

**The Silent Word:
Being Some Chapters
of the Life and Time
of Avatar Meher Baba**

By

Francis Brabazon

An Avatar Meher Baba Perpetual Public
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The Silent Word

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Proletarians – Translations

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Singing Threshold

Let Us The People Sing

East West Gathering

Word at World's End

In Dust I Sing

The Wind of the Word

THE SILENT WORD

BEING SOME CHAPTERS OF THE
LIFE AND TIME

OF

AVATAR MEHER BABA

By

FRANCIS BRABAZON

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AUSTRALIA

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Acknowledgments

This book has been written with the co-operation of many people. It began on my evening walks with Eruch and extended over most of the ten years I was with Meher Baba. From these walks I gathered whatever small understanding I have of the life and time (being and function) of the Avatar, and of the real meaning of obedience to the Master. Eruch might well be called the ‘Tongue of God,’ and I was all ears — hardly ever intruding with questions or with my own ideas.

Then there was the daily company of the resident mandali, or close disciples, men and women who lived at the Meherazad ashram: Pendu, Baidul, Vishnu, Kaka, Aloba and Bhau; Goher, Naja, Mani and Rano. (Mehera and Mehru were on the other side of the wall at that time and were never seen by the men.) These men and women were living examples in their daily lives of actual discipleship in this time and age: they did not derive from sculptured figures of the past, nor had they materialized out of books written in a language no one now speaks. They were as they were — moulded and remoulded from the residual impressions (sanskaras) of many lives to take their place with God-Man in his present advent. Unlike Eruch they had no ‘knowledge’ to pass on to others; their Path was in pure service without thought of personal reward.

Next there were the mandali who lived away from Meherazad, but under Baba’s detailed instructions; who came to the ashram for an hour, a day or a week when

he called them. The extent of this class was never known to anyone except Baba himself, but it would have been some hundreds. A few of these were: Padri (Ferdoon Naosherwan Driver), who looked after the Meherabad ashram; Adi (Adi K. Irani), who had charge of the Ahmednagar office; Nariman (Nariman Dadachanji) a Bombay businessman, and his wife Arnavaz; Meherji (Meherji Karkaria) a Poona businessman; Merwan Jessawala, Eruch's young unmarried brother, who as well as supporting his mother and sister was the 'supply man' to the ashram of all sorts of odd things not procurable locally: Dr. Donkin, retired after completing his great book, *The Wayfarers*, to occupy a series of uneasy residences; Ramjoo (Abdulkarim Ramjoo Abdulla), who divided his time between business and literary work and spent the summers with Baba. He and Padri and Adi had come to Baba when they were quite young and had shared in the adventures and hardships of the early years.

Baba made it quite clear that there was no difference between the two mandalis and that each and all would go on ripening in love whether living with him or far away so long as they obeyed his instructions to the letter. All these maintained a keen interest in the book over the years of its writing.

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Also there were the thousands who came to the great public gatherings: called *darshan* programs: each a song of praise and supplication, each a mirror reflecting a rare personal experience. All these were fellow-workers in a very real sense of the word.

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PART 1

I. Introductory

MEN are born, and die, and are reborn; until they die into the Deathless and are never born again. But one Man, being birthless and deathless, takes birth again and again because of the cry of the world for relief from the burden of living; and to mirror himself in the tears of his lovers.

This Man is the God-Man: Whole God; Perfect Man. Because he is God his actions as a Man are perfect; and because he is a Man mankind partakes of the divine qualities of his Godhood.

To some he comes as a dark cloud heavy with the blessings of rain at the height of summer's heat; to some he comes as the tender sun at the end of winter's freeze to turn ice into murmuring music; and to some he is two arms and a kiss, two eyes and a golden word to be uttered.

The right to eat bread instead of stones, to love and sing and stop building tomorrow, is re-established; and the boughs of the Beloved's orchard hang low so that the fruits which only the 'long-armed' could reach may be plucked by all.

Creation marches up through the circles of expanding consciousness, and men criss-cross the worlds of sensory and intellectual experience, abandoning one vehicle when it is of no further use and building another for the next stage of the journey — all at the instance of the Original Whim, Who Am I? One by one they break away from the anthill of coming and going, from the jungle of eating and being eaten, and take the road back through the widening circles of love to the only reality: I myself am God.

The first one to accomplish this double journey knew, at its end, that no journey had ever been journeyed —

that he had always been where he was — and he came back to us (making no journey at all in doing so, for he was already within each of our hearts as our true self), came back to us to awaken us from our dream-journeys to take the no-road of dust to his feet — to the reality of ourselves.

His home is in the heart; yet, each time he must come to it and knock on its door again — for the most part only to find that it is full of the strangers of our wants. And being a shy man, easily embarrassed by the presence of strangers, he turns away.

And because the heart of man is something great — so great that God himself can live comfortably and happily in it — when he turns away, Nature, which waits upon man when men obey God's laws, longing to achieve man-state, is betrayed and also turns away; and lands which were fertile become deserts; rivers which fed men overwhelm them and new disease flourishes.

God-Man means today. Today means to eat from his orchard and to drink in the wineshop he has opened in Love Street and to sleep under the shelter of his feet. Tomorrow is not what we may build but what he permits to endure. Tomorrow, as far as we are concerned, will be more miles along the roads of his journey. But now he goes with us, and so today and tomorrow meet in his smile and are drowned in the wine cup he fills for us.

He comes because of men's cry, and to see himself in the mirrors of his lovers' tears. And the latter is the greater act — for the cry is answered out of compassion, but the mirror and the Image are because of love.

Love was present in the Whim of Who-am-I; the divine qualities only appeared when the Word went out from itself in search of itself. They were the brightness of the first morning, and the singing of the stars and the shout of men were because of it. They were the Word's glorious escort and they attend Love's dear person on his coming to us and his going and during the interval between these which is called his advent. On the roads of his journey across the world he tells one or another of his bright attendants — Compassion,

Mercy, Brother of the Lowly, Helper of the Helpless — to comfort and encourage those of his lovers who call to him from the anguish of not remembering him as he should be remembered.

Since God-Man's birth is his answer to the cry of the world, his form is the embodiment of all men's sufferings, but the touch of his hand is our healing. His countenance is a light in each one's darkness and his words — even the lightest passing remarks — are paths to his feet.

Those who see and touch him have their reward according to the clearness of their sight and the purity of their touch; those who believe without ever having seen him have few obstructions in their way and will meet him next time; but those who serve him without thought of themselves are the Children of the Daaman and will never lose their hold on it until he shakes them free into Man-Godhood.

He is the Master of the world, yet he apparently allows the world to master him so that his lovers may learn to turn seeming defeats into real victories. (Every blow loosens the sanskaric shackles on the soul.) He is the slave of the love of his lovers — that love which makes the lover the dust of his feet and a lord of creation. The Cross and the Flute and the Begging-bowl are his eternal symbols made of his flesh, suffered, breathed into, out-held in the same one eternal moment.

