

By

Bal Natu

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THE SAMADHI



STAR OF INFINITY

THE TOMB-SHRINE
OF
AVATAR MEHER BABA

BAL NATU



THE
S A M A D H I



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THE TOMB-SHRINE
OF
AVATAR MEHER BABA

BAL NATU

SHERIAR FOUNDATION

1997

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When He Takes Over

DEDICATED
TO
THE EVER-RENEWING, EVERLASTING
GLORIOUS AND LIVELY PRESENCE
OF
THE ANCIENT ONE
IN
THE SAMADHI

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It is difficult for me adequately to express in words my

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With much love in the Eternal Beloved Avatar Meher Baba, I offer this book to the readers, and hope that it may help them in their personal relationship with THE SAMADHI * *Star of Infinity*—The Abode of the Ancient One.

Bal Natu

Meherazad
July 9, 1997

PREFACE

Some may find this an unusual book presented in an unconventional style. I would readily agree with them! It is not a chronological account of my life with Avatar Meher Baba. Instead, it is my attempt to present a theme connected with the Avatar's Samadhi that has touched my heart, and which I have allowed to flow naturally, as it came to me. In this flow, there are some personal, even trivial incidents, some historical facts, and some thoughts on profound subjects based on Baba's statements. I hope that in this open-minded, intimate "table talk," those interested may find some meaning that appeals to their hearts. But before introducing the theme of this book, I would like to share an amusing anecdote which seems, to me, relevant and appropriate:

Long ago in India, even before the invention of the gramophone, there lived a renowned singer famous for his rich, passionate, and heart-stirring voice. His renditions of classical Indian compositions - *ragas* - had thrilled the public for many years. A group of young students, following the Indian custom of those days, resided with him, hoping to imbibe his vocal skill. However, the master was very whimsical when it came to imparting instruction. Sometimes days would pass without his giving a single lesson.

Finally one impatient student hit upon a mischievous plan.

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Rising early in the morning while the teacher was sound asleep, the student would go to the *tamboura*, the large four-stringed droning instrument that sets the pitch for Indian classical music, and deliberately tune it out of key. Then he would begin to sing in a hoarse, discordant voice, mutilating whatever particular *raga* he wanted to learn. This would invariably rouse the master from his sleep, and, without even pausing to perform his morning ablutions, he would rush to the hall, seize the *tamboura*, and correct the tuning.

Seating himself, the master would begin to sing, his glorious voice pouring forth, enrapturing the students. Caught up in the spell of his own music, he would gaze tenderly at the eager faces of his pupils. "Like this, like this, my dear fellows; this is how it goes." And before long he would be explaining the various vocal subtleties and nuances of the piece, then go on to other *ragas* as well. In this way, his pupils received the precious instruction they longed for.

In sharing my thoughts about the Samadhi of Avatar Meher Baba, I may seem a little like that mischievous student, setting forth ideas which some could find "off-key." However, in my case the point is not to question the Master, Avatar Meher Baba, who is perfect and infinitely compassionate, and whose love for each one is overwhelming. But I would consider it a positive contribution if this presentation encouraged, or even provoked, my fellow wayfarers to share their own thoughts and feelings about the Samadhi of the Avatar. I am not deliberately setting out to create confusion in others, but only to relate certain salient incidents from my life with Avatar Meher Baba, and some of my feelings about that small, domed structure, the beacon on the Hill at Meherabad, His Samadhi.

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Writing about my experiences with Meher Baba and His Samadhi is not an easy task for me—I fear it may seem to be an act of self-exhibition. But I feel that not to do so would show a lack of gratitude for the blessings that Baba has showered on me. So treat this as a sharing, in a spirit of camaraderie, rooted in the Avatar's unbinding love. It is a totally personal presentation, revealing the limits of my understanding in my relationship with the Avatar. The working of the Avatar's renewing, guiding presence within each one is a Mystery beyond mysteries revealing unexpected surprises, and I am ever willing to flow with its movements inside of me.

Every individual's relationship with the Avatar is an absolutely unique and uniquely personal matter. I have come to feel this more and more deeply over the years: one has to find one's own way of relating to Baba, the Ancient One, so that He becomes the nucleus of one's life. When this happens, then the individual naturally comes to the conviction, verified by his or her own experiences, that the Avatar is definitely watching over us, lovingly listening to our words, our pleas, our complaints, our questions, and responding in loving and personal ways. There are no words to express the relief one shall feel when such a relationship is bestowed as a gift from the God-Man.

A relationship with Meher Baba is not a static attainment, and the discovery of one's "personal center" should not become an article of dogma. When I speak about a "personal center," I am speaking, in my own case, of the Samadhi and of a particular feature of Baba's form, which possess, for me, deep, personal, and perhaps unutterable meaning. For many years, during those times when I was in Baba's physical presence, my attention would often

P R E F A C E

center on the magnificent radiance of His forehead, and this also became the focus of my recollections of His exquisite form when we were apart.

Lately, however, I find my musings drawn not just to Baba's forehead, but to that mystic Avataric mark between His beautifully arched eyebrows, which symbolizes, for me, the mystery of the Incarnation—Infinite God assuming finite form and merging back into Formlessness. This spot is the "Drop" that contains the Ocean of His presence. I have come to think of this mark as the "Star of Infinity." For me, Meher Baba's physical form and His final resting place, the Samadhi, have now become one; to visit the Samadhi is to have Meher Baba's physical *darshan*. And within the Samadhi itself, I am now mindful of that luminous Star of Infinity; the Center of my inner and outer life.

One of the key words in this book is "manifestation," and it is especially connected with, and limited to, Meher Baba's "public manifestation" as declared by Him in February 1954. This subject is dealt with in some detail in the chapter entitled "The Public Manifestation."

This book has been written mostly for those who already know of Meher Baba and His close disciples, but it may be of interest to other seekers of God as well. This presentation should be treated as one of the innumerable facets of the Avatar's presence in the heart of one of His followers.

The first part of the book consists of reflections on the Avatar's Samadhi, intended to be an informal, intimate, heart-to-heart talk with Baba's dear ones. In the second section, I have shared my thoughts on the significance of the Avatar's form and

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name. The succeeding part is a collection of several of Meher Baba's messages and sayings. His words reveal divine truths. These are a few that I have randomly picked, as it were, from a bowl of priceless pearls. At the book's end, some information on how to reach the Samadhi is given for those who have not traveled to Meherabad and wish to visit it.

I will conclude this preface by relating an incident from the life of one of the Perfect Masters who had a profound sense of humor. His discourses and messages were most enlightening and heartwarming. When he became very ill, some of his close followers were inwardly compelled to ask him what should be written on his tombstone. The Master smiled broadly and said, "I want just one sentence for my epitaph."

"What?" they eagerly asked.

The Master replied, "Beware of my followers!"

With this sentence the Master smiled and breathed his last.

For me, this brief story has a most profound, personal message: unless one feels deep within one's heart the spiritual truths revealed by the Master, the intellectual words of his followers mean nothing. So one should try to feel Meher Baba's words in one's own heart.

I beseech Meher Baba to help me to share with the readers what I feel within my heart about Him as the Ancient One, dispensing His love and compassion through the Samadhi on Meherabad Hill. Jai Baba!



THE INTERIOR OF THE SAMADHI

PART ONE

AT THE ENTRANCE

THE AVATAR'S HUMOR

"I AM HERE"

THE UNIVERSAL DOT

THE PUBLIC MANIFESTATION

AWAKE IN THE SAMADHI

PRAYER: ACCESS TO THE DIVINE SATELLITE

THE LINK ALIVE WITH LOVE.

THE UNIVERSAL FACE

AT THE ENTRANCE

I AM NEVER BORN, I NEVER DIE.

YET EVERY MOMENT I TAKE BIRTH AND

UNDERGO DEATH ALTHOUGH I AM PRESENT

EVERYWHERE ETERNALLY IN MY FORMLESS INFINITE

STATE, FROM TIME TO TIME I TAKE FORM. THIS

TAKING OF FORM AND LEAVING IT IS TERMED MY

PHYSICAL BIRTH AND DEATH.¹

MEHER BABA

MEHER BABA, BORN ON FEBRUARY 25, 1894, in Pune (formerly Poona), India, first came to the property now known as Meherabad in May of 1923. This property, owned by one of His close disciples, lay near the village of Arangaon in the district of Ahmednagar. It was, and is, divided by a railway line: the land to the east of the tracks was called Lower Meherabad; to the west there is a hill, which came to be known as Upper Meherabad. Near the railway lines was a stone structure which had been used as a post office by the military during the First World War. It consisted of one long room with a verandah on the

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outside. It was one of the few buildings left in relatively good repair, and Meher Baba decided to stay there with His close disciples.

Baba resided at Meherabad for several years, engaged in various activities connected with His Avataric work. In April of 1927, while He was strolling on Upper Meherabad Hill, Baba paused and designated a specific spot where He wanted a large pit to be dug. In retrospect, this was one of the most significant moments in the Avatar's ministry, for this spot was destined to be His final resting place, later known as the Samadhi, the Tomb-Shrine, and a future place of world pilgrimage.

After the pit was dug, an improvised structure was built above it, covering a larger area. As one went inside, this pit lay towards the rear of the structure's interior. The pit itself was six feet long, six feet deep, and four feet across. Later, when Baba expressed the wish to do seclusion work here, it was lined with cement, a *farsi* (stone) floor was laid, and several steep steps were built that descended to the bottom of the pit. With these changes, it now resembled a crypt. No one at the time could have guessed its singular importance.

The work of constructing the crypt began in July and was completed by mid-August 1927. Since then Baba used to visit it and on some occasions would retire there. In November, He began to observe a prolonged fast. On December 20th, He entered the crypt for an unbroken stay that lasted until February 26, 1928.

Before too long the improvised structure above the crypt was replaced with a structure built of soft stone and lime. There was a door on the south side for attendants and visitors, who were only rarely admitted. Each of the three remaining walls had a window,

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and outside the east window a long rectangular platform was built of stone. Not long afterward, five small booths were erected on the platform. At various times these served as meditation cells, which were later dismantled in the early seventies.

In the early '30s the government ordered the post office to be torn down, as it was infringing on property legally held by the railroad's right-of-way. In 1938 the structure enclosing the crypt was demolished, and the more substantial structure that we see today was erected. The stones for this new building were taken from the dismantled post office. Thus, Baba's first stay in the post office at Lower Meherabad was linked to the Samadhi; it is as though the Samadhi has become the divine post office of the Avatar.

Baba had expressed the wish that a dome be constructed above the new structure. This dome was built on a circular platform which elevated it a foot above the level of the roof. At the top of it there was a spire, or finial. At the corners of the roof, squaring the dome, were placed models of a temple, a mosque, a cross, and a sacred fire urn—the symbols of four of the world's great religions: Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism. The dome sometimes reminds me of a *stupa*, as though silently representing Buddhism. Over the door a stone plaque was mounted, inscribed with the words "Mastery in Servitude," the motto given by Meher Baba Himself in the mid-'20s. When the building was completed, it was no longer referred to as the crypt, but came to be known as the "Dome."

In 1938 a number of Western women were staying in the Meher Retreat on the Hill at Meherabad. It was the destiny of one of these, Helen Dahm, a famous Swiss artist, to paint the murals

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on the uneven stone surface of the inner walls and the interior of the dome. She also painted the interior of the crypt with a deer, a swan, and flowers, including a trailing rose bush that climbs to the window ledge of the central north window. Inside this window, touching the pane, she installed a large piece of plywood cut to fit the window's size, on which she painted a portrait of Baba, the trailing roses in bloom at His feet.

Baba expressed His appreciation of the murals but did not indicate anything about their spiritual significance. After Helen returned to Switzerland, Baba had the plywood removed, leaving the window opening vacant, and thus it remained for many years. In the meantime, Baba asked Rano Gayley to paint a picture of Him, dressed in a white *sadra* in a seated pose, over the portrait which Helen had done on the plywood. This painting of Rano's is now in the Rahuri cabin at Lower Meherabad. At some point, Rano asked Baba whether He wanted another painting in the north window to replace the one Helen had done. Baba said, "No, not now—later on."

After Baba put aside His visible form in January 1969, a framed photograph of Him, taken by one of His South Indian lovers, was placed on the ledge of the north window, where it remained for over twenty-four years. At the same time, plans were made to replace the photograph with a full-length painting as Helen had originally designed. Mehera selected a photograph of Baba taken by Elizabeth Patterson in Portofino, Italy, in 1933, which was then copied by an artist from America, Charlie Morton. Mehera, Rano, and Mani, as well as other *mandali*, gave him suggestions over the years as he worked on the painting.

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Beginning in 1990, the murals in the tomb were restored, and on March 21, 1993, the photograph in the north window was removed and kept nearby in Baba's cabin, and Charlie's painting was installed in its stead. Somehow, for me, it seems significant that this installation took place on the equinox, when night and day are equal, mirroring the event on January 31, 1969, when Baba's body was placed in the crypt while the sun set in the west and the full moon rose in the east. Mani later wrote of the installation of the new painting in the Samadhi, "I felt that the Samadhi murals at last were complete, with the figures on the walls moving towards the Figure of the Beloved before them!"²

In 1954, Baba led a large group of His lovers up the Hill to His future resting place and instructed them to bow down at the threshold. The bare crypt inside and the steps leading down into it were clearly visible. One day during the Sahavas of 1955, Baba allowed His lovers to come inside and circumambulate the crypt; Baba Himself stood silently inside the structure for some time, in the left rear corner. After Baba came out, He began an informal conversation with the group of His lovers gathered on the Hill, during which He conveyed that after a period of seventy-five years, this little structure would be the center of world pilgrimage.

Over the years Baba referred to the Dome, now known as the Tomb-Shrine or Samadhi, as His final resting place. On Friday, January 31, 1969, Meher Baba suffered severe spasms in His room at Meherazad and, at about 12:15 P.M., closed His eyes. His breathing stopped. In this way, formless God expressed the wish that the Avatar remove His physical cloak from the outer

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vision of humanity. By evening of the same day, the Avatar's body was taken in an ambulance to Meherabad and laid to rest in the crypt beneath the Dome, according to Baba's express wish. The sun and the moon both stood on the horizon at sunset as the Eternal Beloved Avatar Meher Baba's body was lowered in the crypt. It was placed on a carpet spread over a wooden plank. His body was wrapped in a white sheet, His head bound in a checkered scarf, and a wrapping of soft pink cloth was used to frame His face. Garlands, along with roses from Meherazad, were placed on Baba's chest. A pillow was laid beneath His head, so that His face was plainly visible to all who entered the Dome.

According to Baba's oft-repeated instruction, a recording of the song "Begin the Beguine" was played seven times near His body, first at Meherazad and later at Meherabad. Meanwhile, Adi K. Irani, Baba's secretary, was working tirelessly to inform Baba's lovers the world over of what had happened, and many began flocking to Meherabad. After some discussion among the doctors and Baba's close disciples, it was decided that Baba's body could be made available for *darshan* to His lovers for a longer period, and His lovers continued to come from far and near. Eventually it was decided that the crypt would be sealed after seven days—at 12:15 P.M. on February 7, 1969.

During this week when Meher Baba's body lay in the crypt, hundreds and hundreds of His lovers came to Meherabad to have their last physical glimpse of their dearest Lord. Later, many of these people related incredible experiences. The predominant feeling was of the Avatar's divine presence suffused with His overwhelming Love. The *darshan* continued day and night.

A T T H E E N T R A N C E

I learned of this news on the morning of February 1 while I was in the school where I taught in my hometown of Kurdawadi. I met the principal and told him that I had to leave immediately and did not know when I would be able to resume my duties. Then I went home and quickly grabbed a change of clothes before leaving for Meherabad. I reached there by the afternoon. Slowly, I made my way through the crowds to the Samadhi, first bowing down at the threshold and in silence descending the steps. With unutterable feelings I touched Baba's feet wrapped in cloth and gazed at His face, so serene yet so endearing. For much of the following seven days, I stayed near the Samadhi, often gazing in at Baba's face from just outside the door. Baba looked peacefully withdrawn, as though in deep sleep. His beautiful, flashing eyes were closed, but His countenance was as luminous as ever, and my eyes were drawn to the divine radiance of His forehead.

In the years that followed, I pondered the periodic descent of God in Human form as the Avatar, in this Age as Meher Baba. At some point the sight of Baba's luminous face and the radiance of His forehead came back forcefully to me and I began to feel strongly that the Avatar's body holds paramount spiritual importance, particularly His face, which was the only part of His body in the crypt visible to those who came for His last *darshan*. But before I share my views on this subject, especially on the profound significance of His forehead, a digression to a few events from Meher Baba's earlier life seems appropriate.