There was a time when God-Man was not. Neither was anything. There was only the eternal Is-state of God. He became as soon as we were; and having come, he will never leave us. If we seek to live wisely or abandon ourselves to folly, if we love and serve others or remain in the cold prison cells of ourselves, *he is with us*. He is with us whatever we are doing; there is nowhere else he can be; he is with each one of us till the end of each one's little world.

Because we cannot understand his time-scale of timelessness we speak of his coming to us and his going away. But there is nowhere from which he may come: he is always here — standing outside the doors of our hearts, knocking so discreetly in case we are not ready

to be disturbed. And when we do open to him and he sees the drunken riot going on inside he silently withdraws. His seven hundred years' instant will pass in an instant and he will knock again.

He comes his not-coming — just as the sun rises it's not-rising. The sun's rising is only because the earth turns about it; it is always where it is 'waiting' for each piece of earth to receive its light. So, beloved God-Man is eternally where he is — here with us. If we could really grasp this we would become Self-realized instantly and remain where we are — neither coming in fresh birth nor going in another death. And this experience requires nothing but his ever-present Grace in his ever-present person — and for our hearts to be empty when he knocks.

In the instant of his knocking and our opening and his withdrawal and his coming in, well-pleased with the spotlessness of our house, is contained the whole drama of our existence from the beginningless beginning of things, and the entire love game of the Lover and the Beloved: he as lover seeking a beloved through whom to realize his love-nature; we as lovers so greatly desiring to pass away into him that we allow our houses to fall into ruin and we become dust dancing before the threshold of his beautiful feet.

Time ceases. The world's tomorrow is but an extension of the false dream which was yesterday, and today was our possessing and nourishing it.

God-Man is always the Same One God-Man, the same Waiting One in a change of dress with a new name, crucified, playing his flute, gently knocking on our doors. We know this. We know he is the indescribable Beloved who is before the world was; who waits for a spark of love in our hearts to be blown by the breath of devotion into a broom of flame with which to sweep out the strangers who for ages have been devouring our substance: who smiles as our neglected houses fall into dust (and who laughs when empires crumble in ruins).

We know of his continuous glory through what is called the past; but it is his waiting present person whom we love: he who waits for as little as one wide it-is-all-ended smile when we open to his knock, and for as much

as the birth of a new humanity when he speaks again his Becoming Word.

We who have come to this infinitely beautiful One sing under the shade of wine glasses upheld for him to fill when it so pleases him. And when the melody of pouring wine begins we are lost to all but love.

Time now is measured by the duration of each song. We do not say so and so time ago, we say, a song or two songs ago. Tomorrow exists only as the Moment of his Mood when he will bestow his Glance of Grace.

2. *The Birth of the God-Man*

AVATAR Meher Baba was born when from his unbroken, timeless Is-state of very Being, the Whim for Self-Knowledge surged in him and the dark-burning stuff of creation issued from his eternal, but only now awakened, creativity; and, because of the shock and reverberation of the Whim's surge — the shock of the All-knowing asking himself who he was — the dark-burning fluidity of all things hardened, through seven stages of hardening, into Stone, each stage giving off the gases of its hardness-becoming.

Thus was the illimitable, all-embracing Beloved born of ignorance into darkest darkness — stone. But the light of himself, his pure luminosity, was hidden in the darkness, and after aeons, broke out of stone and clothed itself in every kind of leaf and bush and tree, which were created out of the residual impressions of stone-confinement. And in so creating and experiencing these new forms he forgot the painful memory of stone.

After he had experienced the numberless forms of vegetation, he broke free from all of them and, in turn, lived in, and left behind, worms and fish and birds and animals; and now lives in our hearts.

And because he has experienced darkest darkness and knows our hearts to the deepest caverns of their darknesses and remains living in them as pure light and all-love, he is the only beloved whom we should call Beloved.

This Beloved, who lives eternally in our hearts, was born in our time as a Man because time was falling to pieces and all real values were vanishing, and only as a Man could his love and compassion for us be fully expressed and his All-power be wholly exercised.

He-who-is-always-here materialized out of his pure

luminosity a form which all men then and later would adore and worship in song, each in his own way of singing.

He was born as a man with man-consciousness out of his compassion for men; but as soon as the master Babajan with a kiss tore the veil of that consciousness, he tried to escape back to his birthless Self, and the master Upasni Maharaj had to go after him and bring him back and make him aware of his Office of God-Man which he holds through everlasting time.

All this took place in the flash of a seven-year moment: the Unlimited had accepted gross limitation and remained unlimited; Knowledge had accepted complete ignorance and knew everything; Power had accepted utter weakness and was still All-powerful; Bliss had accepted suffering and was ever the Ocean it was; when all this had taken place and the vast sum of evolution, reincarnation and involution was totalled and his Seal, *'All this is good, always was good and shall remain so eternally,'* was put upon the creation, he was again the birthless always-here divine Beloved shining in an entirely new Man-shape: Progenitor of a New Humanity.

His birth, although in the manner of all men's, was because of his compassion; his body was a coat he had put on to snare our imagination and challenge our bravery. His presence said, I have been, with you since the beginning of things when I sent you dancing down the roads of being, shouting in love for me. I sent you; but I also went with you supporting and encouraging you every step of the shout. You went out singing in search of me; who among you now has the daring to find me and know that I am that one who has always been with you? I am nearer to you than you are to yourselves — so near that only a breath separates us.

He had put on the coat of his body out of compassion for us, but he was never comfortable in it. It was new and stiff, sometimes leaving him cold and sometimes making him too hot. It was tailored immaculately, but it never fitted, and at times he seemed surprised that he had ever had it made and that he was wearing it. Because

of his perfection of manhood he was a stranger in the world of men — a stranger in a stiff, new coat. The world was his, but he did not belong in it. He embraced it, but looked at it askance — wondering why he had ever permitted himself to create it; why, being the wisest of the wise, he had done what the most foolish would not do — create an unending trouble for himself.

He looked at the world askance, but also with the tender regard of a lover who understands every mood of a capricious and wilful beloved. His eyes were the Ancient One's — he of infinite attributes: All-loving, All-knowing, All-seeing, All-suffering, All-patient, All-forgiving, eternal Newness. He is the Junction of Reality and Illusion: Bliss and misery, Knowledge and ignorance, Power and helplessness.

His birth as the Creation and his birth as the divine Beloved are but stories told out of a dream until he is born in us and we in him, and all our defences, laboured at over countless lives, fall down at his embrace; for the purpose of the Creation was the individualization of the Ocean of Being into drops, and the purpose of God's Man-form was that the drops should know that they are the Ocean. In this birth there are thousands of deaths — every moment when we forget him. But such is his compassion that as soon as we remember him he again takes birth.

His teaching was in his being what he eternally is — the Ancient One; his presence was the sum of knowledge, and his words were the audible syllables of his silence proclaiming his Ever-here-ness. He in his person was the perfection and completeness of divine utterance. And to give us a clear path through our blasphemies of purpose and travesties of action he said, Love me, — Meaning, Do for me as you would have me do with you. And he also said, Be happy, — Meaning, Surrender to me in perfect child-like trust, for you can do nothing unless my word sanctions it. And because each of us could only love according to the love he had, he gave each that sort of love which each could endure the shining of.

But because we wanted to hear words of our languages,

he also gave out some volumes of discourses and messages; and only a few knew what loving care he put into them to make them incomprehensible to all but the dumbest intellects — so that we would become aware of the absurdity of trying to understand with our minds That which is entirely beyond mind, and begin to love.

His teaching was in his being what he is — the Ancient One, the eternal Beloved whose creative Word broke into thousands of millions of mirrors — mirrors of stone and mirrors of human hearts. And the stone mirrors reflect his stoneness and hearts reflect his Manhood, and those of the perfect saints tell him he is God.

Over and above telling us who he was, what could such a Beloved say except ‘Love me,’ and ‘Be happy.’ When we do these things we do not need books; and if we do not do them, thousands of volumes would be of no use to us.

His daily talk was rain falling on the dust of the world, turning it green for a moment, refreshing our eyes and spirits and making us think that greenness and refreshment were eternal Truth. But his ‘Love me’ implied loving in the desert as well as in the green places, and his ‘Be happy’ meant to be so despite whatever hardships he in his infinite compassion gave us.

Because he is everywhere in everyone, he necessarily had to circumnavigate the world so that those who, because of sanskaric circumstance, were dotted about over the earth could know that he, the Beautiful One who makes shine all which shines and burns all which is dry and sapless, was here on earth; and so that those who were ready for closer association could attach themselves to his person, and those not so called would begin to prepare their heart-habitations for his occupancy; another time when, road-weary, he knocks on their doors.

And he fed the poor in their thousands to satisfy their immense hungers and gave them cloth to cover their wretched nakedness.

And he went to those who live beyond the borders of gross-consciousness to comfort them and urge them on the next stage of their journey to him for their own

sakes for love's sake, and for the sake of humanity; and to strike off the golden shackles of those bowed before his door so that they could look up and behold his ever-glory and cross over to the union of self-state. (The sound of these shackles falling on love's ground reaches the world as a fabulous music unheard, but felt; inspiring in us the possibility of journeying, hollowing places in our hearts so that the first notes of the Beloved's I-Am Song can be heard.)

Such is the bright Beloved whom we call Meher Baba, who was born from his unbroken, timeless Is-state because he was but did not know he was; who made the immense journey from Beyond-the-Beyond to our hearts and was born in our time as a Man to reassure us that he was with us and had been since the beginning of the world and would be until each of our worlds perished, unsupported by desire.

He created for us a new opportunity for service, and gave us a song to sing that would be eternally New.

3. *His Previous Births*

BEFORE Meher Baba was Meher Baba he was Mohammed, and his father was Abdulla and his mother Amina; and his wife was Khadija who was fifteen years older than he. After she died (when he was forty years) he married several other women, but they were either tribal alliances or widows of his captains killed in battle. But he especially loved Aisha, the daughter of Abu Bakr, his chief disciple.

Once when some of his Companions asked him who he was he said: 'I am what Abraham my father prayed for and the Good News of Jesus my brother. When my mother was carrying me she saw a light proceeding from her which lit up the whole land. When I was a small boy shepherding the lambs with a brother of mine behind the tents two men dressed in shining white came and seized me and threw me to the ground, took out my heart and split it and took out a black drop which they threw away. Then they washed my heart thoroughly with snow they had brought in a gold bowl. Then one said to the other, "Weigh him against ten of his people": they did so and I outweighed them. Then they weighed me against a hundred, and a thousand and I outweighed them. He said, "Let it be now, for if we weighed him against his whole tribe he would outweigh them."

People said of Mohammed that he was the first of his people in manliness, the best in character, most noble in lineage, the best neighbour, the most kind, truthful and reliable. And they called him The Trustworthy.

And before Mohammed, Meher Baba was Jesus, whose father was Joseph and whose mother was Mary as everyone knows. He had no wife. He was a wanderer; and his earth-stay was short. Before he dropped his body

he told the people — though some say that he only told his immediate disciples — that he would come again. This he did, AD 570, and stayed with us until AD 632. Once he wept, and the whole world was drowned.

And before Jesus he was the Buddha, who was born a prince and married, but soon left his wife for the Road with a begging bowl. His ministry was the longest of all — fifty years.

And before the Buddha he was Krishna and his father was Vasudeva who was a great chief of a pastoral people dwelling along the river Yamuna or Jumna as it is now called, and his mother was Devaki, but he was suckled by Yashoda.

While still a boy he liquidated various and many obstructive and antisocial elements in the community or, as they put it in their primitive language, he slew many demons. He was also exceedingly mischievous and plagued his foster-mother to distraction. One day she caught him stealing butter, but he denied it. She said, ‘Open your mouth.’ He did so and the poor woman saw the universe therein with all its burning suns. At another time she tied him to a tree and he walked off dragging the tree with him.

He grew into an incredibly handsome youth whose charm none could resist. One night he danced with sixteen thousand girls, accompanying the dances with his magic flute — and the night itself stood still in ecstasy.

He became the greatest warrior not only of his own people but of all the tribes around. He was Dharma or divine law personified and so never hesitated to break the law to suit his purposes. And when things were quiet on the military and legal fronts, he would carry off another willing royal maiden for his love satisfaction and as a sure way of starting up another war.

On the eve of the great battle that ended all battles for a long time, and in which Krishna did not fight but was Prince Arjuna’s charioteer, he delivered his ‘Song of the Lord’ proclaiming his God *Is* state and urging us to love the divine Beloved and remember his Name

in our daily work.

And before Krishna, beloved Baba was Rama whose father was King Dasharatha, which means Ten Chariots, which means that his rule extended to the ten points of the world. His mother was Queen Kaushalya. His wife was peerless Sita. He was the perfect Warrior-King.

And before that Baba was Zoroaster; his father was Pourushaspa, which means 'with grey horses,' and his mother was Dughdhova, or 'Who has milked cows.'

It is said that when he was born he laughed, and the laughter illuminated the whole house. His father was astonished at him, at his laughter and beauty and loveliness, and he said in his heart, 'This is the glory of God. Save this child, every infant born into the world has wept.' But all who were unclean and evil were stung to the heart by that laughter and hated the Light-bringer. There was a king who, like Herod, determined to do away with a possible rival, but when he struck at the child with his dagger his arm became withered.

Like Jesus he began his ministry at the age of thirty, preaching the same One Eternal Existent One. At first, because he owned only a few cattle the people did not listen to him; but then he won the ear and heart of King Vishaspa who sent out his armies and converted the people that way. (Not so cruel really when one considers that to deny the Avatar is to suffer the hell of remorse after one dies, and so it does not matter much whether one meets death by the sword or in bed.)

Beyond Zoroaster beloved Baba did not go — for with him we are already back seven thousand years (although some authorities say it was only six thousand) and are dealing with things in a language no one any longer can understand.