* * *

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IN MAY OF 1913 young Merwan (Meher Baba) was bicycling home from Deccan College when an elderly Muslim woman, Hazrat Babajan—one of the five Perfect Masters (*Qutub*) of the Age—beckoned to him from beneath a neem tree. As he approached, she rose to enfold the young man in her loving embrace. It was their first meeting, and though they did not exchange a single word, it marked the beginning of a nine-month period which was to transform Merwan's life. During this time, he would visit the old woman often, sitting silently by her under the neem tree, sometimes late into the night.

Then, in January of 1914, Babajan planted the divine kiss on Merwan's forehead, between His eyebrows. This conferred on Merwan the Infinite bliss of Self-realization. Now nothing existed for Him but His Ancient One state of being God the Infinite.

Upon experiencing Himself as Infinite and Alone, Merwan did not drop His body, as generally happens with God-realized souls, because it was His destiny to function as the Avatar of the Age. Though totally absorbed in the Beyond, His link with His physical form was retained. Oblivious to creation, His acts and movements during these nine months were like those of an automaton. Babajan had drowned Merwan completely in the Infinity of His Godhood.

More than a year later, in December 1915, Merwan felt intuitively drawn to visit Shirdi. There, on a dirt road, He prostrated Himself at the feet of Sai Baba, the Head of the spiritual hierarchy (*Qutub-e-Irshad*), who was walking back to the *masjid* where he would pass the day. When Merwan lifted His forehead from the Master's feet and stood face-to-face with him, Sai Baba's illustrious

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and penetrating eyes looked deeply into Merwan's, and Sai Baba spontaneously exclaimed, "*Parvardigar!*"—God Almighty, the Sustainer. This was a mystical declaration proclaiming that God the Infinite had descended into human form as the Avatar, and through it, Sai Baba inwardly directed Merwan to *Sadguru* Upasni, whose divinely ordained duty was to give Merwan the Knowledge of His being the Avatar of the Age.

Sadguru Upasni, who had himself realized God by the grace of Sai Baba, was staying in a Khandoba Temple only two miles away. Upasni—or Maharaj, as Meher Baba endearingly called him—was of a *jalali* (fiery) nature. He was usually naked except for a bit of gunny sack worn at his waist, and he lived in dirty surroundings, allowing no one to clean the temple.

As Merwan approached him, Maharaj rose from the steps of the temple, picked up a small, pointed stone, and flung it at Merwan with great force. It struck Him on His forehead between the eyebrows, exactly where Babajan had bestowed the kiss of Infinity. Some drops of blood trickled down His forehead, but Merwan continued to walk towards Maharaj, who kissed the wound lovingly and then embraced Him.

Meher Baba has described this event as follows:

The mark of that injury is still on My forehead. But that blow from Maharaj was the stroke of *dnyan* (*Marefat of Haqiqat*, or divine knowledge). Figuratively, Maharaj had started to rouse Me from "sound sleep." But in sound sleep man is unconscious, while I, being superconscious, was wide awake in sound sleep. With that stroke, Maharaj had begun to help Me return to ordinary consciousness of the realm of Illusion.³

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The blow of that stone ushered in the regaining of Merwan's consciousness of Creation. In either December of 1921 or early January of 1922, nearly seven years after their initial meeting, Merwan was alone in a hut with Maharaj in Sakori, near Shirdi. Maharaj folded his hands to Merwan and declared, "Merwan, You are Adi Shakti (the Primal Power)! You are the Avatar!" Merwan bowed down to Maharaj respectfully, and the two embraced. Thus, Maharaj helped establish Merwan fully in His status as the Avatar of the Age, assuming the office of Head of the spiritual hierarchy.

The mark between His eyebrows represents the drowning of Merwan in the Infinity of His Being and His re-emergence as the Avatar of the Age. For me, the entire Samadhi is charged with the Avatar's divine presence, magnified from this point between His eyebrows—the point of drowning and re-emergence of His Infinite Divinity—the *Sat-Chit-Anand* state of *Sahaj Samadhi* in which the Ancient One, functioning as the Avatar of the Age, is simultaneously conscious of God as God and Illusion as Illusion. I call this mark the "Star of Infinity." The Sun of the Beyond cannot be gazed upon directly, so out of compassion the Sun becomes the Star in the form of the Avatar, who dispenses God's limitless love to awaken the hearts of humanity.

* * *

BY DIVINE COINCIDENCE, February 7, 1969, the day when Meher Baba's physical body was finally covered, also happened to be His birthday according to the Zoroastrian calendar. So in spite of His lovers' grief, there was a celebration at 5:00 A.M. as some of His

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close women disciples garlanded His body and those outside repeated, "Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai!" It was as though these words were conveying the Avatar's message:

I never come and I never go.

I am present everywhere.

Isn't it wonderful that I never leave?

Just past noon the Universal Prayer (now known as the Master's Prayer) was recited for the final time while the "Universal Face" was still visible, and "Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai" was called out three times. Then a sizable wooden covering of fine teak wood was lowered slowly over Baba's form. Thus His form was encased and remains untouched. Flowers were laid upon the wooden covering, and the crypt was reverently filled with earth. Over it, flat pieces of stone (*farsi*) were temporarily laid in place at the level of the floor.

On Sunday, November 14, 1971, a slab of white Italian marble—lovingly donated by Rano Gayley and arranged for by Baba's close ones in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina—was laid, bearing the inscription:

ETERNAL BELOVED

AVATAR
MEHER BABA

FEBRUARY 25 1894 - JANUARY 31 1969

I HAVE COME

NOT TO TEACH

BUT TO AWAKEN

THE SAMADHI

The last part of the above inscription was one of the utterances made by Meher Baba on July 9, 1925, before He began observing silence on July 10. Baba had also chosen this particular message to be highlighted in a film script written under His direction in the early '30s. These words still resound in the Samadhi. He is lovingly inviting each one, "Come inside and I shall awaken your heart to the love of God."

Only now with the benefit of hindsight is it obvious to me how profoundly significant Baba's final resting place has always been. At the Samadhi of Avatar Meher Baba, His call ever rings in silence, "Come all unto Me." Here He waits impatiently for His dear ones. Even casual visitors who have the privilege of paying their respects to Divine Love Personified, the Eternal Beloved, Avatar Meher Baba, receive His silent blessings. His compassion is unconditional.

On the evening of the seventh of February 1969, however, as I stood by the door of the Samadhi, innumerable questions flooded my mind. Where is that exquisitely beautiful form of the Formless One, symbolizing the Infinity of His Being? Where is He now? What, now, is my relationship with the Ancient One who assumed a human form as Meher Baba?

THE AVATAR'S HUMOR

THE HUMOR OF THE DIVINE LOVE-GAME IS THAT
THE ONE WHO IS SOUGHT IS HIMSELF THE SEEKER.

BEFORE I MET MY BELOVED IN UNION, I LOST
EVERYTHING—EGO, MIND, AND LOWER
CONSCIOUSNESS—BUT THANK GOD, I DID NOT LOSE
MY SENSE OF HUMOR. THAT IS WHY I APPEAR
AMONGST YOU ... ON YOUR LEVEL ... I CAN
AUTOMATICALLY ADAPT MYSELF TO ALL KINDS OF
PEOPLE AND MEET THEM WHERE THEY ARE.¹

MEHER BABA

WITH GOD'S GRACE, I had the great good fortune to meet Avatar Meher Baba in person in November, 1944. At the very first sight, I found His presence to be so full of love and so overpowering that all speculation about His spiritual status, whether He was a saint or a God-realized person, became irrelevant.

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I did not immediately accept Him as the Avatar—Formless God descended into human form. But in a most natural manner, my feelings about His status progressed through a series of changes: I went from regarding Him as a good man to taking Him to be a great man. Then I came to recognize Him as a true saint, and still later, as a Perfect Master. In the end, thanks to Meher Baba's unconditional compassion and patience, my heart was awakened to His true status as the Avatar, and I accepted Him as the Ancient One. When God comes amongst humanity, on this earth as the Avatar, Infinite Consciousness manifests with an express purpose—to quicken the spirit of the whole creation. So Meher Baba's Avataric life is the "active functioning" of Formless God through finite human form.

The joy and bliss experienced in Meher Baba's physical presence will ever remain indescribable. How can one explain the presence that is at once overpowering, and yet not the least oppressive or domineering? In Baba's profound purity the whole burden of self-identification seemed to fall away, and the mental mechanism of assessment and comparison was stilled. The result was a feeling of lightness and trust in Him.

Whenever I used to gaze upon Baba's face, it would sometimes appear that the entire drama of humanity, with all its joys and woes, was being expressed through its features. Along with the bliss that He radiated, there was a sense of detachment, and when He was visibly suffering, there was an expression of compassion.

In my inner journey with Baba, through all the changes in my life, my longing to be in His physical presence became more and more intense. In July 1948, through a letter written under Baba's

THE AVATAR'S HUMOR

direction, I was permitted to visit Him during school vacations or whenever I was granted leave, provided I was also free from any family responsibilities. Many times I took advantage of this blessed opportunity to be with Baba, and yet, somehow, I took this privilege for granted and did not realize its deep significance or regard it with the profound gratitude with which I should have.

My last stay with Baba was at Meherazad in November 1968. Before leaving, I folded my hands to Baba, who was sitting in His chair in the corner of Mandali Hall, and asked His permission to go. Baba nodded His consent and raised His right hand in a gesture that meant, "Be happy." As I reached the door, however, Baba called me back, and with a tender intimate smile, He looked at me and gestured, "Kiss Me, then go." At the time, I never imagined that He would soon veil His body from our sight, but Baba knew and, in His loving compassion, He saw to it that my last farewell should be sealed with a kiss.

That touch of my lips on the Avatar's cheek became the everlasting wellspring of my love for Him. In later years, when I went through some physically and emotionally trying times, that kiss sustained me and helped nourish my ever-increasing trust in Him as the Ancient One. Such is the grace of the Avatar!

In the last week of January 1969, I received a postcard from Meherazad conveying Beloved Baba's love on my birthday. There was a casual mention that Baba's health was not at all good, but I did not ever dream that He was seriously ill. I was still looking forward to being with Baba again in Pune during my summer school break in April-May. But Baba suddenly passed away from our sight, and His body was lowered into the crypt at Meherabad

THE SAMADHI

and covered with a wooden case. This opened a totally new chapter in my relationship with Him.

After the crypt in which Baba's physical form rests was sealed, the structure covering it was referred to by many of His lovers as the Tomb, and by some of His Hindu lovers as the Samadhi. The use of these words saddened me.

Samadhi is a word that has numerous meanings in Indian languages, usually denoting a trance or a state of deep absorption in which the individual is oblivious to his or her external surroundings. Deep sleep is sometimes even jokingly referred to as "going into *samadhi*," *Samadhi* also generally refers to the place where a loved one has been buried, or to the shrine where someone's memory is honored and where, perhaps, their ashes have been interred. It did not seem to me that this word was appropriate to Baba's state in any of these meanings, because Baba could not be said to have slipped off into some final trance or ceased to exist. His universal spiritual work, I believe, continues unimpeded from the top of Meherabad Hill.

Yet, as uncomfortable as I was with the word *Samadhi*, "Tomb" seemed even more objectionable. Literally, a tomb is a place where someone who has died is buried, and Meher Baba, to me, is alive and active as the Avatar of the Age. How, then, can the place where the body that housed Reality is be called a tomb?

I did not accept that Meher Baba had "died" in the usual sense of the word. I had read an expression that seemed far more apt—Meher Baba, for His own spiritual reasons, had chosen "to put a veil" over His physical body. I recalled a statement Meher Baba had made in the '30s: "I am not limited to this form. I use it

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like a garment to make Myself visible to you, and I communicate with you. I am Infinite Consciousness."

So when talking with pilgrims visiting Meherabad, I would go to great lengths to avoid using either of the words "Tomb" or *Samadhi* and would instead say things like, "Have you been up the Hill? Have you offered your homage to Baba?" No one suspected that I was deliberately avoiding the use of the word "Tomb." This went on for quite some time until finally Baba had pity on me and used His supreme sense of humor to pull me out of my hesitation to use this word.

I can best relate the change that transpired within me during the early '70s by putting it in the form of a dialogue with Baba. However, I want to make it very clear that what follows is not based on a vision of Meher Baba or an actual conversation I had with Him. This is just a way of sharing my thoughts and feelings on this subject

"Baba," I complained, "why do You allow people to use the word 'Tomb' for the place where You are so alive? It is the place from which Your work is being carried out most naturally as ordained by You."

And I felt Baba asking me in turn, "What's wrong with the word 'Tomb'?"

"What's wrong with it! What's right with it? I don't think a worse or more misrepresentative word could be suggested! Are You not so alive, so active here in dispensing Your unbinding love? So how can this place be called the Tomb?"

"All right! If you don't like the word 'Tomb', what other word can you suggest that would be better?"

"The Center of centers! The Source of *Sahaj Samadhi*!" I answered, wondering how these words came to me! I felt You

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chuckle deep within me at my offhand reply.

"Big words and big ideas, but rather clumsy!" You continued, "Don't you understand that the use of this particular word is one of My ways of simultaneously concealing and revealing My divinity to those who visit Me here?"

I remained silent for a while. You said, "Tell Me, were you not present when the English newspaper was read out to me?"

"Yes."

"Do you not read the newspaper now?"

"Sometimes," I replied, wondering at the question.

"Then you must have come across phrases like, 'The UNO [United Nations Organization] has decided such and such'" (This is an acronym used by the Indian English dailies.)

And I recalled that when a newspaper was read aloud to Baba by one of the *mandali*, UNO would be pronounced as "you know."

"You understand that 'UNO' doesn't mean 'you know,'" You continued. "It means the United Nations Organization."

"Yes, right," I agreed.

"In the same way, 'Tomb' is not just a word; it's an acronym—T.O.M.B."

It was no trouble for me to recognize the last two letters of the acronym as standing for "Meher Baba," but what about the first two letters, T and O?

Then in a flash it came to me: T.O.! Timeless One! "Timeless One Meher Baba!" I exclaimed.

I felt Meher Baba's charming smile, indicating that I had guessed correctly, yet I asked, "You're not just humoring me, are You, Baba?"

THE AVATAR'S HUMOR

"Why should I? Go inside the Tomb and see for yourself!"

I did so and was immediately struck by the first words, shining with gold leaf, engraved at the top of the white marble slab: "Eternal Beloved Avatar Meher Baba." That is—"Timeless One Meher Baba."

I felt that I had received the answer to my question. Avatar Meher Baba's methods in reaching the hearts of His lovers and cleansing even their smallest doubts about Him are matchless. His responses to the needs of His dear ones are offered in the most personal way so that they can be wholeheartedly accepted. He is able to do this owing to His infinite sense of humor. I now use the word "Tomb" in conversation, but with what a difference! Meher Baba, the Timeless Avatar, is ever-present there.

" I A M H E R E "

SINCE THE MID-'40S, despite my religious upbringing and strong interest in doing social work, Meher Baba continued to bring me, in a very natural way, into His closer inner contact. More and more I was drawn to Him, and He indirectly responded to the feeble call of my heart by providing me with opportunities to be in the company of His disciples—Hindus, Muslims, and Parsis.

They freely shared with me the incredible experiences of their lives with Baba. I was immensely impressed by the conviction they had of Baba's Divinity. Some had faced many difficult situations in their lives, including opposition from their friends and even family members. But this did not deter them from following Beloved Baba, whose love was so unconditional that all, in spite of their different religious backgrounds, social status, unconventional habits, or even mistakes they might have made, were accepted without reservation. I had read the life stories of other Masters, and yet what I was discovering here, in Baba, seemed more dynamic, intimate, and all-encompassing than anything I had previously read or heard.

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It was only natural that this prompted in me an even greater desire to read and hear more and more about Baba's divinely human and humanly divine life. In the '40s, there were biographies of Baba in both Marathi and English. I also eagerly devoured the copies of *Meher Baba Journal* which were available, each of which contained an enlightening discourse given by Meher Baba on a profound spiritual subject. A year or two later, Baba's discourses were collected and published in five volumes.

Although I had some familiarity with spiritual literature, I had never come across such utterly logical and compelling explanations on so many different subjects, such as reincarnation and *karma*, *sanskaras*, *Maya*, meditation, the formation of the ego—nor had any other books ever explained in such detail the subtle distinctions between the different states of those on the spiritual Path and of those who were God-realized.

I got into the habit of keeping a small notebook with me, and I would write down passages from the *Discourses* or Baba's messages which particularly appealed to me. Then, during the day, whenever I could find time to, I would read and reread these passages. You might even call this a "practice" of mine which helped me feel that my connection to Baba was maintained no matter where He was physically. Not only that, but many a time I found that the solution to any problem I was facing at that moment was revealed to me in my reading. The passages I copied became a sort of guide, giving me understanding and practical direction in my life—an extension of Baba's internal support and help.

Because of the importance such messages had in my attempt to sustain and strengthen the link I felt with Meher Baba, I wish to

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share three quotes from the *Discourses* at this point. They are lengthy, but they, along with some others, were mainly responsible for shaping my way of relating to Baba, the Avatar. I have not changed any of the words, but have taken the liberty of underlining phrases that are of special significance to me.