Once, when talking to us about these previous Incarnations, Baba said that each time, despite his perfect Perfection he showed one weakness: That of Mohammed was that he said he was only a Messenger, instead of telling the truth that he was God; that of Jesus was in his calling upon his 'Father,' which limited him to Sonship; that of the Buddha was in his explaining the Path only as far as Nirvana (passing away) and saying

nothing about the I-Am-God state (Nirvikalpa); that of Krishna was in not being able to protect his gopis, and he himself, the Great Archer, dying from the poisoned arrow of an aboriginal; that of Rama was in his listening to village gossip and putting away faultless Sita. Baba did not say what was Zoroaster's weakness — but perhaps that was because of reverence for himself as the first Avatar shining through the mists of time.

Someone asked Baba what was his weakness this time, and he said he would answer that question when he came next time, in seven hundred years.

4. *The Five Men-God*

THE world is ruled at all times by five men who are God-realized — perfect in all perfections.

Each was daring enough to dive to the bottom of the ocean of conditioned existence and claim the Pearl of Truth, the possession of which gives one all knowledge, all love and all power, and return to the shore of the world and guide and direct men with a compassion that is ever-living and vigilant. As each finishes his term of office he drops his body and is replaced by another Man-God or Perfect Master.

Periodically, when the darkness of man's pain obscures completely the form of the divine Beloved and brotherhood has been forgotten and careship of the earth laid aside, the FIVE cause the divine, indivisible Substance of Reality to take human form and manifest again the glory of Truth, relight the fire of love in men's hearts and give intellect fresh purpose and direction.

The FIVE this time were Babajan, Sai Baba, Upasni Maharaj, Narayan Maharaj and Tajuddin Baba. Almost invariably the perfect masters have male bodies, but this time one of them, Babajan, was a woman.

BABAJAN was born in Baluchistan between India and Afghanistan of an aristocratic family. As a girl she ran away from home to escape marriage and became a wanderer. Eventually, on a mountain near Rawalpindi she met her Master, Maulashah, and stayed with him for six years, when he gave her the Realization of her own perfection and brought her back through the six planes of conditioned consciousness to exercise it in the world of forms.

Because she said once that she was God and that the world had been created by her, some Baluchi soldiers

buried her alive; but many years later some of them saw her in Poona, a thousand miles south. They implored her forgiveness, and she being the Ocean of mercy forgave them. And they and many others from their regiment, the 127th Light Infantry, as well as many drivers of the 13th Mule Corps of the New Modikhana, Poona became her staunch devotees and would gather round her in the evenings.

The place in Poona where she made her seat (because she herself in the very beginning of things had chosen it as the place where she would receive the Avatar that would be) was under a neem tree on a bit of vacant ground in Khan Bahadur Jan Mohammed Road. Here she prepared her share of the preparation for God's Descent, and in time received him and in timelessness awakened him to himself.

In the meantime thousands had come to recognize something of her divinity and came to take her *darshan* — that is, to bow down before her in love and reverence: submission for remission of the burden of unenlightenment; or just to find fresh courage to endure the drag of days.

She was small, with delicate features, and a hundred years had covered her head with gleaming snow. Someone said: If you see only a bundle of clothes and a face, you are looking at yourself; if you catch but a glimpse of her greatness, you are on the way to God.

The sun and the wind and the rain adored her; and she refused to deny them her darshan by moving under a shelter some of the people built for her — for it was the sun that sought shelter at her feet from its own burning, and the rain had to obtain her permission before it could fall, and, without her as their home, to where would the winds return? But on one occasion the wind and the rain, while lashing the city for two hours, stood off from her seat leaving it dry and calm. This was recorded in a letter by Major S. Hormusji, Indian Army (Retired), to the Poona Herald, 7th February 1967. After mentioning that he used to see Babajan about the vicinity of Charbaudi in 1904-05 when he was a student at St. Vincent's High School, he

writes: 'In August or September 1907 there was a terrific hurricane in Poona followed by very heavy rain which lasted for two hours. All the place in the vicinity of Gharbaudi was converted into a lake. I was sitting on the Islamai School verandah with Munshi Abdul Subhan Rajab, Superintendent of the school, and Munshi Dadd Meya, Headmaster.

'When I went out, I saw Babajan under her favourite neem tree, but there was not a drop of water on her and the ground around the tree was quite dry. Hundreds of people had gathered to see this miracle. Although it is sixty years now since this occurred, I shall never forget it.'

But later on, because the shelter built for her had been built with love she graciously moved under it.

Sometimes she walked to Bund Garden some two miles and back, surrounded by devotees; and the talk was full of smiles and gaiety.

She was most caustic with men who called her 'Mother,' telling them in the coarsest language that their sex was inverted; but at the same time implanting in them the seed of true manliness — the longing for real Darshan and endurance on the road to the Beloved's door.

Baba once said that she was the Emperor. He also said that in a previous birth she had been Rabia of Basra.

SAI BABA was the Head of the Five, the Master of Masters, the Wine-seller to the wine-sellers (Saqi-ul-Irshad). He had his seat at Shirdi in the District of Ahmednagar. Nothing is known of him before his Realization — except that from nowhere he went to Khuldabad near Aurangabad where the Perfect Master Zar-Zari Baksh gave him the glory, the love and the power which were his from the beginning of things.

He begged food from five houses, and also oil for the temple lamps, although his name shows that he was a Mohammedan. This endeared him to the Hindus. Consequently he had followers from both religions, and they amounted to many thousands. He showed openly that he was everyone and knew everything; and performed

many miracles.

For the most part of the day he sat with his close circle of disciples while the bhajan and qawwal (Hindu and Mohammedan) singers repeated God's name or sang of love's states — passing around at times a pipe for each one to take a draw.

You upbraid me for having spent my life at
the Master's feet.

Ah! But you do not know that they are my shade
from the noonday heat.

Life goes on. But in the going is the snare
In which the anguished soul cries, 'O where?
O where?'

To you, I waste my time; but time
has already wasted me.

Now I wait; and the waiting is also
his divine mercy.

From all except the poor who came for his blessings he demanded whatever money they had, leaving them only with their return fares; and he would distribute it among the needy.

Every morning he went in procession with band music to the latrine. There he would spend an hour, during which time he would bring under his surveillance all the stars. This was routine, and easily done — for at the time he created the universe he had given infinite thought and care to all eventualities and possibilities. Now there was only a touch here and there required to keep it all going smoothly. His great work was with the other four Masters — prevailing upon the Avatar to take human birth again and investing him with the garments of those attributes which the world would be able to recognize and love; and in preparing the heart-ground of humanity for the new love it was to receive.

In the last years at Meherazad, beloved Baba once referred to him affectionately as 'Grandfather' and said that no one had such eyes as he, so luminous were they.

UPASNI MAHARAJ was born Kashinath Govindrao Upasni of Brahmin parents. From an early age he loved

God and preferred worship and listening to the stories of the saints and the discussions of the pundits to playing with the other boys.

At twelve years of age he left home and wandered about, starving for the most part until an older fellow wanderer, noticing him going to the front door of a house to beg, told him that he would never get enough to eat at front doors. 'Go round the back to the kitchen,' he said, 'where the women servants' hearts are the more easily touched.'

After some time his father sought him out and took him home and arranged a marriage for him; but his girl-wife died within two years and he was free to wander again. When he was sixteen his people arranged another marriage for him; and again, a third, but they could not make him settle down; and he obtained his father's and his last wife's permission to follow the scent of longing wherever it led.

At one time it led him to a cave near the top of a mountain where he subsisted on leaves and roots. Coming down again, now but skin and bones, he fell into a steep gully, from where there seemed no way out. He accepted death as inevitable and as no loss — for if a man has not found his divine Beloved he is dead anyway.

With these thoughts he let his eye wander up and down the sides of the gully. He noticed a small tree growing out from a crevice and beyond it a ledge. Almost unconsciously his mind registered that if he could swing over on to the ledge he would be able to crawl up the rest of the way. Gathering his remaining strength he grasped a branch, drew it back as far as his strength could draw it and catapulted on to the ledge. There he rested, and then slowly made his way to the top where he lost consciousness.

At this point a shepherd boy came along and seeing a lifeless skeleton, ran home and told his father who went with him, and together they carried Kashinath down. When he returned to consciousness and had drunk a little soup and had enough strength to speak, the farmer said, 'We saw you going up the mountain. But that was about a year ago. Surely you have not been

there all that time?’ Kashinath said, ‘A year ago? All that time? I’ve been nowhere else.

The farmer and his wife nursed him back to health, and people from all over the district came to bow to this man who had come back from death. His powerful body restored to strength, he resumed his wandering.

One night he went down into a cellar underneath a shrine and it was filled with light. Some people who saw it spread the news that he was a saint. But he knew that he had not yet reached that exalted station. Even if he had, it would have meant nothing to him: either realization of the deathless, eternal Self, or oblivion — nothing less.

A friend advised him to go to Sai Baba, but he said, ‘What have I to do with a Mohammedan?’

He went to Kedgaon and paid his respects to Narayan Maharaj who gave him something to eat, telling him to chew it thoroughly. Then he said, ‘I have painted you as no one else has ever been painted by me.’ Meaning that he had prepared him fully to receive the gift of himself. But he had to go back to Sai Baba and square his account with him and receive the gift at his hands.

He took leave of Narayan, and after some time came to Shirdi for Sai Baba’s darshan. That Master said, ‘Why have you come?’ Kashinath replied, ‘To have your darshan.’ The Master said, ‘It would be better if you stopped wandering about and stayed with me.’ But Kashinath didn’t wish to. So Sai Baba said, ‘All right, you may go. But be back here on the eighth day from now.’ Kashinath said he would not promise. If he was to be back, he would be back; and left.

By the eighth day Kashinath had described an aimless circle. Sai Baba said, ‘So you have come back as I told you to. For years now my nazar (sight) has been on you; in fact everything you did was done by me. Now stay until I have given you that which you are to be given.’ Kashinath stayed in the small temple near by and continued to starve — for starving was his share of the world. In the beginning, a restaurant-keeper impressed with his powerful personality despite his emaciated body, offered him a daily meal. But God did not like this

interference with routine — it was Kashinath's share to starve, not sit down every day to a sumptuous repast — so he caused the man to do simple arithmetic; and the next day when Kashinath came the man began complaining that business was very bad and he would not be able to feed him indefinitely. He would be happy to do so for another month, after which Kashinath would have to go somewhere else. Kashinath said 'Why for a month? Why not from now?' And pushing aside the half finished plate, got up and walked out. He did not bother to seek food, elsewhere.

One day the Master sent him a meal. He put it beside him — for when one has been without food for a long time one is in no hurry to eat. A dog came and started eating it, and Kashinath drove it away. Later in the day Sai Baba came to see him and said, 'I came this morning to share with you the meal I had sent, but you drove me away.'

The manner of Kashinath's Realization was thus: One day he was sitting outside at the back of the temple when he heard heavy footsteps approaching, and then two gruff voices. One said, 'I know he lives here.' And the other said, 'Are you sure? He doesn't seem to be anywhere about.' Kashinath looked round out of the corner of his eye and saw two giants. He started to creep away, but one of the giants spotted him. 'Ha! There he goes — catch him.' They strode towards him and seized him and broke his head open and emptied out his brains. And his soul sped to the sun, went through the sun into space which is the Shadow of Reality, went beyond this and became Reality itself — absolute Knowledge, Power and Bliss.

After Sai Baba had poured the Ocean of Truth into the Drop that was Kashinath, and brought him back from the Ocean into the Dropness of every drop of creation, the new Perfect Master did not take leave of his Master immediately but stayed on in the temple to await the coming of the Avatar and his work with him — for that was the place laid down in the beginning of time where that work should be done.

NARAYAN MAHARAJ like Dnyaneshwar in earlier times who was a child prodigy in spiritual things and played miracles as other boys play marbles, Narayan's childhood was spent in golden innocence.

He was born into a Brahmin family in 1885, nine years before the birth of the Avatar. He lost his parents in infancy and was brought up by a maternal uncle. While still a child he left the house one day and remained untraced for seven years. During this period he met a woman whom he addressed as Mother. She accepted the honour and in due course had the boy's 'thread ceremony' performed. Later at Gangapur, which is reckoned a great place of pilgrimage for devotees of Dattatreya, he met an old man with an exquisitely radiant face, and he attached himself to him.

One day this man told him to go and beg food from some pious householders. On his return the old man had disappeared. Narayan resolved not to eat until the beloved Stranger came back and with his own hands gave him some of the food. For three days and nights he sat under a tree waiting, calling, addressing him as his Guru, the Source of his life, the Goal of his journey. On the third night the old man came back and expressed his complete happiness with Narayan's devotion, took a morsel of the food and gave him the rest to eat. As he ate he saw that the Stranger was Dattatreya himself. That glorious one then made Narayan perfect in his own perfection of knowledge, power and bliss.

He went to Kedgaon some thirty miles from Poona where his kingship was acknowledged by thousands and he was called Narayan Maharaj. And he remained there. One of those who came and paid obeisance to him was Lakshmi the goddess of wealth who desired to be his servant, which desire he graciously granted. It is not often that a Perfect Master permits this goddess a place in the train of his servitors; rather they make her feel, and tell others, that her finery is rags, her gold tinsel and her pearls paste. But Maharaj gave her a place of honour; for mastership of illusory wealth was the role he had assigned to himself when he laid out the stars and poured gold in seams in the earth, made all manner

of precious stones, and sowed the seas with pearls for him to wear now.

TAJUDDIN BABA it is said, was a soldier by profession and a Mohammedan in religion until the words of God-Man when he was called the Apostle-of-himself 'We return from the lesser war to take up the Greater War' — struck home and he left the service of arms and sought the service of some Master's feet. Who this was and where he met him is not known, but after his drowning in the Ocean of Power-Knowledge-Bliss and the Master had brought him back to the shore where men go about their affairs not knowing that the Ocean is also for their drowning and deliverance, he went to Nagpur which was then the capital of the Central Provinces, where he waited the time of his part, in bringing the eternal Ancient One again into the world.