Supreme Claim of One's Own Master

Since the Master is, for the aspirant, a symbol of the supreme Self in all, the problem of true adjustment to the Master appears to him to be the same as realizing his own inner divinity and arriving at true adjustment with all other forms of the supreme Self. Through his allegiance to the Master, the aspirant achieves conscious appreciation of the fundamental unity of these problems

The supreme claim of the Master cannot be challenged or limited even by the spontaneous reverence that the disciple is bound to feel for Masters other than the one who has accepted him. All Perfect Masters are one in their consciousness, and it is absurd to imagine any grades between them. Though one Master is not greater than another, the disciple must, for his own purposes, place the claim of his own Master over and above the claims of other Masters—until he transcends the domain of duality and realizes the unity of all Life. Mental energy would be dissipated unless there arose a supremely imperative claim among the many conflicting claims of life.

Exclusive concentration upon one Master is therefore usually indispensable for the gathering up of the dispersed mental energy of the disciple.¹

—Meher Baba

"I A M H E R E"

Personal Meditation

Personal meditation is directed towards those who are spiritually perfect. ...A suitable object for personal meditation is a living or past Perfect Master or the Avatar. It is important that the object of meditation be spiritually perfect....

Appreciation of the divinity perceived in the Master gives rise to forms of meditation in which the aspirant constantly and strenuously thinks of the Master as being an embodiment of qualities like universal love or complete detachment, egolessness or steadfastness, infinite knowledge or selfless action....

Dwelling upon the qualities of the Master often facilitates concentration on the form of the Master. In this type of meditation, the aspirant is aware of the spiritual Perfection of the Master; and he spontaneously fixes his attention upon the form of the Master, without analyzing his spiritual Perfection into any of its component qualities....

Complete identification of the Master with the spiritual ideal is responsible for removing such barriers as might exist between the aspirant and the Master. This gives rise to the release of unrestrained love for the Master and leads to the meditation of the heart, which consists in constant thinking about the Master with an uninterrupted flow of limitless love.²

—Meher Baba

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The Living Link with the Master

Once the aspirant experiences the bliss of the *darshan* of a Master, that sight gets carved on his mind. And even when he is unable to establish frequent personal contact, his mind turns to the Master again and again in an effort to understand his significance. This process of establishing mental contact with the Master is essentially different from merely imaginative revival of past incidents....

As he is one with Eternity, the Master is beyond time and all limitations of time.... To love the Master is to love all, not merely symbolically but actually; for what the Master receives on the inner planes of consciousness he spiritualizes and distributes. Thus he not only strengthens the personal links that the disciples may have with him but also gives them the privilege of sharing his divine work.³

—Meher Baba

I do not mean to suggest that because of my reading Meher Baba's messages and discourses, I had no doubts or conflicts. It took many years before I was able to happily accept my inability to resolve questions I had about the breaking of Baba's silence and His status as the Avatar. I gradually came to realize that these questions could only be answered by the heart, not the mind. But that's a different story. Regardless of my mind's questions, my heart was increasingly drawn to Baba, and I tried to do what I could to feel His omnipresence.

Although I had quit my job as a schoolteacher to join Baba in

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His New Life, He, for reasons known only to Him, unexpectedly instructed me to return to my home and continue with my job. Instead of having me travel with Him, Baba ordered me to contact a certain person in the Himalayas and give him a special message from Baba. After completing this task, I was able to resume my teaching. A year later, at a meeting in Mahabaleshwar in which Baba again gave some of us a choice to join Him in the New Life, I, with all honesty, opted to stay with Him in the Old life. I continued with my job and because of this, I was physically apart from Baba during much of my life. At such times I would keep track of Baba's travels, which I easily could with the information I received from the *mandali* in correspondence, and I would try to picture Him wherever He might be. This helped me a great deal to feel His presence, in the way that rereading His messages did. Even when reading Baba quotes from my small notebook, I would visually imagine Baba wherever He was, so my remembrance was intimately associated with His physical form.

In 1948 Baba had given me permission to stay with Him whenever conveniently possible. I availed myself of this offer of grace, especially after He concluded His New Life in 1951.

When Baba veiled His visible physical form in 1969, I was suddenly at a loss as to how to relate to Him. As I sat or stood outside the Samadhi during that first week of February 1969 and watched His lovers taking *darshan*, it became clear to me that Baba was still actively greeting His lovers and showering them with His love. But the question arose in my mind, "Where is Baba as Meher Baba, that dynamic Avataric personality? His body is in the crypt, this is clear, but where exactly is the Source, the Powerhouse, of the love His lovers feel?"

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During the next few years, in the early '70s, I would be struck time and time again by Baba's active dispensation of love to those who would visit Him in the Samadhi. People would also pour into Meherazad from all over the world at all hours of the day and share their stories of Baba's loving presence in their lives, felt especially when they were in the Samadhi. I was drenched in the showers of their love for Baba as the Eternal Beloved, but my mind would ask, "But where is the fountain that is showering us with this living water of Love?"

In talking to Indian Baba-lovers and listening to their stories, I also felt Baba's love very strongly. I would often be reminded of places I had been with Baba and of *darshan* programs I had attended, especially those at Guruprasad. Various incidents of my life with Baba would be replayed in my mind with sudden vividness. Each time, my heart felt illumined as if a light had been turned on. But again my mind asked, "But where is the generator that is providing the power?" With Meher Baba's veiling of His physical body, the form which had been the focus of my thoughts and feelings for so many years, I felt as if my link to Baba had in some way been disrupted. I would inwardly ask Baba, "Where are You?"

I felt that if I knew the answer to this question, it would help me reestablish the same sense of rapport with Baba which I had felt before. I wondered, "Should I try to picture Baba now in the Samadhi?" But somehow there seemed to be a contradiction in associating Baba's divinely dynamic personality with the place which He used to sometimes refer to as His "Final Resting Place." My mind was in a state of extended suspense awaiting a resolution to this turmoil which would appeal to my heart. Some years later

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this distressing problem was finally resolved by an experience which, even to this day, I find difficult to categorize.

One morning in May 1987, I was resting on my bed at Meherazad with my eyes closed, waiting for the call announcing that the car was ready to leave for the Trust Office in Ahmednagar. Baba chose this moment to reveal the answer to my question in a way that not only totally eased my mind, but also consoled and convinced my heart.

While resting, I suddenly found myself in the midst of a kind of "waking dream." I saw myself standing on the platform in front of the Samadhi at Meherabad, just to the right of the door. There was no furniture as there is now, no cabinets or benches. No one else was present. It was all blissfully quiet when, most unexpectedly and to my great surprise and joy, I saw Meher Baba and Eruch, one of His dear disciples, coming up the slope from the south. As they approached the platform, Baba asked Eruch to wait at its edge. He then walked gracefully towards the door of the Samadhi, His arms swinging, hair flowing, His eyes flashing brilliantly. He gave me a glance of deep intimacy that words cannot convey, then entered the Samadhi. I waited with great anticipation for Him to come out, trying to decide how I would greet Him. "Should I bow down to Him, do this, or that ... or what?"

Just then, from inside the Samadhi, I heard a deep voice with a sweet ring to it, and the words resounded, "I AM HERE, I AM HERE, I AM HERE." These words reverberated throughout my whole being. Just then I heard someone calling my name, saying that the car was ready to go to the Trust Office. As I opened my eyes, I found myself uttering the word "EVER."

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My heart was filled with an inexpressible joy. I felt deep within me that Baba had clearly shown me: HE IS THERE, HE IS THERE, HE IS THERE, in the Samadhi, as the Ancient One, ever divinely vibrant, responding to the calls of those who visit Him for *darshan*, or think of Him wherever they may be.

Thus, thinking of Meher Baba in the Samadhi has come to be, for me, the same as thinking of Him when He was visible in the physical body. This has become the natural way for me to feel closer to the presence of the Avatar—the Infinite, Active Consciousness that assumed human form as Meher Baba. Since that day, Meher Baba's living physical presence in the Samadhi has been for me a fact beyond all doubt.

This experience reminds me of an incident from Baba's life when He also spoke three significant words. Once, Baba was visiting the Ellora Caves with some of His Eastern and Western women disciples. One of the caves they visited is known as the Buddha's cave. Mani sometimes shared the story of this visit and commented that as they were inside, looking at the impressive statue of the Buddha which dominates the cave, they were moved by the spiritual atmosphere which they felt there in Baba's presence. Just then, Baba took His alphabet board from under His arm and dictated to Mani these three words, "I AM BUDDHA." As Mani read aloud from the board, she felt as if every particle of the cave resounded with the truth of His words.

One evening a few years after I heard the three words, "I AM HERE," I found upon returning to Meherazad from the Trust Office that, as usual, someone had placed on the table in my room some pictures of Baba and a few pamphlets to be distributed to

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pilgrims. I was tired and went to bed immediately after having supper. The next morning, when I rolled back my mosquito netting, I saw a painting of the Samadhi on the windowsill next to my bed which I had not noticed the night before. Later, I learned that it had been sent to my room from Baba's House, where the women *mandali* stay, to be given away or kept as I chose.

Naturally, I decided to keep it. In fact, I was overjoyed to receive it. I had been wanting a picture of the Samadhi ever since my "vision." Not only that, but this painting showed the Samadhi with the door open as I had seen it, and I took this as an objective confirmation from Meher Baba that the words I had heard were truly His. This painting adorns the wall of my room to this day, proclaiming from the Samadhi Avatar Meher Baba's message, "I AM HERE." And yes, He is.

THE UNIVERSAL DOT

AS I LOOK BACK OVER MY LIFE WITH MEHER BABA, many intimate and astonishing incidents stand out that have guided me in my journey with Him, to Him, the real Self. These have often taken the form of "coincidences," but to me they are divinely orchestrated and suffused with Baba's unconditional compassion. I used to feel that I was not worthy to be the recipient of such benedictions, and I wondered, "How is it that these loving attentions are showered on me in abundance when I have neither expected them nor deserve them?"

That they should continue to come despite my obvious unworthiness has made it plain to me that His love does not look for merit; it is unconditional and waits only for an excuse to flow. This has led me to ponder, "Who is the seeker here, and who is the Sought?" Bayazid of Bistami, an eleventh-century Perfect Master, provides the answer in a statement he once made to his close ones:

At the beginning I was mistaken in four respects: I concerned myself to remember God, to know Him, to Love Him and to seek Him. And when I had come to

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the end, I saw that He had remembered me before I remembered Him, that His knowledge of me had preceded my knowledge of Him, His love towards me had existed before my love for Him, and He had sought me before I had sought Him.

Everyone's life is a wonderful, unfathomable game played by God, with Himself, by Himself. To feel God's active presence in our lives, drawing us ever closer to Him, we have only to try our best to offer every action, thought and feeling to formless God or the God-Man. The limitless help of Meher Baba, the God-Man, is available to anyone who honestly calls on Him, for He is the Ancient One—the One eternally residing in every heart, responding to any sincere call. Simple, natural remembrance of Baba from time to time opens the door by which His divinity begins to enter one's life, expressing itself in a most natural way. At present that vibrant, spontaneous "divinity in action" is fully alive in the Samadhi at Meherabad. This is not just intellectual conjecture on my part, but has been confirmed by the experiences of many who have visited the Samadhi. I have met the people who had these experiences, and they themselves have told me their stories.

Here I would like to relate an incident which I still vividly recall of someone visiting Meherabad for the first time. In February 1958, I was traveling by train to Ahmednagar to spend a few blessed days at a Sahavas program Beloved Baba was holding at Meherabad. As I had a four-hour wait while changing trains at Dhond, a large railway junction, I stretched out on a bench on the platform to get some rest.

The bench next to mine was occupied by a short, stocky man

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who appeared, from his manner of dress, to come from Punjab, in the north. I am not loquacious by nature, but after a while the man engaged me in conversation.

"Where are you going?" he asked. "Ahmednagar," I replied.

"Oh, I am going to Ahmednagar too," he informed me. "Are you going to see relatives?"

"No," I answered, volunteering nothing more.

"Then where will you stay for the night?"

Being pressed, I acknowledged that I was going to Meherabad to be with Meher Baba.

"You are going to see Meher Baba! But I am also going to Meher Baba!"

A wonderful coincidence!

"Have you seen Him before?" he asked.

"Of course," I answered. "Many times."

"What! You've seen Him! You've seen Him with your own eyes?"

I nodded and the next moment, to my amazement, he rose to his feet, took my face in his hands, and reverently kissed my eyes, the eyes which had beheld the *Saheb-e-Zaman* (Avatar of the Age).

I was impressed by the intensity of his love for Meher Baba, but at the same time felt a little embarrassed at such a demonstration of emotion (fortunately, there were very few people on the platform). I beckoned him to sit down, and we had a long conversation.

I learned that his name was Asmi and that he came from Lahore, Pakistan. For many years he had been sincerely seeking

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God and had read many books on spirituality. Though he was a Muslim, he had not confined himself to the literature of Islam but had studied the saints and mystics of many traditions with an open mind and heart. In the mid-'50s, he had heard about Meher Baba. With deep interest and profound earnestness, he read the *Discourses* and *God Speaks*. He also read whatever he could find on Baba's life and became convinced that Meher Baba was the Avatar of the Age. In Meher Baba he found the perfect blending of Sufism, Vedanta, and Christianity. Asmi's heart was awakened to Baba's love, and he began writing letters to Baba in English and Urdu.

Ramjoo, one of Baba's close Muslim disciples, attended to this correspondence. What Ramjoo wrote Asmi about Baba, under His direction, further convinced Asmi of Baba's divine authority, and he began to write *ghazals* in His praise. He intensely longed to see Meher Baba in person, and now, in 1958, he was at last getting his first chance, as he had been given permission to attend the Sahavas program being held that February at Meherabad. With great joy he left Lahore and traveled to Bombay, where he took a train to Dhond to make the connection to Ahmednagar. That was how I happened to meet him on the railway platform.

Our conversation was so animated and flowed so naturally and delightfully that neither of us noticed the passage of time. In fact, someone else had to bring it to our attention that our train had arrived. We ended up sharing a third-class compartment and, though it was crowded, we continued to talk about Baba all the way to Ahmednagar. Our conversation was punctuated now and again by Asmi excitedly reading out passages from the *ghazals* he had

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composed exalting Meher Baba's divine status as the Avatar:

Meher Baba tu Khuda, tujme hai jalvagar Khuda.

Meher Baba Surat-e-Insan ho tu haq-numa.

Meher Baba, You are God, and in You God is manifested. What if You have the face of a man [human form]? You are verily God.

These recitations were very touching and revealed his deep understanding of spirituality. Later I learned that he was a well-known scholar and poet.

When we got off the train in Ahmednagar, Ramjoo was waiting with a jeep to take Asmi to Meherabad. So I was able to ride along with them. Once we reached Meherabad, I quickly took up the usual duties I had during Sahavas occasions. Over the next few days, whenever I noticed Asmi, he would be sitting quietly near Baba or walking about Meherabad with folded arms, deep in thought. I never saw him mingling with others or speaking to anyone, even about Baba. I greeted him on a few occasions, but he would pass me by as though he hadn't noticed me, always deeply absorbed.

Then one day I stopped him. "Excuse me, my friend, you seem to be upset with me. Have I said something to offend you?"

He was so absorbed in his thoughts that it took him a while to register my presence, but he finally managed to say, "Meherabad is not a place for casual conversation."

I stared at him questioningly, and he said solemnly, in Urdu, "*Yahan ke zar-re zar-re per satwa asman jhuk raha hai.*" That is, "Here, the Seventh Heaven is offering obeisance to every grain of dust."

THE UNIVERSAL DOT

Though this was, and is, a most profound statement, I failed to grasp the meaning contained in it. Years later, after Baba veiled His physical body, I began to think about the special significance of Meherabad, particularly the Samadhi, and I recalled the potent words of Asmi. I also remembered that, in the 1930s, Baba had declared, "In the future, Meherabad will be like Jerusalem. For My spiritual work, it is the best place. It will always be the center of My work." In 1938, while strolling on Meherabad Hill, Baba made a sweeping gesture and stated, "This whole universe is Mine, but this place is especially Mine."

I thought that if, as was revealed to Asmi decades ago, every grain of dust at Meherabad is being worshipped by the Seventh Heaven, then how much more sanctified must be the Samadhi? After all, the Samadhi, as specifically designated by Baba, has the honor of housing His body, the cloak donned by Infinite Consciousness in this Age.

Baba had shown me, on my level, that "He is there" in the Samadhi. It was now natural for me to focus my thoughts on Him there. However, I wondered how it was also possible that others, thousands of miles away, also felt His presence. That such a thing was possible I had no doubt, but it puzzled me a great deal. Soon, Baba provided the clue. In the '80s in Mandali Hall at Meherazad, I happened to hear the following story from one of Baba's *mandali*:

Once a Perfect Master was visiting the home of a family of his devotees in some big city, say Bombay. He was explaining to them the need to have faith in the Omnipresence of the Avatar, God in human form. A young boy of the family, just about to leave for school, politely interrupted him.