In the meantime he gave his blessings, as the sun gives its warmth and light, to all who came to him. He had an area marked off in squares, each containing a different blessing such as 'Better Health,' 'A Child,' 'Promotion'; and each suppliant was directed to stand in the appropriate square. When all who were to receive this sort of blessing had been blessed, Tajuddin went one evening naked to some tennis courts of an English club and was promptly picked up and sent to a lunatic asylum where he stayed for seventeen years.

At one time he was given labouring work carrying dirt in an iron pan on his head. But the iron had more reverence for him who was the Lord of dirt and stardust (with mettle in between) than did people, and it would not touch his head but stayed above him in the air. When news of this Adoration was given out great crowds came for his darshan, until a local ruler placed his palace at the Master's convenience and he graciously accepted it.

5. *The Preparation of the Place Where He Was to Be Born*

BABA once said that each Incarnation of Avatar is preceded by a *minor incarnation* which prepares the way for his Advent.

This time it was the warrior-king Shivaji in the seventeenth century who, with his sword, swept clean of an oppressive Mohammedan rule the land where Avatar was to take birth, and which would become the hub of the wheel of his world work. Shivaji's sweep extended from Daman and Karwar on the sea coast to Nagpur, with Poona, then a village, becoming his capital.

Incessant wars waged with mercenary armies had laid waste the countryside; the peasantry was hunted down, the women and children and the livestock carried off and the crops burnt. The peasants who escaped took to banditry. The commander of the last army to pass through Poona had had all its walls pulled down and the area ploughed over with a team of asses to show his contempt for the people. But Shivaji's steward Dadaji Kondadev came and ploughed it with a gold plough drawn by pure white oxen, and gradually the men came back out of the forests and hills, rebuilt their houses and sowed their crops again; and commerce and learning flourished and it became a great city.

His Guru was Ramdas, one of the five Perfect Masters at that time, and he deeply loved the poems of Tukaram, who was another of the Five. His feats and exploits became legendary and he is still loved and revered by the people in that area today.

It was within this Sweep that the five Men-God of our time took up their stations for the bringing down of God-Man into the world again.

Baba's disciples were astonished to hear that their Master had once been Shivaji, so he showed himself to them in Shivaji's likeness and they all were convinced.

6. *His Parents*

THE father this time of Creation's Father was Sheriar Mundegar who was born in 1853 in the village of Khoramshab in Iran where his father was the poorly paid keeper of the Tower of Silence to where those of the Zoroastrian faith are taken at death to be consumed by vultures. The boy's mother died early and he was taken care of by his sister, Peela. He had no schooling and played by himself much of the time at the place of his father's work. At twelve years he left home and led an ascetic's life for eight years, when he briefly returned home and then left Iran and went to India accompanied by his elder brother Khodadad, and continued his life as a dervish for nearly ten years. Khodadad had no liking for a monk's life and got work. Later he returned to Iran, but visited his brother many times and, as time went on, began to recognize who the son of his brother was. Even at eighty as a mark of his respect he refused the horse-cart seat to 'Nagar to bring him to the ashram and walked the six miles.

Once in the Rajastan desert Sheriarji was at the extremity of thirst when an old man appeared before him with a water-skin and gave it to him to drink. When he had drunk a little and washed death from his eyes and drunk some more and looked up, the man had vanished. At another time he attempted the terrible Forty Days Fast in which the aspirant, after drawing a circle on the ground and taking his seat within it, invites and subdues to his will the animal forms of infatuation, greed, lust and anger. But he gave up after thirty days. A Voice told him that the fruits of such austerities were not for him, but that a greater reward would be his.

He went to Bombay and stayed with his sister Peela who, with her husband, had recently emigrated from

Iran to escape the petty although numerous annoyances and persecutions to which the Mohammedans subjected the Zoroastrian minority. She desired her brother to marry and offered to find him a suitable wife in the Community; but the dream of the road and the begging-bowl was still between his eyes. However, she persisted, and one day to be rid of her importunities Sheriarji, pointing to a little girl skipping along the street, said he would marry her. Peela thought he was joking, but he was adamant — that girl, or no one. So she went to see the child's mother who agreed to the proposal in spite of the great difference in years. When she told her husband, he was astounded, but she said she had given her word and he should respect it. So he gave in, not too ungracefully, for Sheriarji was after all reckoned by the Community a very good match. So they were betrothed. Nine years later, that is in 1892 when Shirin was fourteen and Sheriarji was thirty-nine, they were married. In the interval he thoroughly prepared himself for his new life, taking a job as a gardener and applying himself so well that he became a head gardener. He taught himself to read and write Persian and also Gujerati and Marathi, the principal languages in Bombay.

Shirin's father was Dorab, the son of a silk merchant. Against his father's wish he married Golandan, or Rose, and his father disinherited him. He went to India and opened a small restaurant in Poona. Golandan was so beautiful with her rosy cheeks, jet-black hair and large eyes that people used to say she was well named. She bore eleven children and remained beautiful, slim and straight-backed until she died at eighty five. The names of only six out of the eleven come into the story — the others had the fortune to be kin to God-Man but it was not their share to know him. So their names have already been forgotten. The six were: Daulat, Shirin, Dinshaw, Rustom, Peela, and Banu.

Shortly after their marriage Sheriarji and Shirin went to Poona where they bought a house in Butler Mohalla (so named because of the number of butlers during the British Raj who lived there) in Dastur Meher Road.

Many years later the Mohalla was renamed Meher Mohalla, or Meher Place. Because of a pumpkin shaped stone by the door the house came to be known as Pumpkin House.

Two years later, that is in 1894, at five o'clock in the morning in the David Sassoon Hospital the Lord of the World, Avatar Meher Baba, was born and was named Merwan. He had been preceded one year by Jamshed and was followed by seven other children: Jal (eight years later), Behram (six years), Ardeshir (six years); two more boys, Jehangir and Shirmand, and a sister, Freiny, came in between, but died young; the last child, a girl, Manija, was born in 1918 four years after Ardeshir.

Shirin had no interest in her first child, Jamshed, preferring dolls she could pick up and put down rather than a baby to look after; so he was given to Shirin's sister Daulat and her husband Ferdoon in adoption. It was Merwan's birth that awakened her motherhood and it was to Merwan that she gave her whole life and thought. A little while before his birth Shirinmai on two separate nights had dreams. In one a Hindu goddess rose out of the well near the house and held out her arms for the child; and in the other a multitude looked towards her with great expectancy. Sheriarji said the dreams portended that the child would become a great light in the world.

Gazing at the new-born child Sheriarji remembered the Voice in the desert which had told him that the fruits of his austerities would be something quite different from what he had been striving after: it could well be that his fulfilment was to be through this son. Shirinmai was not interested in 'great lights' — had they not the light of Prophet Zoroaster to guide their lives? — Her Merwan would be a great man, looked up to and respected in the Community.