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"Excuse me, Master, may I ask you a question?"

The Master smiled and beckoned the boy towards him. "Yes, what is it?" the Master asked gently.

"You say that the Avatar is everywhere and in everything. But how can He be in one place and also everywhere simultaneously?"

"Oh, that is a very good question," the Master replied appreciatively. "Why don't you run off to school now, and when you come home I will tell you the answer."

The boy was satisfied and left. But by the end of the day he had completely forgotten his question. After returning home and depositing his books in his room, he was just about to leave to go out to play when the Master called out to him. "Did you get the answer to your question yet?"

"What question?" the boy replied, then, remembering, somewhat shamefacedly confessed, "I forgot all about it."

The Master smiled. "But I did not. Do you happen to have an atlas?"

"Yes."

"Could you show me the map of India?"

The boy got out his atlas and opened it to a map of India. "Now," said the Master, "can you show me Bombay?"

The boy immediately pointed to a red dot on the western coast of India.

"Very good! Now, can you show me the suburb where you live?"

Again, the boy pointed to the red dot. "Excellent! And where are we?"

Once more, the boy innocently pointed to the red dot.

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"Exactly!" the Master declared. "That single dot not only indicates where we are, but also your apartment complex, your suburb, and Bombay with all its millions. All of that is contained within that single dot. Isn't it so?"

The boy nodded.

"In the same way, the whole world is contained within the being of the Avatar."

The boy seemed satisfied by this analogy.

The Master's explanation, given at the level of a young schoolboy, illustrates how the macrocosm can be contained within the microcosm. Out of love, formless God periodically descends into human form as the God-Man, who holds all space and time within Himself. Meher Baba's love and guidance are to be found everywhere, at any time. But I feel that they originate from the Samadhi at Meherabad, where the body that houses Reality is kept. So the Samadhi can be likened to a "Universal Dot," radiating the Avatar's loving presence.

THE PUBLIC MANIFESTATION

MY MIND OFTEN ACCEPTS the delightful challenge to seek objective confirmation for what I subjectively believe to be true. This attitude has helped me strengthen my relationship with Meher Baba. So my mind silently looked for some kind of confirmation from Baba that would reveal the validity of His special presence that I often felt in the Samadhi. As always, Baba was kind enough to lead me along the way, ending in my acceptance of the fact that He is truly there in the Samadhi.

Before going into this subject, however, I wish to present some events connected with Meher Baba's programs and travels in the '50s. Baba's sister, Mani, used to write letters giving information about Baba's activities to Bili Eaton in the United States. Bili would then type copies of these letters and send them to the Baba groups she knew of, which at that time were mostly on the East Coast. This arrangement enabled the majority of Baba-lovers in the U.S. to hear the latest news that they so longed for of their Beloved. However, after about a year, Mani's "Family Letters" were sent regularly to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, where they were duplicated and sent out to all Baba groups in the West.

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During one of my stays at Meherazad in the '70s, I was doing research for the volumes of *Glimpses of the God-Man, Meher Baba* when I happened to come across a file of the letters which Mani had written to Bili. These had remained unpublished until Bili Eaton's book *A Love So Amazing* came out in 1984. While reading this file, I found one letter that caught my special attention. It concerned a clarification of the difference between the terms "Avataric period" and "Avataric cycle." Before quoting this letter, however, I want to give some more background which will explain why it came to be written in the first place.

This digression begins in the early 1940s in England. A woman by the name of Irene Conybeare—sincere, scholarly, and deeply interested in spiritual upliftment—heard about Meher Baba from Fred Marks, one of Baba's close followers. She was so impressed by what Fred told her, and the conviction with which he relayed it, that she decided that she had to see Meher Baba for herself. The Second World War had started, however, and travel from England to India was not permitted. Yet Irene was so determined that she went to South Africa, where, in April 1941, she managed to get a place on the last boat sailing from there to India. What an intense longing the Avatar had awakened in her!

Once in India, she found out that Baba was in Dehra Dun, in the north, and traveled there from Bombay, only to receive word that Baba would not see her. However, He asked her if she would be willing to go to America for His work. Irene agreed and began to make arrangements to go there. Pleased with her decision to obey Him, Baba called her to Aimer, a distance of over seven hundred kilometers to the west, where He was doing His work

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with the *masts* (God-intoxicated). She was informed that she would be allowed to see Him for no more than five minutes and should ask Him no questions during their meeting.

Irene happily agreed and later wrote about that first meeting, "I had the curious sense of having arrived at the end of my destination, my quest for Truth, and felt that I was in the presence of a great spiritual being; it was an indefinable sensation."¹

Subsequently, Irene wrote two books: *Civilization or Chaos?* in 1955, published in England, and *In Quest of the Truth, or How I Came to Meher Baba* in the early '60s. Her book *Civilization or Chaos?* attempted to examine the world situation in the light of her understanding of Avatar Meher Baba's teachings. Some complimentary copies were sent to Baba and the *mandali*. While going through it, someone noticed that in the chapter "Cycles and Circles" there was some erroneous information about the Avatar's circle and the responsibilities and roles the close disciples play during His Advent. When this was brought to Baba's attention, He took pains to convey a number of key points to one of His *mandali* before going into seclusion in Satara. These points became the basis of Meher Baba's discourse entitled "The Circles of the Avatar."

I mention that Baba took pains because He had recently, in October 1954, given up the use of the alphabet board through which He had earlier dictated His discourses and messages. In November of 1954, Baba wished, for His universal work, to go into seclusion and to reduce all communication to an absolute minimum. But still He took the time to dictate His clarifications, and because it was essential that the precise meaning behind Baba's gestures be understood, this sometimes resulted in Baba

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laboriously spelling out words letter by letter. When He was finished, the discourse was written out and read back to Baba, who made corrections and finally approved of it.

Mani sent a copy of this discourse to Bili Eaton. Bili, in addition to sending this to her usual list of people, also sent a copy to Ivy Duce, who was the Murshida of Sufism Reoriented. At that time Mrs. Duce, along with Don E. Stevens, was editing *God Speaks* preparatory to its publication. Because of this, Mani also had mailed a copy of Baba's discourse to her. When Mrs. Duce checked her two copies, she found that Bili's version contained an extra sentence which stated, "The Avataric cycle is one hundred years." She wrote to Mani to find out which version of the discourse was correct, and, of course, this matter was brought to Baba's notice.

Baba instructed Mani to write a letter to both Mrs. Duce and Bili in which He clarified the difference between the Avataric period and the Avataric cycle. How Bili, who was an expert typist, had inadvertently added this extra sentence remains a mystery, but because of it we have the following explanation from Baba in Mani's letter to Bili.

In Baba's explanation of the Circle, it says: "All the fourteen members of the Avatar's Inner Circle realize God by the grace of the Avatar during the same Avataric *period*, which is of one hundred years' duration after the Manifestation of the Avatar on earth."

The Avataric *period* has nothing to do with the *cycle*. Please have that clear. The 100 years after the Manifestation of the Avatar is the period encompassing the direct living and personal radiation of the Avatar.²

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Back to the '70s, as I read the file containing the above explanation, written in 1955, I felt that I had found the confirmation I was seeking. No wonder I could trust that Baba is actively present in the Samadhi: Baba Himself had characterized the Avataric period as being charged by His *"direct living and personal radiation."* This is the period in which a special Avataric dispensation continues to flow forth, in spite of the veiling of the Avatar's physical form from our sight. So even now, during this specific period, all who visit the Samadhi at Meherabad are blessed in the same way as being in the Avatar's physical presence.

At least this is how I take it. It is likely that others will have their own opinions on this subject, and I am not trying to persuade anyone that my view is "correct." I am simply explaining what my view is, and others are most free to agree or disagree with me according to their own understanding. Whenever we simply call on Meher Baba, the Omnipresent One, with a loving heart, wherever or whoever we may be, Baba is there to help us. But it strikes me that the veil of ignorance covering the Omnipresent One is most transparent at the Samadhi.

Some readers, no doubt, may at this point say, "But Meher Baba stated that the period encompassing the direct and personal radiation of the Avatar is for a hundred years after His Manifestation. When did His Manifestation occur?" Here, I would like to share my personal understanding of the terms Avataric "cycle," "period," and especially, "manifestation."

Baba has mentioned that the Avataric cycle varies from 700 to 1,400 years. He often stated that He would come back after 700 years, so the present Avataric cycle is of 700 years. The Avataric period, as

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mentioned, is 100 years long. But when does this period begin?

For me, the current Avataric cycle began on February 25, 1894 when Meher Baba was born. Some might suggest that this is also the date for the beginning of Baba's manifestation, but as Baba was veiled at that point and was not functioning as the Avatar, this does not seem so to me. The next date to consider, therefore, is in January 1914 when Babajan unveiled Merwan by kissing Him on the forehead between His eyebrows, making Him experience the infinite bliss of Self-realization—His Ancient One state. However, in this state He was totally unaware of the three worlds, the entire Creation, and hence was still not functioning as the Avatar. Meher Baba began functioning as the Avatar and Head of the spiritual hierarchy from either December 1921 or January 1922, when Shri Upasni Maharaj folded his hands before Merwan, saying, "Merwan, You are *Adi Shakti*. You are the Avatar!"

Yet, this does not seem like the public manifestation of the Avatar, for the simple reason that Baba had disclosed His status to only a few, but did not publicly declare Himself to be the Avatar to the world. Thinking about this disparity between Maharaj's explicit declaration and Baba's public reticence has helped clarify in my mind my understanding of Baba's public manifestation.

There are many facets implied in the word *manifestation*. Most people, I think, when they refer to Baba's manifestation are referring to His Universal Manifestation. I hasten to admit at the outset that I do not know what Baba meant by that particular term. I feel that its meaning was conveyed in His "language" alone, thus it is so far beyond my comprehension that I can never grasp its

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import even with the highest flights of my imagination. Everyone should feel free to delve into this subject as deeply as they wish, but I willingly refrain from such an attempt.

There are other aspects of Baba's manifestation too. There is a personal manifestation which occurs within one's heart when a person recognizes Baba as the Ancient One, the Eternal Beloved. Baba manifests in a unique way within each one. He eternally resides in every heart, so His manifestation is latent within everyone. As the heart begins to awaken to His love, the manifestation becomes more explicit. A God-realized soul, a saint, a lover, and an ordinary devotee all experience and reflect Baba's manifestation differently. This makes it very difficult to try and pinpoint when Baba's manifestation occurs, because it unfolds in innumerable ways.

Therefore, in this book, I am limiting myself to trying to determine when Baba manifested publicly as the Avatar. In the early years, for example, not only did Baba not declare to the world at large that He was the Avatar, but He often went out of His way to hide His identity. Baba did not allow His dear ones who journeyed with Him to even reveal His name, much less His spiritual status. To His close ones, in both the East and West, Baba disclosed His Avatarhood in a variety of ways, but to the public, Baba was generally referred to as a Perfect Master or *Sadguru*. For His own spiritual work, Baba allowed this. It is very interesting that, especially during His work of physically contacting the *masts* (God-intoxicated), Baba would take care that His status should not be disclosed; but if, in spite of this, He was recognized by a *mast*, He would generally leave the place immediately.

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In the early '50s, Baba began giving more public hints about His status, as in the message "The Highest of the High," which was given in Dehra Dun in 1953. But the date that seems to me to symbolize Meher Baba's public declaration of Avatarhood is February 10, 1954. On this day, at about 1:00 A.M., Baba was in a small hut in an out-of-the-way place called Meherasthan, in the district of Hamirpur, Uttar Pradesh. *Asthana* in Hindi means "threshold"—it is as though the Avatar crossed the threshold of disguise here. The hut was situated on a small hill, and that night a large group of His followers had gathered around its entrance. Most unexpectedly, and to the amazement of those present, Baba spelled out on His alphabet board, "Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai" ("Victory to Meher Baba, the Avatar"). One of Baba's dear ones, Keshav Nigam, has faithfully recorded this event in detail, a part of which is quoted below:

At that time, Baba was in an extremely happy mood! His fingers ran on the alphabet board and spelled the words: AVATAR MEHER BABA KI JAI! and He simultaneously raised His right hand up to confirm that JAI. Baba also declared that it was for the first time in this Incarnation of His that He had here openly and clearly declared Himself to be the AVATAR.³

I personally take this declaration as the commencement of Meher Baba's public manifestation as the Avatar, and therefore as the beginning of the Avataric period. It was after this that Adi K. Irani, Baba's secretary, had a stamp made that he used on his correspondence, which said, "In the Service of Avatar Meher Baba." It was also from this date that Baba began to consistently

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refer to Himself as the Avatar in public. Some weeks later, while making a house visit in Andhra, when asked to give a message, Baba replied:

It has been possible through Love, for man to become God; and when God becomes Man, it is due to His love for His beings.

If people were to ask Me, "Have you seen God?" I would reply, "What else is there to see?" If they were to ask Me, "Are you God?" I would reply, "Who else could I be?" If they were to ask Me, "Are you the Avatar?" I would reply, "Why else have I taken this human form?"⁴

At the end of 1954, Baba called His Western men lovers to be with Him for three weeks. During this time, on September 12, He held a large *darshan* program in Wadia Park in Ahmednagar. Obviously aware of the effect His public declaration of Avatarhood would have on the minds of some, the very first message which Baba had read out was:

When I say I am the Avatar, there are a few who feel happy, some who feel shocked, and many who, hearing Me claim this, would take Me for a hypocrite, a fraud, a supreme egoist, or just mad. If I were to say every one of you is an Avatar, a few would be tickled, and many would consider it a blasphemy or a joke.

The fact that God being One, Indivisible, and equally in us all, we can be naught else but one, is too much for the duality-conscious mind to accept. Yet each of us is what the other is. I know I am the Avatar in every sense of the word, and that each of you is an Avatar in one sense or the other.⁵

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"Meher Baba's Call" was a special message given on this occasion. In it, Baba made the following explicit declaration:

Age after age, when the wick of righteousness burns low, the Avatar comes yet once again to rekindle the torch of Love and Truth. Age after age, amidst the clamor of disruptions, wars, fear and chaos, rings the Avatar's call:

"Come all unto Me."

The time is come. I repeat the Call, and bid all come unto Me.⁶

It was the following year that Mani, under Baba's direction, wrote Bili the letter mentioned earlier, in which it is specified that for a period of a hundred years the Avatar's direct personal radiation would be available. From this I gather that Baba was indirectly conveying that it would not be necessary for His body to be visible for this to happen. So, for me, Baba's public manifestation began on February 10, 1954, as did the Avataric period. Although, as part of His *Leela* (divine sport), Meher Baba allowed His body to be veiled from our eyes on February 7, 1969, His public manifestation of love and compassion continues as it did when He was visible in His physical form.

This is what I mean by saying that to be inside the Samadhi is to be directly in Avatar Meher Baba's physical presence. It can be likened to the times when Baba was in different parts of India or the West and His lovers not with Him were able to feel His Physical presence in spite of not seeing Him. They knew that His Public manifestation was taking place. Now, although His body is

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veiled in the crypt beneath the white marble slab, His "direct living and personal radiation" continues and will continue for the rest of the Avataric period.

Thus Meher Baba, as the Avatar, is available for audience to one and all who visit the Maha-Samadhi at Meherabad. This explains the significance of the Samadhi, being the source of His direct living and personal radiation. It is from here, this unique, matchless spot chosen by the Avatar Himself, that He now dispenses His love and compassion on this Earth during the Avataric period. In one of His brief discourses, Meher Baba has mentioned that although the universes in this seemingly Infinite Space are innumerable, "only on the planet Earth do human beings reincarnate and begin the Path to Self-Realization."⁷

Meher Baba has also stated that of all the countries on the Earth, India is closest to the "creation point." And the Samadhi at Meherabad is that unique site in India chosen by the Avatar to be His final resting place. So how can we ever fathom the spiritual importance of the Samadhi in relation to any other place in the world? When anyone visits the Samadhi, this becomes the most significant moment in that individual's life. It is the blessed time of being in the Avatar's company.

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MEHER BABA HAS EXPLAINED that when Perfect Masters drop their physical bodies, they become totally merged in the Infinite Power, Knowledge, and Bliss (*Sat-Chit-Anand*) state of God's Infinitude. Perfect Masters never reincarnate, but everlastingly experience the "I-AM-GOD" state. Thus, in their case, the term "dropping the physical body" is literally true for all time.

Various types of miracles seem to occur at the Samadhis or Tomb-Shrines of Perfect Masters due to the residual power which remains in such places for a very long time. Any type of contact with a Perfect Master has a timeless quality. This power is especially activated when those who had strong connections with the Master, in this or previous lifetimes, happen to visit the Samadhi of this Master.