From the beginning the child was very active and while his mother was busy with her housework would crawl away. So she took to tying one end of a sari round him and the other end to the leg of a table. One day she found him playing with a cobra. She screamed and the

snake vanished. As soon as he was old enough he was taken each day to a kindergarten, the Padamji Gujarati School, situated in Main Street (now called Mahatma Gandhi Road) where the Madan Pharmacy and Kashmir Stores now are; and at five years he went to the Camp Government English School. It was Shirinmai's ambition that her son should become a great man, but there was little love and affection for the child. Once, because of a bowel weakness — a weakness he was to carry all his life — she beat him, and Sheriarji when he heard of it said, 'You don't know whom you have beaten.'

Because of her harshness the boy used to spend much of his time with Shirinmai's sister, Peela, who lived near by. This angered Shirinmai and she forbade him to go to his aunt's.

It is not known how Sheriarji earned a living during these first years of guardianship of God-Man, but after some time they moved to a new building at Quarter Gate where he opened a tea shop, over which they lived. It is still a tea shop and has been named Cafe Sheriar — but whether to honour Sheriarji or not is not known. The shop was successful, and he opened a second one nearly opposite the Jain mandir in the Cantonment. During the following years at different times he also had five toddy shops: in Sachapir Street; Mundh; Baramati on the Sholapur Road; Talegaon twenty-five or thirty miles from Poona, to which he moved for the period of occupancy; and Chorpari, a suburb outside the Cantonment.

7. *Merwan*

FROM Quarter Gate Merwan attended St. Vincent's High School where English, the language of commerce and the key to Civil appointment, was given importance. The Community was, and still is, the most western-oriented people in India. They all speak English fluently and with a rich musical accent.

As well as English, which was to become the vehicle of God-Man's Discourses and Messages, and Gujarati, which he once said he had never liked — 'It had no music and a poverty of words' — Merwan also learnt Marathi, on which Baba was later to comment: 'Even God could not understand it as written and spoken by scholars'; and Hindi; and Urdu, the sweet-sounding language of the poet-singers; and Persian, which he had already been studying with his father and which later he said he had mastered thoroughly.

He excelled in the literature subjects but was only average in maths and science. He played the street and playground games that under different names boys all over the world play, called by Merwan and his friends atya-patya, gilli-danda and soor-soor-kathi; also a fast ball-throwing and catching game called seven tiles, played with teams. (Fifty years later Baba played this game with western men visiting him at his ashram.) And marbles, which he was to play with a small boy in Australia when he visited that country.

Merwan played cricket and hockey for his school. His interest in cricket continued all through his life. It became an important tool in his world work, and many notable cricketers came to him. He played draughts and cards; and these games were continued throughout his life. He wrote poems under the pen-name of Homa which were published in the school magazine. He also

created and conducted a club called the Cosmopolitan Club which was based on spiritual and ethical values. Both older and younger boys came to him to settle their disputes. He also took part in school theatricals; and was an avid reader of Sexton Blake and other detective writers. During the last years at Meherazad detective fiction became an important item of time-pass when it was his sister Mani's duty to read to him for an hour in the afternoon. During this period there was a sudden revival in England of these early 'thrillers.' (At this same time he also had Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* read to him.)

Quite early he developed a passion for the Persian Master-poet, Hafiz. And this also carried through to the very end of his world stay.

Except for the occasion which he once told his disciples about when, at seven years he was reading the life of the Buddha and felt for a fleeting moment that he, too, would become great like him, there was nothing to suggest to the boy and those around him his Mission. But it was noticed by many that he looked different and behaved differently from the other boys. But none could say in what lay the difference. But no doubt it was this difference which caused the others to trust him.

He once said: 'For three years during my schooling at St. Vincent's I used to bow down to my father every morning before leaving the house. Later on he used to burn incense and pray before my picture.'

As mentioned earlier, Shirinmai had given her first child, Jamshed, who was one year older than Merwan, to her sister Daulat, who with her husband, Ferdoon, lived in Lonavla on the Poona-Bombay railway where the Ghats step down to the plains. Ferdoon had a restaurant, and being a chef himself and doing his own cooking, it flourished. Merwan used to spend most of his school holidays with his aunt and uncle and the two boys became great chums and loved each other intensely. Of the boys with whom they made friends, some eventually came to know who their playmate was; one of them, Sailor, was one of the very first to come to Merwan when he began his mission, and he remained to the end.

One of the customers at the restaurant was a hunchback who was a marvelous story-teller and would entertain everyone for hours on end. And HE-who-had-out-spilled-the-tale-of-the-universe would listen fascinated by this man's inventions.

About the time that Merwan began to attend St. Vincent's, Daulat and Ferdoon sold the restaurant and moved to Poona to the locality in the Cantonment called Char Baudi (Four Wells) which takes in Khan Bahadur Jan Mohammed Road where Babajan had her seat. Here they opened a tea shop which Babajan used to go to sometimes, and they would give her tea and snacks without charge.

At the same time Shirinmai and Sheriarji moved from Quarter Gate to Bhagwan Das Chawl, a terrace which runs off Bhawani Peth Road which is to the left, and behind Babajan's seat as one faces it. So the two houses were quite close and the boys were always backwards and forwards between them. The boys' love for each other did not at times prevent them quarrelling, and there was a great row one night in the sitting room and Merwan knocked down the hanging centre oil lamp which caused a small fire and much panic.

Merwan matriculated and went to Deccan College, one of the seats of learning in India, but Jamshed failed in his Sixth Standard Examination and left school and helped his foster parents. Merwan would leave Bhagwan Das Chawl in the morning on his bicycle, turn left into Khan Bahadur Jan Mohammed Road and just opposite the neem tree, turn right into Malcolm Tank Road (now called Rao Saheb Kedri Road).

He must quite early have noticed the little old woman sitting under the tree and noted at times the crowds who came for her darshan. But such things are common in India and do not excite one's curiosity — they are part of the landscape. But one afternoon on his way home she beckoned to him and he went straight to her, attracted, as he himself said much later, as a piece of iron to a magnet. And she kissed him between the eyes. Then Merwan went on home. And the world around him vanished and he kissed the Threshold of divine

consciousness. And after three days Babajan took him into his own Presence — that is, into the Presence of Feeling-Who-He-was, Eternal Bliss. The absolute *knowledge* of who he was came nine months later; but the exercise of his power took seven years to accomplish.

To his mother Merwan was stricken with some strange malady which none of the doctors she called in could cure. So thinking that he might be the victim of witchcraft she called in exorcists. When they, too, failed to restore her son to normality, she stormed off to Babajan and demanded to know what she had done to her son, for she had in the meantime heard about the ‘holy woman’s’ embrace. Babajan told her, ‘Merwan is not your son, he belongs to the world and is destined to change the world. Leave him alone and don’t be anxious about him.’

But Sheriarji, remembering the Voice which had told him that his divine share would be much greater than the fruits of austerities, rejoiced, for he inwardly knew that his son would become one of the Great Ones. He tried to comfort Shirinmai, telling her that they were greatly blessed in their son, but this talk only infuriated her the more.

The family had been living in Bhagwan Das Chawl for three years, and now moved back to ‘Pumpkin House’ which Sheriarji in the meantime had bought. (It is still in the possession of the family.)