The Ancient One, however, as the Avatar, is the eternally active source of God's limitless love and grace. Because of this, the Avatar does not "drop the body" in the same sense as a Perfect Master does. Baba has explained that every 700 to 1,400 years, according to the need of the times, the formless aspect of Infinite

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Consciousness is brought down by the five Perfect Masters to assume a human form as the Avatar in order to quicken the awakening of humanity to its real destiny—eternal, conscious Union with God.

Through one of Mani's Family Letters sent to the West in April 1963, Meher Baba disclosed the unique state and status of the Avatar:

Why and how can I suffer when I am the Ocean of Power, Knowledge and Bliss? God has infinite Power, infinite Knowledge and infinite Bliss. The Avatar is God Himself incarnate on earth as Man. During His ministry as Avatar, He uses only infinite Knowledge. He does not make use of His infinite Power and infinite Bliss. This is because God incarnates as Man and goes through universal suffering and helplessness in order to emancipate mankind from its ignorance of suffering and helplessness.

If the Avatar were to use His infinite Power, how could He experience helplessness? If the Avatar were to use His infinite Bliss, how could He suffer? He therefore does not use either His infinite Bliss or His infinite Power. Such is His infinite Love and Compassion for His creation! Jesus Christ, Who had infinite Power, let Himself become helpless and suffered the humiliation of letting the people spit on Him and jeer at Him. He suffered crucifixion, but even while on the Cross did not help Himself from the Power and Bliss that were His. Instead He cried, "Father, why hast Thou forsaken me!" He said it to Himself, of course, for He and the Father are One.

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Again and again, God takes human form to suffer for His Creation. I am that One. Like you I have a body and mind, and so I feel hunger and thirst, etc. But I also have Universal Body and Universal Mind, and therefore your individual suffering is as nothing compared to My eternal, universal suffering! I have infinite Knowledge. I do not have to use My mind in order to know—I just know

In no previous Avataric period have I disclosed these secrets, because the time was not ripe for it then.¹

In the supplement to *God Speaks* titled "The Avatar and *Sadguru*," Baba offers a succinct distillation of the above explanation:

"Sadguru" means that man has become God. Therefore, when man has become God he can no longer be man, and if he has to live as man he has to act, behave or appear like a man by spontaneously putting into action, that is, demonstrating all the natural tendencies of man. . . .

In the case of the *Avatar*, the story is quite different. All the difference is contained in the fact that *Sadguru* means man becoming God, while *Avatar* means God becoming man. It is very difficult to grasp the entire meaning of the word "*Avatar*." . . .

Whatever be the understanding of man, the fact remains that the *Avatar* becomes and the *Sadguru* acts.²

During one of Meher Baba's visits to Andhra in the early '50s, He once conveyed, as far as I can remember, "The gnosis of the *Sadguru* is: I am God, and everyone is God; everything is God. The gnosis of the *Avatar* is: I am God, and I become everyone and

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everything." These statements cleared away the confusion I'd had earlier about the relationship of the Perfect Master and the Avatar with Creation. I had especially wondered why so many of the Perfect Masters, experiencing the "I-AM-GOD state," wrote hymns and poems in praise of the Avatar, and why most of them so often gave their disciples names of the Avatar to be used as *mantras* rather than asking them to repeat their Master's name. Although the spiritual state of *Sat-Chit-Anand*, experienced by both the Perfect Masters and the Avatar, is the same, the difference of expression arises because of the difference in their relationship, duty, authority, and responsibility towards Creation.

I am here reminded that during this same visit to Andhra, Baba stayed at Eluru for a few days in a small cottage in front of a big garden. One day, His followers placed three large, framed portraits of three of His Masters—Sai Baba, Babajan, and Upasni Maharaj—on the verandah of His cottage. When Baba came out of His room and saw these, He reverently offered His homage to each one of them, and gestured:

Sai Baba made Me *assert* this time what I am.

Babajan made Me *feel* what I am.

Upasani Maharaj made Me *know* what I am.

What I am, I am.

Baba gave me the blessed privilege of accompanying Him during His Andhra tours. During this time, I witnessed and heard of various miraculous incidents, some of which were spiritually significant in helping people in their search for God. But Baba never put emphasis on such happenings. It was around this same time period that once while He was visiting Allahabad in northern

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India, one of Baba's *mandali*, after hearing about an incredible lifesaving coincidence at Dehra Dun that had occurred in the life of one of His dear ones, exclaimed, "Why, it's a miracle!" Baba responded, "Even after being in My company over all these decades, you call this a miracle? I do not perform miracles. All that happened was a response of love—My own love naturally flows back to those who love Me." This revealed to me an altogether different aspect of the Avatar's "miracles."

Throughout my association with Baba, I have gathered that the only real miracle is the awakening in one's heart of longing for the love of God. And it is this real miracle that continues to happen within the Avatar's Samadhi. There are many touching, marvelous, and humorous incidents associated with those visiting the Samadhi; these reflect the active presence of the Avatar's omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence, responding to the faintest longing of an individual's heart. He is infinitely benevolent!

"I Have Come Not to Teach But to Awaken"—these words were spoken by Baba in July 1925, a few days before beginning His silence, and they are now inscribed on the marble slab in the Samadhi, clearly revealing the purpose of the Avatar's Advent. They show us the right approach to have when visiting Baba's Samadhi, the center of infinite Power, Knowledge, and Bliss, *Sat-Chit-Anand*.

Meher Baba, the Source of all Blessedness, once conveyed, "The Powerhouse will never fail, provided the wires take care of their connection with It." The Powerhouse is God as Avatar—the God-Man. When formless God takes form as the God-Man, that form becomes the vehicle through which Creation receives a

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spiritual push. Meher Baba as the Avatar of the Age personally chose the place where His form should be covered, so it is inevitable that this place be regarded as the divine Powerhouse.

If one's connection with this Powerhouse is intact, then one can feel His presence wherever one happens to be. This connection is love and trust in Baba as the Ancient One. As the Powerhouse has infinite resources at its disposal, Baba can transmit His love to anyone, anywhere, anytime. Those receiving Baba's love should take care of their link with the Powerhouse to be more receptive to His guidance. But even where the connection seems to be nonexistent, a visit to the Samadhi still delivers a wonderful, unexpected charge, as it vibrates with the infinity of the Avatar's Divinity. Anyone who visits the Samadhi receives an indelible impression of unconditional love from the Source—whether one is conscious of it at the time or not.

Even everyday events from Baba's life provided, in a silent way, guidelines for the future. Once, in the '30s while Meher Baba was sitting with a group of His close women disciples, He gestured, "Today I have a big surprise for you!" Then He told them to close their eyes and slowly count to ten. Naturally, they were bursting with curiosity and excitement, but they all closed their eyes and began counting. When they reached ten and opened their eyes again, they found that Baba had quietly slipped out of the room and was no longer with them.

Years later, in 1969, Mani recalled this particular incident to Mehera, remarking that Baba had played the same trick again: He had stolen away when they weren't expecting it. But in this divine game of hide and seek, as one begins to look sincerely for Baba, it

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seems as though Baba Himself calls out, "Here I am! Here I am!"

Since February 7, 1969, I have experienced many coincidences in my life with Him in which Baba "calls out" to me, letting me know that if I open to the inner significance of these harmonious happenings, I will, with His grace, feel Him more and more. Baba lets each of His lovers know, in ways that are so natural, intimate, and personally significant, that although His physical form is no longer visible, He is still with us.

Mani has pointed out that Baba often gives us lessons in such natural ways that at the time we may not even realize He is telling us something significant. One afternoon, in January 1969, Mani was reading a Nero Wolfe book to Baba. It was a book she had read to Him earlier, and He had enjoyed it greatly. During this time, the physical strain of Baba's Universal Work was tremendous, and Baba's health suffered a great deal. So sometimes, late in the day, He would sit back in a reclining chair in His room at Meherazad, and Mani would read to Him. This was one of His few opportunities to relax.

Mehera and a few of the other women disciples were sitting in the room listening while Mani, a gifted mimic, read out the story, adopting different voices for the different characters—one for Archie, one for Nero, one for Inspector Cramer, one for Fritz, and so on. Baba was settled comfortably in his cushioned reclining chair with His eyes closed and, after a while, He began to breathe deeply. Assuming Baba had fallen asleep, Mani stopped reading. Immediately Baba snapped His fingers loudly and gestured, "Why did you stop?"

Surprised, Mani explained, "Baba, I was coming to a passage

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that I remember You enjoyed so much when I read this book to You before. I didn't want You to miss it. You were sleeping, so I stopped."

Baba gestured, "I heard everything you read."

With the privileged intimacy of being Baba's sister, Mani teased Him by asking, "What did I read?" Without a moment's hesitation, and to everyone's delighted amazement, Baba gestured what Mani had read while He had appeared to be sleeping.

Mani resumed reading. Again the same thing happened. This time, not only did Baba appear to go to sleep, but He actually started snoring. Mani wasn't sure what to do. She didn't want to disturb Baba's sleep with her reading, but after what had just happened, she was reluctant to stop. She continued to read for quite a while, but then she and Mehera, exchanging a silent look, agreed that she should stop. As soon as she did, Baba snapped His fingers again and asked why she had stopped reading.

Full of concern, Mehera replied, "Baba, You were resting; we didn't wish to disturb You. You need Your rest so much!"

Baba gestured, "Go on reading. Even if My eyes are closed, I hear."

A few days later, after January 31, 1969, the women disciples remembered this incident and saw that Baba, in His natural way, had revealed both to them and indirectly to all His followers a precious guideline for the future: even if His eyes look closed in the Samadhi, we should continue to communicate with Him, because He is listening, and lovingly responding too.

For myself, this was reinforced later when a friend read a passage to me from a book on the life of Muhammad. On several

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occasions the Prophet had assured His close ones, "Mine eye sleepeth, but my heart is awake." This may relate to Baba's description of God-realization as a state of "being wide awake in sound sleep." In any case, it seems clear that the Avatar's Infinite Love and Compassion—His "Awake Heart"—remain ever alive and are equally vibrant as before the veiling of His physical form in the Samadhi.

PRAYER : ACCESS TO THE DIVINE SATELLITE

MEHER BABA BEGAN OBSERVING silence at Meherabad on July 10, 1925. Prior to this, during His extensive travels throughout India in the early '20s, He resided for a period in the home of a disciple in Quetta (which is now in Pakistan). One day He used the telephone on the second floor of the house to talk to a disciple on the ground floor. After conversing for some time, Baba remarked playfully, "Isn't this fun? Even though you can't see Me, you have no difficulty in talking with Me. Even though I'm out of your sight, because of the link of the telephone, we are able to communicate with each other." Thus, in a very natural way, Meher Baba used the analogy of the telephone to give His dear ones a hint that they could communicate with Him even when He was not visible to them.

In those days, the telephone system depended on cables. But today, telecommunication systems simply beam information upward to a satellite which then relays it to a receiver anywhere in the world. I am not highly educated and only minimally conversant with modern technology. I do not claim to understand the physics, engineering or electronics which underlie modern communications,

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but I am struck by the fact that, to make use of them, an ordinary person has to understand neither how these appliances work nor the scientific laws which govern them. The present routine use of fax machines, computers, televisions, and telephones in our daily lives, in fact, often reminds me of God's incredible game with His Creation, played through His subtle and intricate laws, which are far beyond the grasp of the common person. With these machines, fantastically complicated operations are executed in seconds and then transmitted instantaneously with just the push of a button. And, undoubtedly, all of these systems will become even more sophisticated in the coming years. This is made possible by the application of the higher laws of physics in this gross world.

Similarly, in the inner realms of life there are subtle spiritual laws which facilitate communication. I do not presume to understand how these laws operate either, but it has been the experience of many that the Samadhi of Avatar Meher Baba works as a divine phone, computer, fax, walkie-talkie, satellite connection—all rolled into one. Not only has this Avataric communication center dispensed with the need for external connections, but unlike worldly technology, it does more than transmit information. Because of the Avatar's omnipresent love, it also responds automatically by offering loving guidance to anyone, anywhere, any time.

In the old days, with telephones, you needed to contact the operator before you were connected. Even today, when faxing, you need to go to a machine and push the right buttons to send your message. With Meher Baba who is omnipresent, it is remembrance of Him that puts us in touch with the divine "Operator." And Prayers directed to Him, especially the prayers gifted to us

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personally by Baba—"The Master's Prayer" and "The Prayer of Repentance"—are the buttons He has given us to push to send our hearts' messages to Him through loving remembrance. Any invocation to Baba with a sincere feeling is like a wireless message in the inner domains, needing no physical connection—a direct signal straight to the Avatar's compassionate heart. While visiting a Christian chapel in Murrie, Pakistan, in 1933, Baba conveyed to a group of Westerners, "All worship returns to Me. The sigh within the prayer is the same in the heart of the Christian or the Muslim, or the Jew [or any worshipper]. They are all indivisibly longing for the same God."

When we remember Baba or say the prayers He has given us, in which He Himself participated hundreds of times, this is like picking up the phone to find that the connection has been made automatically. He has laid unseen spiritual cables through these prayers, connecting the hearts of His dear ones, enabling the easy transmission of our yearnings, sorrows, and joys, and His loving response is assured. I sometimes think fancifully of the finial on top of the Samadhi as an antenna which receives our hearts' call and transmits the love of the Ancient One. Our calling on Baba is like pushing a button on the remote control, and the channel that is changed is within us. It is not only that a connection is made, but the very pushing of that button selects a frequency within us, fine-tuning us so that our thoughts and feelings are increasingly centered on Him.

Thinking about Avatar Meher Baba's presence in the Samadhi and the various events connected with His life gradually slows down the mind and gears life to a different rhythm. Then

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the heart begins to sing the song of the Avatar's glorious love, and a joy unknown and inexpressible begins to enliven one's journey to the Source, the Eternal Bliss of God.

These analogies might strike some as far-fetched, but technology reflects the effects of the Avatar's universal working on the inner realms of consciousness. Science is reaching great heights, not in spite of the Avatar's advent, but because of it. During the Avataric period, all aspects of life are being divinely quickened to new levels. I have no doubt that the Samadhi is the center of the Avatar's work of creating a new surge in the arts and sciences, and of awakening the heart of humanity to the love of God.

Earlier, I referred to the two prayers Baba has given us as buttons we can push to gain access to the divine satellite and receive His love and guidance. Some may wonder at the importance that has been ascribed to these prayers, since Baba has also stated that the only prayer God hears is the prayer of the heart. Doesn't the regular recitation of the prayers amount to precisely the kind of ritual Baba has come to do away with? Therefore, I wish to share a few thoughts and facts about these prayers.

Baba dictated the Repentance Prayer at Meherabad in November of 1952, and the Master's Prayer in Dehra Dun in August of 1953. The Master's Prayer was originally referred to as the Universal Prayer. By the time it was sent to the West, it was known as the Master's Prayer because of Baba's participation in offering it.

Let me admit that when I first read the Universal Prayer, I was not impressed by it. But since Baba had given it, naturally I had a deep respect for it. When Baba first gave the prayer, He made it

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clear that He wanted His followers to recite it daily for a certain period, and while I was happy to comply with this, the prayer did not appeal to my heart the way it should have. Unlike the prayer of Saint Francis or some of the prayers in the Upanishads, the Master's Prayer seemed rather remote, being neither moving nor poetic. It seemed, to my limited understanding, to read like a dry collection of divine attributes which did not have a great deal of significance for me.

I was also a little hesitant about the use of the word "we" in the Repentance Prayer. I wondered why I should share in other people's repentance when I hadn't participated in their sins! So, sometimes when I recited this prayer by myself, I would change "we" to "I," since it was "I" who was repenting. Baba had made me feel so natural in my relationship with Him that I did not feel the slightest guilt about doing this.

Then, in the '50s and '60s, Baba gave me more and more opportunities to spend time with Him and also to participate in these prayers in His presence. This gradually changed my perspective. Baba's attitude towards the prayers, I saw, clearly reflected the importance they had for Him in His universal work. Before reciting them, He would wash His hands and face and straighten His coat or *sadra*. Then, with great solemnity, Baba would join His palms and listen with closed eyes while the prayers were read aloud by Eruch.

The look of profound and reverent absorption on Baba's face at such times impressed me deeply. As He listened to all the attributes of God in the Master's Prayer, I could see that they were clearly not just a dry catalogue of terms to Him. One had the vivid

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impression that Baba was inwardly experiencing each of these attributes which, for me, had only been high-sounding phrases. I could not help but begin to develop an appreciation for these superlatives, as they were obviously charged with deep significance. When the Repentance Prayer was read out, a deeply penitent look would come over Baba's face and He would softly tap His cheeks with His palms.

Through the recitation of the prayers, I felt that Baba was bringing together the religions of the world "as beads on one string." His hands were joined in the fashion common to both the Hindu and Christian traditions, and yet the Master's Prayer begins, "O Parvardigar," a Sufi term used by the Muslims. As the prayer was read, He would sway from side to side in the manner of the Zoroastrians. Thus, the major religions were symbolically represented through Baba's external actions. He participated in these prayers hundreds of times.

My growing sense of the spiritual importance of the prayers was reinforced in later years when Baba's health was declining: He would still insist on standing while the prayers were read out. From 1966 onward, Baba was in seclusion, engaged in intense universal spiritual work on all planes of consciousness. In spite of the fact that this work seemed to leave Baba terribly drained, He wanted the prayers read almost every day when a particular part of His work was finished. After 1967, He usually needed one of His disciples to stand at His side to support Him.

On one such occasion, with Baba standing in spite of His pain and fatigue, He signaled to Eruch to read the prayer faster. Then, several moments later, He gestured again to read faster still.

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Eruch was reading briskly when Baba signaled once again to increase the pace. Now Eruch was reading at breakneck speed and the words were running together. Suddenly, he had the image in his mind of an express train barreling its way from Bombay to Pune, clattering through small by-stations without stopping or slowing down. Unexpectedly, contrary to Eruch's habitually poised and balanced nature, he involuntarily burst out laughing for a few moments; then, collecting himself, he resumed reading as rapidly as he could. Afterwards Baba asked him why he had laughed, and Eruch apologetically described the image which had come to him.

Baba gestured, "You have no idea of the physical strain I was going through when I gestured for you to read faster. For you, reading the prayer fast may seem farcical, but for Me to participate in these prayers in My present state of health is no joke. I have given these prayers to humanity to recite. They are for all posterity. Whenever anyone recites these prayers, they will be helped spiritually because of My present personal participation. It has nothing to do with how quickly you read the prayer or how much feeling you read it with or anything of that sort. All that matters is My having participated in the prayers. Any time anyone repeats these prayers, I am there with them, and they will be helped spiritually." This was the clear divine assurance from the Avatar Himself about the importance of reciting these prayers. They are a loving expression of His compassion, accomplished at the cost of His physical suffering.

On February 1, 1968, a Life Circular was issued in which Baba asked all His lovers to help Him in His work by reciting the

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prayers every day until March 20th. This was subsequently extended to July 9th. Thus, Baba showed that by reciting the prayers, His lovers are also given the privilege of participating in His Divine work.

I now feel that both these prayers subsume all the other prayers I have spoken and loved. I no longer have any need to say "I" when reciting the Prayer of Repentance. On the contrary, I feel the "we" is the most high "WE" because it includes Baba's participation. In a real sense, the Master's Prayer has become "The Universal Prayer" for one and all.

Meher Baba suffered willingly and consciously to participate in the prayers so that posterity might benefit from them. To me the offering of these prayers is not a ritual. That is why I liken them to special buttons we can use to intensify our contact with the Ancient One, functioning through the Samadhi during this Avataric period. And it is also true that any moment of sincere remembrance of the Eternal Awakener, wherever we may be, will awaken His love in our hearts and guide us in our journey to Him.

THE LINK ALIVE WITH LOVE

THE DESCENT OF GOD INTO HUMAN FORM is the perfect blending of the Formless aspect of God with His "enformed" aspect. A God-realized poet has beautifully expressed this truth:

The purity of the Wine and the transparency of the
Goblet
Have perfectly merged into each other.
Now, as it were, it is all Goblet and no Wine,
Or all Wine and no Goblet!

Here, "Wine" represents the formless aspect of God and the image of the "Goblet" symbolizes the human form that God assumes when He descends to Earth as the Avatar to dispense His compassion to one and all. The dual yet simultaneous functions of the God-Man, in His formless as well as His enformed aspects, are manifest during His Avataric ministry. This is the mystery of Incarnation—the greatest gift of God to humanity.

Periodically, whenever man's craze for sense pleasures reaches a dangerous level and defiles the pure quality of God's selfless love,

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the five Perfect Masters of the Age precipitate the descent of formless Infinite God into human form as the Avatar. The form of the Avatar is the embodiment of God's Infinite love. It is this quality of pure love, which is limitless and unconditional, that enables the Avatar to touch anyone's heart directly and deeply, no matter where they are, what religion they belong to, or even if they have no religion at all. Avatar Meher Baba stated, "I come periodically to awaken Myself in everyone and everything because I have become everyone and everything." The Avatar's form becomes the vehicle for God's work on Earth. And what is that work? It is to "quicken the spirit"—to enliven the receptivity of the heart to God within.

Sometimes Meher Baba used the term "past connection" to explain why certain persons felt a spontaneous intimacy with Him. In light of this, many of His lovers feel that Baba's intense universal work, especially in later years, had to do with His revitalizing connections with those who were to come to Him after He veiled His form. Anyone who sincerely feels that the Samadhi holds the matchless treasure of the Avatar's human form is naturally brought into direct contact with His presence.

In the late '60s, and especially after 1967, Baba was in seclusion for increasingly long periods. At such times, He did not permit anyone to have His *darshan*; He did not even respond to His lovers' letters. Bhau, one of the *mandali*, had the passing thought that Baba was neglecting His lovers. So the All-knowing and Most Compassionate One took the trouble of explaining to him, "You think I am ignoring My lovers, but it is not so." Baba made a gesture of pounding His right thigh, symbolically

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representing His universal work, which He carried out when He was alone in His room. And He conveyed, "This is the real work, and you will see its results." At the time Bhau did not understand what Baba meant.

Then, in July of 1968, Baba declared, "My work is done. It is completed 100 percent to My satisfaction." If this was a hint that His lovers no longer needed to see His physical form, His dear ones didn't catch it. This is not surprising, especially in view of the fact that Baba continued to insist on planning a huge *darshan* program for His lovers from all over the world. The program was scheduled for April-June, 1969 and was to be held at Guruprasad in Pune. It was to be the first such program since Baba had entered His period of prolonged seclusion.

In October of 1968, Baba convened a meeting of some of His Indian lovers to discuss the projected *darshan* program. During this meeting Baba declared:

The strain of . . . eighteen months work was tremendous. I used to sit alone in My room for some hours each day while complete silence was imposed on the *mandali*, and no one of them was permitted to enter the room during those hours every day. The strain was not in the work itself, although I was working on all planes of consciousness, but in keeping My link with the gross plane. To keep this link I had to continuously hammer My right thigh with My fist.¹

As a result of this constant hammering, the muscles of Baba's thigh became stiff and hard like wood. On the day of the meeting Baba asked one of His intimate disciples from the early days in

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Pune to feel His thigh. The disciple was outwardly a composed man, but when he touched Baba's leg he burst into tears, as he felt the intensity of Baba's suffering.

Eruch and others tried to persuade Baba to postpone the '69 *darshan* program due to the delicate state of His health. But Baba assured them that there would be no problem for Him and that, if necessary, He would give *darshan* lying down. He turned to Francis Brabazon and asked, "Will My lovers be upset if I give *darshan* while reclining or with My eyes closed?"

"No, Baba," Francis answered, "they will just be happy to have Your *darshan*, that's all, no matter what!"

Eruch remained concerned that Baba's health could not endure the strain of three solid months of programs and suggested that Baba at least scale the program back to a shorter span of time. But again, Baba was unyielding and insisted that in the future, instead of giving *darshan* for three months, He would be available for *darshan* every day. When Eruch persisted, Baba ended the conversation by stating emphatically, "The business of the *mandali* is to arrange the details of the *darshan* program. Giving *darshan* is My business."

A month or so later Padri came to visit Meherazad. Shocked by the condition of Baba's health, he urged, "Baba, drop this idea about the three-month *darshan* program. The *mandali* are all getting old now, and it is better to close the shop!"

Baba gestured forcefully, "Close the shop! I am just about to fling the doors wide open!"

In the final month, Baba's urea count was so high that one doctor who visited thought there must be some mistake in the

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reading. An ordinary person would not be sane or lucid in such condition, and would emit a foul odor. Yet Baba was able to converse and joke until the very end. His face continued to glow with divine radiance, and His body emitted a fresh scent, like that of a baby.

On January 30, 1969, Baba told Dr. Donkin that He was being crucified, so great was His pain. He repeated this to Bhau that same night. Bhau could only look on helplessly while Baba's body was racked with spasms and convulsions, which at times lifted Him completely from the bed. "This is My crucifixion," He gestured again. The Avatar, as Man, was taking the suffering of all the world onto Himself to usher in a new era in His own time. The spasms became more and more severe. Dr. Goher was greatly alarmed. Baba gestured to her, "Don't forget, I am God." On an earlier occasion Baba had conveyed, "I know all that happens and will happen. Whatever happens does not happen without My Will."

On January 31, between noon and 12:15, Baba's body was seized by a climactic spasm, and His respiration stopped. The Great Event had happened.

Under the guise of planning the '69 *darshan* program, Baba gave the world hints that *darshan* would be available every day in the future. Eventually many people who had never seen Meher Baba flocked to Pune to honor the Avatar's invitation, and the *mandali* realized what Baba had so cryptically conveyed. This *darshan* revealed that Baba had, indeed, forged "internal links" with His future lovers and had also strengthened the existing links with those who loved Him already. It became clear that Baba

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had withheld His *darshan* and curtailed correspondence for over two years out of compassion, so that these internal links could be established on a worldwide scale. The links had been forged through His indescribable suffering. Those who loved Baba were shocked by the cable sent by Adi on January 31, but their connection with Him withstood the shock, and many have reported that they feel Baba's presence to be stronger and more accessible since that time.

Within a few years, thousands of lovers from all over India and the world, who had not heard Meher Baba's name while He was living as Man amongst men, visited His Samadhi to have His *darshan*. Although these new ones were internally connected to Baba, many of them could not help but lament that they missed the chance to be physically with Baba when His form was visible. Touched by these feelings, Francis Brabazon wrote the following couplets:

Don't let anyone tell you that we're not all in the same
boat;

Those that saw Him were seeing no more than a
beautiful coat

Whether one saw Him or not, He is still knocking on
each Heart-door

And each heart is still harboring strangers—what
matters some few, some more?²

Baba battered His form to revitalize His link with the world so that His intimacy with His lovers' hearts could be established. This link is actively retained to this day, though the body is under

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the "marvel" slab at Meherabad. In this way, the spot that Baba chose to house His body has become the living link between the Avatar's functioning Infinite Consciousness and the pilgrims who visit Him there. For the rest of the blessed Avataric period, the Samadhi will continue to radiate His Divinity to those who visit Meherabad, and to His lovers everywhere.

My personal feeling is that from February 7, 1969, a fresh dimension of Baba's spiritual work has commenced. The veiling of Meher Baba's body heralded the beginning of a new adventure in love. It was as if Baba had decided that the time had come to hide His physical form from our sight so that His divine presence could blossom all the more in our hearts. The Ancient One, in each of His Advents, veils His form at an appointed time, so that humanity may be able to experience His formlessness in a multitude of beguiling ways. I feel it is important even for those who met Baba to avail themselves of the opportunity to meet Him again in this new dimension of His work. I do not expect all to agree with me, but this is what I sincerely feel.

Meher Baba once conveyed to His close ones, "This [body] is only an overcoat that I am wearing; this is not the real Me."³ That "Real Me" of the Avatar's presence is now manifesting itself in innumerable ways through the Samadhi. There the atmosphere is permeated with His divine presence, awakening hearts to His glorious love. To enter the Samadhi is to bathe in a clear pool of purity. It not only cleanses the impurities of mind and heart, but perfumes one's entire being with His illuminating presence. The Samadhi is where Meher Baba responds to His lovers' longing for the Avatar's physical company. Whenever one has the rare fortune

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to visit there, either physically or in one's thoughts, it performs a wondrous sanctification of one's mind and heart. That little room holds the key that unlocks any human heart which sincerely calls on Him, the Eternal Beloved.



THE UNIVERSAL FACE

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LONG, LONG AGO, there lived a king in India who was strict in administration yet benevolent to his subjects. He seemed to be an exceptional ruler, attending to all his duties, from the great affairs of state to the needs of the common people, with equal attention. Most thought of him as a good king and a few felt that he was a saint, but he was, in fact, a Perfect Master.

Once, a sincere seeker visiting the city for several days had the opportunity to observe the king performing his day-to-day duties—holding meetings of court, attending a gathering of *sadhus*, and even watching a sporting event—in each activity, the king displayed a perfect equanimity. The seeker wondered, "He lives in the world, but is not of it. What could be the king's secret?" And he felt intuitively, "Here is the Master who will guide me."

Later, the seeker had an audience with the king. "Your Majesty, I feel that you are the one who will help me to find the way to God within my heart."

The king smiled and then, becoming serious, replied, "You will have to obey me."

The seeker answered, "Yes, I will."

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The king called for a round platter filled to the brim with milk, then commanded the seeker to put the platter on his head and walk through the main streets of the capital city. The king ordered, "Do not spill even a drop, or you will be beheaded by the two soldiers I am sending to escort you." The seeker humbly accepted the king's order with all sincerity.

A few hours later, the seeker returned to the king, having not spilled a drop. Pleased, the king asked him, "Did you enjoy the sights of the city?"

The seeker answered, "No, I didn't."

"Perhaps you were distracted by the crowds and the hustle-bustle of the marketplace," the king suggested.

"I never noticed that," the seeker replied.

"Why not?" the king asked, as though perplexed.

"My whole attention was focused on not spilling one drop of milk."

The king then queried, "Where is your attention now?"

"It is still absorbed in the milk."

With a smile, the king ordered the seeker to lift the platter from his head and place it on the ground. When this was done, the king revealed, "Such one-pointed focus on the presence of God within you is the secret of remaining detached in the midst of worldly activities."

Then, embracing the seeker, he said, "You can stay with me, and I will help you to find what you are longing for." There was a glow of bliss on the young man's face. For the seeker, this was the blessed moment of the Master's acceptance, and indirectly, it was God's assurance of his ultimate Union with Him.

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Here I recall that in one of Mani's letters to the West written in the 1960s, Meher Baba gave the following message to His lovers and followers: "To resolve all problems, remember Me wholeheartedly." How simple it is, but alas, how often I forget to focus my attention on Him! Though I am not always aware of it, in fact He is with me every moment of my daily life. My life with Him has been a process of finding the way to center my attention on Him, a journey on which He set me and continues to help me on my path to His Abode in me.

This brings to mind a story that I heard years back. Once, there was a woman who had an only son whom she loved dearly, though he was a simpleton and very forgetful. The mother suffered from asthma, and she told her son that if she ever had a severe attack, he should immediately give her a particular medicine kept in one of her old pouches.

One day, she did have a severe attack. A doctor was called, who declared that her case was beyond hope. Luckily, at that very moment, the son finally remembered the medicine. When he gave it to his mother, she slowly revived and, upon coming to her senses, embraced her son, tears of love flowing from her eyes. Not once did she upbraid him for putting her life in danger by forgetting the medicine until that time. She only gave him her motherly love. My relationship with Meher Baba is that of a child to the Divine Mother who has never expressed displeasure over my failures, but, rather, continues to encourage and guide me with love. Thus, Meher Baba's Name and Form have become, for me, tender reminders of His infinite, motherly love and compassion.

The following lines of Jalaluddin Rumi, a poet and Perfect

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Master of the thirteenth century, rightly and beautifully express my feelings:

The brow of the Friend is a Guarded Tablet:

To His dear ones it reveals plainly the secret of the two worlds.

Fix thine eye on the Star, for He is the One to be followed ...

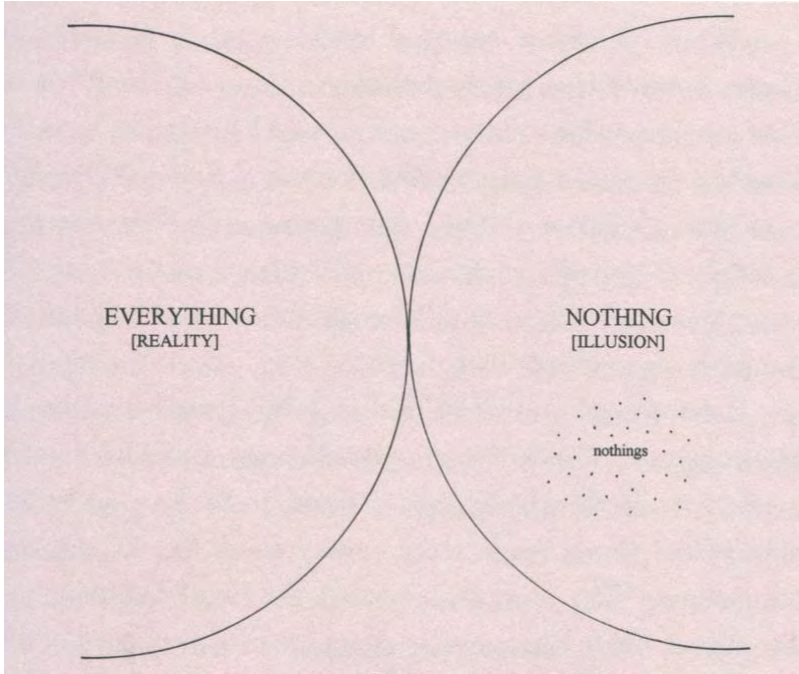
Everything is perishing except His face.

—Rumi

These words of Rumi take me back to an incident that transpired in the late '60s. One quiet morning at Guruprasad in Pune, when a few of us were with Meher Baba, He had someone draw the arcs of two circles on a sheet of paper. They just touched each other at one point. Baba asked one of His *mandali* to write inside one circle, "EVERYTHING," and inside the other, "NOTHING," and below that, to put many scattered dots, which He termed the "nothings." Baba explained that the word "EVERYTHING" represented Reality, the word "NOTHING" represented Illusion, and that the dots symbolized the numberless false selves—separate, illusory "nothings."

Then, indicating the point where the two circles just barely touched each other, Baba gestured, "This is the point of Creation through which Illusion emerges from Reality and then merges back."

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When the Infinite Reality descends through the creation point into human form as the Avatar, His advent gives a spiritual push to the domain of Illusion. The physical form of the God-Man, therefore, bears this point of Creation within Him. As Saint Paul has written:

He is the image of the invisible God,
 the first-born of all creation;
 for in Him all things were created
 in Heaven and on Earth
 All things were created through Him
 and for Him . . .¹

Colossians: 1:15 - 16

In Him all things move
 and have their being.²

Acts: 17:28

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While Baba was in New York in 1931, a painter named Julian Lamar, meeting Him for the first time, exclaimed, "How radiant Your eyes are! What a glow is on Your face! I would like to reflect Your true beauty by painting Your portrait, if You would consent to a sitting." Before granting him permission, Baba gestured, pointing to Himself, "This is not the original picture! My real portrait is something quite different, and to portray it accurately, you must wipe out your own image."³

Later, the oil portrait painted by Julian Lamar was taken to Meher Spiritual Center in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, where it is preserved to this day at Baba's House. In the late '50s, when Baba visited Myrtle Beach, He gestured towards this painting and commented, "The artist has captured the Star," indicating the star-shaped mark between the eyebrows in the portrait. Baba added, "I always have that mark when I come."

It is my feeling that the point of Creation that Baba illustrated in His diagram of the circles of EVERYTHING and NOTHING is represented in Avatar Meher Baba's physical form by the mark between His eyebrows. This is the point where Babajan planted her kiss; it is this place that touched the feet of Sai Baba; and it was here that the stone flung by Upasni Maharaj drew the Avatar's blood. Baba later related that this stone's hit was the first stroke of *Dnyan*, beginning His return to the consciousness of the three worlds. It was this spot also which Baba used to hit against the floor in an effort to ease the agony involved in leaving the Infinite Bliss of Self-realization to assume His status as the Avatar of the Age, fully conscious of the three worlds. The stone in the floor at Baba House in Pune stands as a silent

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but objective testimony to the "star" between Baba's eyebrows.

This is the juncture from which He carries out His divine game of dispensing His grace to Creation and drawing the false selves back to drown in the true Self. It is this spaceless point that ushers the finite individual into the Formless Infinity of God. Thus the Avatar's physical form serves as a passageway between Reality and Illusion, and the point between His eyebrows is like a springboard from which to dive into the Infinite Ocean of Luminosity that He is. Because of this, contemplating this star-like mark has become deeply meaningful to me as the nucleus of the functioning of the Avatar, liberating false selves from their bondage.

Every Avatar comes to be associated, over time, with a historic image that symbolizes a major aspect of that Advent. For Jesus Christ, this was the face bowed in pain on the cross, expressing His infinite suffering. For Buddha, it was the face reflecting transcendent serenity as He sat in the lotus posture, eyes closed. For Krishna, it was the face of the flute player, His features alight with merriment and humor.

Just as the Avatar has a Universal Mind and a Universal Body (of which I know nothing and can say nothing), for some of His lovers, He also assumes a symbolic Universal Face. The Universal Face is not necessarily the same for all, but in every case, it is that Face in which all other faces, with their variety of expressions, naturally merge without losing their grace and beauty. All the faces of the Avatar are subsumed by this one Face. None are negated by it; rather, all are individually glorified. When Meher Baba veiled His physical form from humanity in the crypt at Meherabad, His

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face alone was left unshrouded for the seven days of His lying-in-state. This face, our last image of the Avatar's beautiful human form, has become, for me, Meher Baba's Universal Face. And, as if in confirmation of this, I noticed that the trailing rose bush that Helen Dahm painted, which blooms beneath Baba's feet in the painting in the north window of the Samadhi, traces back into the crypt where Baba's face lies. It is almost as if the roses emerge from their source—the Universal Face—reminding me of "IT."

The expressions of all the previous Avatars can be seen in what is, for me, Meher Baba's Universal Face—the suffering and humility of Christ, the serenity of Buddha, the strength of the Prophet; and the humor of Krishna the flute player, which reveals itself in a supreme irony: many of the people who visit the Samadhi think that Meher Baba is dead and they are alive, when, in fact, Meher Baba is fully alive and they are dead! What an infinite sense of humor! And so, the prominent Avataric expressions of infinite suffering, compassion, strength, and humor are manifesting silently with ease and grace through Baba's Universal Face in the Samadhi, helping us to focus our attention on Him, the Avatar as the Eternal Awakener. This Universal Face with its star is latent in everyone and in everything; it contains all of creation, and all of creation bears its inner imprint. "Everything is perishing except His face."

Throughout my life with Meher Baba, I have been following my own internal quest for that one Face which will intimately reveal the Avatar's presence, with all His various expressions. At different points in my relationship with Baba, my inner focus would be guided to a specific form of the Formless One, and this

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would become the center of my reflections about Him for that period. I believe there was an innate reason why, at different times, a different form of Baba would become the center of my personal devotion and meditation.

Now, with the Universal Face of the Avatar, and more specifically, with the "Avataric mark" between Meher Baba's eyebrows, which have, for me, a profound and heartfelt appeal, my quest, I believe, is coming to a close, though I have an open mind to any new benedictions in the ongoing flow of His Grace.

I have heard that astrophysicists posit the existence of collapsed and compressed galaxies in deep space, which are known as "black holes." It is said that the density of these collapsed galaxies is so immense that the resulting gravitation pulls everything that comes near them—even light—into their own mass; hence the name "black hole."

The Universal Face is a vortex of immeasurable power that does not take light, but gives it; a vortex which restores, fulfills, and completes; a vortex which could be called a "light whole." This is especially true of the Star of Infinity that crests Meher Baba's brow in the Samadhi.

This Star symbolizes the Oceanized Individuality of the Avatar, in whom all drops of numberless false selves, "scattered drops in the Nothing," are contained. This is the point which, becoming a "Drop" in Creation, contains the Ocean of infinite attributes. Though it functions through the body of the Avatar, it is not limited by space or time. All that is beautiful, blissful, and noble, all that gives hope and inspiration, all that radiates love, comes from this point and returns to it.

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Once Baba gestured to me that He wished me to bow down to Him. As I stepped forward, He stopped me, and then conveyed, "Place your forehead on My feet in such a way that you will never, ever lift it again!" This was an implicit command to focus my attention on Him always, in all ways. Now, in my mind's eye, as I gaze upon that Star of Infinity, I find that here is where my forehead at last comes to rest, forever upon His blessed feet. For He is here, wholly immanent in the Star—the feet upon which I surrender my being, the hands that touched me, the smile that captivated me.

A verse from Tukaram, one of Maharashtra's greatest poets and Perfect Masters, and a favorite of Baba's, whose writing has moved millions over the centuries, expresses my feelings most eloquently:

From Your brow emanates the healing effulgence of
a million moons.

I beg of You, O Lord!

Let not my eyes stray but remain forever fixed on
Your divinely luminous face.

May Baba guide each to find their center in Him as naturally as a thousand different flowers open into a thousand different blooms, each vibrant with the colors of His beauty and redolent with the perfume of His love.

Concerning a tomb-shrine or a *samadhi* of a saint, Rumi wrote:

The very earth where a holy man is buried is ennobled by his form, which is endowed with the sanctity of his soul. This dust is blessing and protecting us; hundreds of the living are under his protection.

THE UNIVERSAL FACE

If this is true of the tomb or *samadhi* of a saint, consider the immensity of the spiritual importance of the God-Man's Samadhi, where Meher Baba is functioning as the Avatar of the Age just as He was while visible in His physical body, especially now in this Avataric Period.

Oh, let my heart ever face the Samadhi
And my every movement be a step in its direction.
So that one day, with the Avatar's grace,
I may reach the Center to abide in it forever.

Whether this heart-to-heart sharing about the Avatar's living presence in the Samadhi at Meherabad is confusing or clarifying, exhausting or exhilarating, I regard this writing as one of the Avatar's humorous acts of awakening me to His Leela (Divine Sport), of raising a few curtains of ignorance, and burning a little dross of the illusory self. He has said, "I am the Way; I am the Goal." With His Grace, any point along the way can be the Goal; however, for this, one has to resign to His Will wholeheartedly. He alone knows best. His methods, full of wit and humor, are unique with each of His lovers.

About His love, Baba once conveyed, "It increases when shared with others." And I believe that in our "togetherness," if we try to commune honestly and share our approach, perspective, and insight with others, it can be mutually beneficial. In my association with Baba, I have gathered that purity of heart, sincerity of mind, and honesty of action lead one closer to His presence. To whatever degree He has awakened these in me, they have prompted me to share my thoughts and feelings about the

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immensity and significance of the Samadhi of the Eternal Beloved.

May the dear ones of the Ancient One be consumed, in His time, in the Center of the all-inclusive luminosity of the Avatar's eternal, infinite Being—perfect, inviolable, complete unto Itself—the only Reality.

All Glory to the Ancient One, Avatar Meher Baba!

PART TWO

THE AVATAR'S FORM:

THE OCEAN OF LUMINOUS LOVE

THE AVATAR'S NAME: THE REAL REMEDY

YES, I SAW HIM

THE AVATAR'S FORM: THE OCEAN OF LUMINOUS LOVE

ONCE UPON A TIME, at one unprecedented, timeless moment, infinite formless Love, of its own free Will, happened to beget Creation. And with this occurrence, there appeared numberless forms of different kinds. Yet each form held in its center the drop of luminous Love. Every drop was veiled, however, by the form's own ignorant notion of being separate from the Ocean of Love.

Owing to the creative power of Love that resides in every form, each drop consciously and unconsciously longed to experience its true being as the formless Ocean of Love. In its sojourn of seeming separateness, the drop, in spite of assuming innumerable forms and continually renewing its efforts, was unable to feel Love in its boundless glory. This created a feeling of deep helplessness in all the forms of Creation. So the Creation earnestly invoked Love for greater help, greater release, and deeper awakening.

Lo and behold—in response to this collective yearning of Creation to experience profound levels of Love, infinite formless Love appeared in human form, moving in Creation and living amongst humanity as Man amongst men. This descent of infinite

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Love into finite human form is the first Advent of God as Love Personified, known as the Ancient One—the Avatar.

The periodic recurrence of the Avatar is the real hope of Creation for redemption and total freedom. The Advent and life of the Avatar on earth, as the Savior, quickens the hearts of humanity and drowns them more and more in Love, so that eventually all drops experience consciously the "Oceanity" of Love.

Every act of the Avatar is the spontaneous expression of Love Divine. To share the events from His Life with others and to converse with Him as one's Constant Companion are the best ways of maintaining connection with Him; to sing His praise is to glorify His unconditional compassion. His Advent represents the perfect response to the need of the times; and the Avatar's form is that universal form for which each heart yearns. So remembrance of Him is the master-key that can, with ease and grace, open any heart to receive His love.

Meher Baba states:

I am the Ancient One come to redeem the modern world.
 I was Rama; I was Krishna; I was this One, I was that One;
 and now I am Meher Baba.
 I am not this body that you see.
 It is only a coat I put on when I visit you.
 I am Infinite Consciousness.
 The Ocean of My love is yours to fill your hearts with.
 Drink deeply of My love and keep happy.

Let the oceanic form of Meher Baba be the cynosure of the inner eye's eye. Then one day, with His grace, we will drown our "selves" in the Ocean of Love's luminosity. And all of us will live happily forever after.

THE AVATAR'S NAME: THE REAL REMEDY

IMBUED WITH LOVE AND COMPASSION, the Avatar of the Age Himself chooses the Name by which He will be addressed by humanity, for whose sake He descended into Illusion. So the name of the Avatar has a unique status and significance in the world of sound. Whosoever takes His Name is guided by the Name itself to that Original Word from which the entire creation sprang forth. Therefore, whether one utters it wholeheartedly, halfheartedly, "quarter-heartedly," or no-heartedly, the Avatar's Name has a matchless sanctifying effect. It loosens the bonds of Illusion and awakens the individual to the Reality of God residing in the heart.

If this remembrance becomes an integral part of any day-to-day activity, one will be surprised to find how it endows that activity with a special grace, and its charm invites one to bring that same remembrance into other activities of one's life. Is it not befitting for us to set aside some period, however small, every day during which to say His Name? We do so many things as a matter of routine. Why then should we not routinely repeat the Name of the Avatar and focus our minds and hearts on Him?

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Let me offer this friendly suggestion: please, make no excuses; try repeating His Name. You will surely feel Him guiding you in your life and drawing you closer to Him. His name will then gradually become the sweetest music, the password that leads you through the maze of illusion to God—the only Reality. In His Name is centered all spiritual wisdom.

Meher Baba states:

I and God are One. . . . Therefore think only of Me and constantly repeat My name.

The more you think of Me, the more you will realize My love for you.

Think of Me, remain cheerful in all your trials and I am with you, helping you.

The remedy for all ills is to remember Me constantly and wholeheartedly.

Think always of Me, whatever you may be doing, then gradually you will realize that it is I doing everything through you.

The best course for My lover is to remember Me wholeheartedly as much as one can ... and leave the rest to Me.

Remember Him, repeat His Name. Taking Baba's name is remembering Him. And to remember Him, in any way, is a form of taking His Name.

Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai!!

YES, I SAW HIM

I met God who has become Man;
I met the Man who is God.
To me, this God-become-Man is Absolute God;
this Man-who-is-God is Perfect Man.
He dwells and moves with me
on every level of mind, heart, and spirit,
sharing every human joy and sorrow.

Sometimes, in His boundless compassion,
He transports me to a region beyond—
Far beyond—my understanding,
a region where silence alone reigns.
No one can describe the experience of sound sleep.
In the same way, how can I say anything
about that luminous quietude?

Yes, this is a unique sport of Divinity;
God periodically plays with mankind
through His Advent as the God-Man.

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Thus, He quickens the spirit
and offers a chance for the human race
to feel His loving presence
in numberless ways, divinely human and
humorous.

Isn't it wonderful and also dramatic?
To join the Divine Sport is really fantastic!
Do you know Him?
His name is Meher Baba.
The sound of His Name is perfect music;
His form is the personification of art Divine.

And yes, by His unconditional grace,
I stayed with Him
and even played with Him.
I journeyed with Him,
and I continue to journey with Him.
He offered me this privilege.

And so I dare to say,
"Yes, I saw Him."

PART THREE

MESSAGES AND SAYINGS OF
AVATAR MEHER BABA

M E S S A G E S

THE AVATAR

THE QUESTION AND ITS ANSWER

REAL BIRTH AND REAL DEATH

"COME ALL UNTO ME"

UNIVERSAL MESSAGE

I AM INFINITE CONSCIOUSNESS

I AM NEVER BORN

THE REMEMBERED AND FORGOTTEN ONE

GIFTS OF LOVE

HONESTY

TRUTH OF RELIGION

THE BOOK OF THE HEART

DRUGS

MAKE ME YOUR CONSTANT COMPANION

I LOVE YOU

THE AVATAR

The Avatar was the first individual soul to emerge from the evolutionary process as a Sadguru (Perfect Master), and He is the only Avatar who has ever manifested or will ever manifest. Through Him God first completed the journey from unconscious divinity to conscious divinity, first unconsciously became man in order consciously to become God. Through Him, periodically, God consciously becomes man for the liberation of mankind. The Avatar appears in different forms, under different names, at different times, in different parts of the world. As His appearance always coincides with the spiritual birth of man, so the period immediately preceding His manifestation is always one in which humanity suffers from the pangs of the approaching birth. In those who contact Him, He awakens a love that consumes all selfish desires in the flame of the one desire to serve Him.

THE QUESTION AND ITS ANSWER

There is only one question. And once you know the answer to that question, there are no more to ask. That one question is the Original Question. And to that Original Question there is only one Final Answer. But between that Question and its Answer there are innumerable false answers.

THE SAMADHI

Out of the depths of unbroken Infinity arose the Question, Who am I? and to that Question there is only one Answer—I am God!

God is Infinite; and His shadow, too, is infinite. Reality is Infinite in its Oneness; Illusion is infinite in its manyness. The one Question arising from the Oneness of the Infinite wanders through an infinite maze of answers which are distorted echoes of Itself resounding from the hollow forms of infinite nothingness.

There is only one Original Question and one Original Answer to it. Between the Original Question and the Original Answer there are innumerable false answers.

These false answers—such as, I am stone, I am bird, I am animal, I am man, I am woman, I am great, I am small—are, in turn, received, tested, and discarded until the Question arrives at the right and Final Answer, I am God.

REAL BIRTH AND REAL DEATH

There is one real birth and one real death. You are born once and you really die only once.

What is the real birth?

It is the birth of a "drop" in the Ocean of Reality. What is meant by the birth of a "drop" in the Ocean of Reality? It is the advent of individuality, born of indivisibility through a glimmer of

M E S S A G E S A N D S A Y I N G S

the first most-finite consciousness, which transfixed cognizance of limitation into the Unlimited.

What is meant by the real death?

It is consciousness getting free of all limitations. Freedom from all limitations is real death: it is really the death of all limitations: it is liberation. In between the real birth and the real death, there is no such reality as the so-called births and deaths.

What really happens in the intermediate stage known as births and deaths is that the limitations of consciousness gradually wear off till it (consciousness) is free of all limitations. Ultimately, consciousness, totally free of all limitations, experiences the unlimited Reality eternally. Real dying is equal to real living. Therefore I stress: Die for God and you will live as God

The Moslems believe in one birth only and one death only. The Christians and the Zoroastrians the same. All are right. But Jesus, Buddha, Mohammed, Zoroaster, all meant what I mean by real birth and real death. I say you are born once and die once.

All the so-called births and deaths are only sleeps and wakings. The difference between sleep and death is that when you sleep you awake and find yourself in the same body; but after death you awake in a different body. You never die. Only the blessed ones die and become one with God.

" C O M E A L L U N T O M E "

Age after age, when the wick of righteousness burns low, the Avatar comes yet once again to rekindle the torch of Love and

THE SAMADHI

Truth. Age after age, amidst the clamor of disruptions, wars, fear, and chaos, rings the Avatar's call:

"Come all unto Me."

Although, because of the veil of illusion, this Call of the Ancient One may appear as a voice in the wilderness, its echo and re-echo nevertheless pervades through time and space, to rouse at first a few, and eventually millions, from their deep slumber of ignorance. And in the midst of illusion, as the Voice behind all voices, it awakens humanity to bear witness to the Manifestation of God amidst mankind.

The time is come. I repeat the Call, and bid all come unto Me.

UNIVERSAL MESSAGE

I have come not to teach but to awaken. Understand therefore that I lay down no precepts.

I veil myself from man by his own curtain of ignorance, and manifest My Glory to a few. My present Avataric Form is the last Incarnation of this cycle of time, hence my Manifestation will be the greatest. When I break My Silence, the impact of My Love will be universal and all life in creation will know, feel, and receive of it. It will help every individual to break himself free from his own bondage in his own way. I am the Divine Beloved who loves you more than you can ever love yourself. The breaking of My Silence will help you to help yourself in knowing your real Self.

MESSAGES AND SAYINGS

All this world confusion and chaos was inevitable and no one is to blame. What had to happen has happened; and what has to happen will happen. There was and is no way out except through My coming in your midst. I had to come, and I have come. I am the Ancient One.

I AM INFINITE
CONSCIOUSNESS

Believe that I am the Ancient One. Do not doubt that for a moment. There is no possibility of My being anyone else. I am not this body that you see. It is only a coat I put on when I visit you. I am Infinite Consciousness. I sit with you, play and laugh with you; but simultaneously I am working on all planes of existence.

Before Me are saints and perfect saints and masters of the earlier stages of the spiritual path. They are all different forms of Me. I am the Root of every one and every thing. An infinite number of branches spread out from Me. I work through, and suffer in and for, each one of you.

My bliss and My infinite sense of humor sustain Me in My suffering. The amusing incidents that arise at the expense of none lighten My burden.

Think of Me; remain cheerful in all your trials and I am with you helping you.

THE SAMADHI

I AM NEVER BORN

I am never born; I never die. Yet every moment I take birth and undergo death. The countless illusory births and deaths are necessary landmarks in the progression of man's consciousness to Truth—a prelude to the Real Death and Real Birth. The Real Death is when one dies to self, and the Real Birth is when, dying to self, one is born in God, to live forever His Eternal Life consciously.

THE REMEMBERED
AND FORGOTTEN ONE

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

I am that Ancient One whose past is worshipped and remembered, whose present is ignored and forgotten and whose future (Advent) is anticipated with great fervor and longing.

MESSAGES AND SAYINGS

GIFTS OF LOVE

Love is a gift from God to man.

Obedience is a gift from Master to man.

Surrender is a gift from man to Master.

One who loves desires the will of the Beloved.

One who obeys does the will of the Beloved.

One who surrenders knows nothing but the will of the
Beloved.

Love seeks union with the Beloved.

Obedience seeks the pleasure of the Beloved.

Surrender seeks nothing.

One who loves is the lover of the Beloved.

One who obeys is the beloved of the Beloved.

One who surrenders has no existence other than the Beloved.

Greater than love is obedience.

Greater than obedience is surrender.

All three arise out of, and remain contained in,

The Ocean of divine Love.

THE SAMADHI

H O N E S T Y

I have lately been laying stress on honesty. If we love God honestly, we become one with Him. Never before has dishonesty and hypocrisy prevailed in this world as today. If the least hypocrisy creeps into our thoughts, words, and deeds, God, who is the innermost Self in us all, keeps Himself hidden.

Hypocrisy is a million-headed cobra. There are today so many so-called saints who, even though they tell people to be honest and not be hypocrites, are yet themselves deep in dishonesty.

I say with Divine Authority that I am in you all, and if you honestly love God, you will find Him everywhere. And remember, if you cannot love God, and cannot lead saintly lives, then at least do not make a show of love and saintliness, because the worst scoundrels are better than hypocritical saints.

T R U T H O F R E L I G I O N

I belong to no religion. Every religion belongs to Me. My personal religion is My being the Ancient Infinite One, and the religion I impart to all is Love for God, which is the Truth of all religions.

This Love can belong to all, high and low, rich and poor.

MESSAGES AND SAYINGS

Every one of every caste and creed can love God. The one and only God who resides equally in us all is approachable by each one of us through love.

Religion, like worship, must be from the heart. If instead of erecting churches, fire-temples, *mandirs*, and mosques, people were to establish the House of God in their hearts for the Beloved God to dwell in, My work will have been done.

If, instead of mechanically performing ceremonies and rituals because of age-old customs, people were to serve their fellow beings with the selflessness of love, taking God to be equally residing in one and all, and knowing that by so serving others they are serving Me, My work will have been fulfilled.

THE BOOK OF THE HEART

I have not come to establish any cult, society, or organization; nor even to establish a new religion. The religion that I shall give teaches the knowledge of the One behind the many. The book that I shall make people read is the book of the heart that holds the key to the mystery of life. I shall bring about a happy blending of the head and the heart. I shall revitalize all religions and cults, and bring them together like beads on one string.

THE SAMADHI

DRUGS

The user of LSD can never reach subtle consciousness in this incarnation despite its repeated use. To experience real spiritual consciousness, surrenderance to a Perfect Master is necessary.

When LSD is used for genuine medical purposes, in controlled doses, under the supervision of specialists, there are no chances of brain, liver, or kidney being damaged.

Taking LSD is harmful physically, mentally, and spiritually. But if you take Me into your heart and love Me as your real Self, you will find Me in you as the infinite Ocean of love. And this experience will remain continuously throughout eternity.

No drug, whatever its great promise, can help one to attain the spiritual goal.

Drugs are delusion within illusion.

If God can be found through the medium of any drug, God is not worthy of being God.

I am God. My word is Truth.

MAKE ME YOUR CONSTANT COMPANION

I want you to make Me your constant Companion.

Think of Me more than you think of your own self.

MESSAGES AND SAYINGS

The more you think of Me, the more you will realize My Love for you.

Your duty is to keep Me constantly with you throughout your thoughts, speech, and actions.

No amount of slander can affect or change Me, nor any amount of admiration or praise enhance or glorify My Divinity.

Baba is what He is.

I was Baba; I am Baba; and shall forevermore remain Baba.

I LOVE YOU

Do not worry about your weaknesses.

Eventually they will go; even if they linger, love will one day consume them.

Everything disappears in the Ocean of Love.

Because I love you, you have a pool of love within you.

When you feel wretched, when you fall in your weakness, have a dip in that pool of love.

Refresh yourself in that pool of My love within you.

It is always there.

Even if you wash your weaknesses every day in that pool, it will remain clear.

Don't worry. Baba loves you, that is what really matters.

THE SAMADHI

SAYINGS

Live in the world but be not of it.

If understood, life is simply a jest;
If misunderstood, life becomes a pest.
Once overcome, life is ever at rest.
For pilgrims of the Path, life is a test.
When relinquished through love,
Life is at its best.

Mind stopped is God.
Mind working is man.
Mind slowed down is *mast* [God-intoxicated].
Mind working fast is mad.

God is everywhere and *does* everything.
God is within us and *knows* everything.
God is within us and *sees* everything.
God is beyond us and *IS* everything.
God alone *IS*.

Devotion burns the Beloved.
Love burns the lover.
Devotion seeks the blessings of the Beloved.
Love seeks happiness for the Beloved.

MESSAGES AND SAYINGS

Devotion throws the burden on the Beloved.
Love seeks to shoulder the burden of the Beloved.

Devotion asks.
Love gives.

Love is a reflection of God's unity
in the world of duality.
It constitutes the entire significance of creation.

Inscribe these words in your heart:
Nothing is real but God.
Nothing matters but love for God.

Take it as a blessing, or take it as a test—
Whatever happens, happens for the best.

All paths are Mine,
and all lead eventually to Me.
But the shortest Way to Me
is the "No-Path of self-annihilative love."

I am never silent; I speak eternally.
The voice that is heard deep within the soul is
My voice ...
the voice of inspiration, of intuition, of guidance.
Through those who are receptive to this voice,
I speak ...

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Long for one thing; be restless for one thing.
Long and wait for one thing that will kill
a million other longings.
Long for Union with the Beloved.

I am the Divine Beloved
worthy of being loved,
because I am Love.
Don't try to understand Me,
My depth is unfathomable.
Just love Me.
My message always has been
and always will be
of Divine Love.

Everything is Mine except Myself;
Myself is for those who love Me.
I am the Ancient One,
the Highest of the High.
Love Me, Love Me, Love Me,
and you will find Me.

I am the Ancient One.
Come all unto Me.
Don't worry; I am with you.
The Ocean of My Love is yours
to fill your hearts with.
Drink deeply of My Love and keep happy.

MESSAGES AND SAYINGS

Do your best and leave to Me the rest. Then don't worry, be happy, I will help you.

Once you open your wings to fly, you must fly straight like the swan. Do not flit from tree to tree like the sparrow, or many things will distract you on the way, and the journey is long.

I have only love to give and all I want is love.

Things that are real are given and received in silence.

PART FOUR

VISITING THE SAMADHI

VISITING THE SAMADHI

IN A RURAL AREA OF MAHARASHTRA STATE, six miles south of the city of Ahmednagar, lies a place called Meherabad, surrounded by a broad expanse of farmland.

Here, on a low hill rising above the level countryside, stands a small domed structure with a golden finial. This is the Samadhi, the Tomb-Shrine, of Avatar Meher Baba. It is not a grand work of architecture, but is a simple structure made of rough-hewn stone. But within, the Samadhi holds unfathomable divine majesty and spiritual splendor.

At the bottom of the hill begins a winding path lined with the neem and banyan trees that once shaded Meher Baba's way as He walked up the slope with His swift and graceful strides. Today, as then, a pilgrim following this path may hear the sounds of birds and of farmers plowing their fields, and may even be accompanied by an occasional butterfly flitting by.

Near the Samadhi are a number of improvised buildings used by Meher Baba during various phases of His universal spiritual work. Like the Samadhi, they are a testament to the divine simplicity through which infinite love and compassion have manifested in this Advent of the God-Man. Those coming to Meherabad for the first time might wonder about the graves on

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either side of the Samadhi. It was Meher Baba's express wish that a select few of His intimate women disciples and His parents be buried there. Also close by, in a grove of banyan trees, six smaller graves containing the remains of some of Baba's pets attest to His love for animals.

The Samadhi is open every day from six in the morning to eight at night. In the morning and evening the prayers given by Meher Baba are recited, and songs glorifying divine love are sung by those gathered there in His remembrance. Especially at such times, the atmosphere is charged with the Avatar's heart-stirring presence.

In silence the call from the Samadhi ever rings,

"Come all unto Me!"

There, the Ancient One waits impatiently

until His call is responded to.

The hearts of those who enter there

are kindled by His love,

and a new life awakens in them.

A visit to the Samadhi is the beginning of the heart's journey through the manifold phases of life—both exhilarating and challenging—continuously sustained by the Avatar's grace. It is a journey to His Universal Heart, the fount of boundless compassion and unconditional love.

Meherabad is most easily reached by car or bus, and is located approximately halfway between Pune and Aurangabad on the Mumbai (Bombay)-Aurangabad Road. For pilgrims traveling from abroad, Mumbai is usually the most convenient point of disembarkation. From Mumbai the visitor may travel to Ahmednagar by bus, train, or car via Pune, where Meher Baba was born.

VISITING THE SAMADHI

Those who wish to visit Meherabad may write for further information to:

Avatar Meher Baba Trust
Pilgrim Reservations Office
King's Road, Post Bag 31
Ahmednagar, M.S. 414001
India

*Salutations to the God-Man,
the Eternal Beloved Avatar Meher Baba!*

NOTES

At the Entrance

1. *Glimpses of the God-Man, Meher Baba*, vol. 5, p. 162.
2. Excerpt from a letter written by Mani, Meher Baba's sister, to a Baba-lover, dated November 22, 1993.
3. *Listen, Humanity*, p. 249.

The Avatar's Humor

1. *Three Incredible Weeks with Meher Baba*, pp. 25-27.

"I Am Here"

1. *Discourses*, p. 158.
2. *Discourses*, pp. 230-232.
3. *Discourses*, pp. 188-190.

The Public Manifestation

1. *In Quest of Truth, or How I Came to Meher Baba*, p. 98.
2. *A Love So Amazing*, p. 82.
3. *GLOW International*, May 1985, p. 8.
4. *Glimpses of the God-Man, Meher Baba*, vol. 5, p. 271.
5. *Glimpses of the God-Man, Meher Baba*, vol. 6, p. 92.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
7. *The Everything and the Nothing*, p. 19.

NOTES

Awake in the Samadhi

1. *Eighty-two Family Letters*, pp. 158-159.
2. *God Speaks*, 2nd ed., pp. 268-269.

The Link Alive With Love

1. *Eighty-two Family Letters*, p. 328.
2. *The Awakener*, vol. 14, no. 2 (1972), p. 32.
3. *Because of Love*, p. 61.

The Universal Face

1. *Colossians* 1:15-16
2. *Acts* 17:28
3. *Lord Meher*, vol. 4, p. 14 70.

GLOSSARY

Adi Shakti: The Primal Power from which the Creation came forth.

arti: A song of praise invoking the Master to shower His love and compassion on His lovers.

avatar, an: An incarnation manifesting a specific divine quality of a deity.

Avatar, the: "God-become-man." The incarnation of God, the Infinite, in a finite human form. The traditional use of the word avatar (with a lowercase a) refers to an incarnation manifesting a specific divine quality of a deity.

darshan: An audience with the Master - one of the ways of expressing homage and respect for one's Master.

ghazal: A short love poem. An ode. A special poetic composition in Persian, Urdu, or Hindi.

mandali: Lit., a group associated with a common activity. A group of intimate disciples of a Perfect Master or the Avatar.

G L O S S A R Y

mandir: A Hindu temple.

mantra: A sacred name or phrase repeated to invoke God .

masjid: A mosque, a place of public worship for Muslims.

mast (Pronounced must): A God-intoxicated person on the spiritual path.

Maya: Lit., illusion—that which does not exist. The principle of Ignorance, which makes the Nothing appear as Everything. In a general sense, false attachment.

Qutub: Lit., hub or axis. A Perfect Master.

Sadguru: A Perfect Master or Man-God, who is infinitely conscious of God and creation simultaneously.

sadra: A thin, ankle-length muslin garment.

Sahaj Samadhi: The spontaneous experience of the Perfect Masters and the Avatar of their infinite, effortless, and continuous life of Perfection—divinity in action.

sanskaras: Impressions left by thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Sat-Chit-Anand: Infinite Power-Knowledge-Bliss. Lit., *sat* means Eternal Existence, the Reality.

Upanishads: Ancient Sanskrit scriptures expounding intuitive knowledge of Reality.

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STAR OF INFINITY

THE TOMB-SHRINE OF AVATAR MEHER BABA

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