Here Merwan spent the days either locked in his attic room or wandering aimlessly about. He would take his food up to his room and put it in a drawer to later take out and give to dogs. Sometimes the family below would hear a rhythmic knocking as he beat his head on the table. He went in his wanderings as far as Bombay and stayed with his brother Jamshed, going to the beach at Chaupati in the mornings and in the afternoons to a particular bench in Victoria Gardens.

Thus nine months went by, when Merwan felt drawn towards Sai Baba at Shirdi. He was accompanied by his boyhood friend Sailor.

As they approached the ashram Sai Baba was returning from the latrines accompanied by musical

instruments. Merwan threw himself in the dust before him and the Master shouted, 'Parvardigar!' (Sustainer and Protector) and passed on.

This shout tore the veil between Bliss and Knowledge and Merwan remembered fully who he was and, at the same time, it proclaimed to the world that the Ancient One — God, the eternal Beloved — was about to step down into it for its renewal and heart-ease.

Some little distance away there was a totally emaciated naked man sitting outside the temple. This was Kashinath Upasni who, after four years with Sai Baba, had just been brought down by that Master to worldly consciousness for his share in the Avataric manifestation, and was extremely sensitive to intrusion — 'Like a snake which has just shed its skin,' was how Eruch, who comes into the story later on, put it.

Merwan rose and went towards him and when he was a little way off Upasni Maharaj welcomed him by flinging a stone at him, hitting him on the same spot where Babajan had kissed him — and so beginning immediately God-Man's Down-coming.

Merwan was the Sun of Reality. Maharaj's work was to help him establish his authority and assert his God-hood, to cause the Sun to shine in its own shadow without dispelling that shadow — for the shadow is the illusion without which the divine love game of Lover and Beloved could not continue.

Concerning these things, many years later Baba said: Babajan made me feel what I am, Sai Baba made me know who I am, and Maharaj gave me God's powers which had always been mine.

After a few days Merwan returned to Poona, and Maharaj went to Kharagpur in West Bengal and stayed in the scavengers' colony. Being a Brahmin, caste had been one of the tightest knots in his consciousness to undo; now sitting on a throne of refuse he sang to these outcastes, not, in the words of his mouth but in those of his love:

Your God is as great as the God of the Brahmins,
the Brahmins have cast you out,

but I welcome you to come into the temple of my love.

Whoever and whatever comes into this temple goes out from it purified.

And the people worshipped him, for he had set a light in the depths of their misery and given them new hope.

In Poona Merwan stayed with his parents who had moved to the house opposite, 765 Dastur Meher Road, Cantonment. In the small yard at the back was a tiny shed with a flagstone floor, and on one of the flags which projected he would beat his head for hours at a time. The beating of his head was because of the struggle to retain the bliss of Reality and, at the same time, fulfil the purpose of his Descent. It gave relief from his infinite spiritual suffering and anchored his purpose, enabling him, under the cover of his person, to 'sneak' Reality into Illusion without Illusion at this stage being aware of Reality's presence.

Every blow was an announcement: I HAVE COME. — But Illusion heard only the sound of a man knocking his head on a stone: it did not know that the soil of world consciousness around the Tree of Grace was being dug so that the Tree's laden branches would hang down with the fruit of Oneness for all humanity to pluck and eat.

This head-knocking went on in varying degrees for the whole seven years of the coming down from his Godhood to humanity, and his stabilization as God-Man. Then he would emerge from his confinement and after tying a scarf round his head so that his mother could not see the abrasions, he would wander off again. One of these wanderings took him to Narayan Maharaj and the same one, or another (it matters little), to Tajuddin Baba. 'It matters little' may appear to be a flippancy, but the truth is that although everything Avatar does, even his merest movement, has significance, the time sequence of his actions has no meaning to us because there is no 'development' in his life and mission: it begins in perfection and ends in perfection

and is perfect in every moment of it. The two Masters just mentioned had had no outward roles in the Avataric drama, but it was necessary for Merwan to outwardly declare himself to them.

Returning again to Poona, Merwan started helping his father in the Sachapir Street toddy shop. He would advise the customers to drink in moderation, not so much because of the alcoholic content, which was very low, but because of their purses; and to remember God. Over the shop was a large room which he rented, and used to gather the drinkers into it and encourage them to express their intoxication in choruses in praise of God. Sitting on the floor they would drink and sing the classical couplets of the poet-saints to lively tunes. Word of this spread about, with the result that customers left the places they were wont to frequent and came here where there was real conviviality and no squalid drunkenness. When he closed the shop at night Merwan would go to Babajan and sit with her and scratch her back while she chatted with him. During the cold months he always took firewood for the little fire she kept burning. Often he wished to feast his friends, but since all the takings of the shop were handed over to his mother, and she only gave him a miserable allowance, he could not do so. On Thursdays and Sundays at four in the morning Arti would be sung and prasad distributed; and on Sunday evenings all would gather, and free discussion was encouraged.

In the meantime Maharaj had returned from Kharagpur to the Khandoba temple at Shirdi. In later years Baba once told of an incident which occurred at this time. He said, 'About 1915 — not before '15 and not after '16 — Maharaj was living in the Khandoba temple and Gustadji was still with Sai Baba. Maharaj took me and Gustadji by train to Khapolgaon, Dhabadi. Here we climbed a high hill in the pouring rain. On this hill was a cave into which Maharaj took us and we sat there for awhile. Returning to the town we took the train to Kasara station where we got off and went to the village of Shahpur. Here we sat on a wall. We went back to Khapolgaon. Maharaj returned to the temple,

Gustadji to Sai Baba and I to Poona.'

Then Maharaj left the place and went to Sakori, a village three miles away where he cleared a small area of stones and thorn bushes and fixed up a shelter. This place became his permanent seat. When word of this came to Merwan he went to Maharaj and stayed some days and cleared more of the ground and built a proper hut for him.

Shirinmai continued to fret and storm and would go to Babajan, and Babajan would talk to her as an old friend, repeating that Merwan was not hers for he belonged to the whole world. But Shirin would answer, 'I don't care about the whole world, I just want to see him as a success in the world. Instead of following some brilliant career his life is being wasted and ruined.' She would go home consoled for awhile; but she never understood who her son was. Once, later on, she said to some of the disciples, 'You may worship Merwan but I have spanked him.' At another time she said, 'Don't say he is Zoroaster, say *like* Zoroaster.'

Once she went to Sakori and confronted Maharaj with his part in the stealing away of her son. As is customary in India when one visits a Master, she took a garland of flowers for him. After she had taken his darshan and put the garland round his neck he said, 'Why have you brought me a garland of old shoes?'" Oh, Maharaj,' Shirin said, 'How can you call these lovely flowers old shoes? And I went to so much trouble to keep them fresh all the way here.' Maharaj laughed and said, 'When you were coming along in the train didn't you say to yourself, 'Flowers, indeed! I should be taking an old shoe to beat him.' Shirinmai was ashamed and begged his forgiveness.

Merwan visited Maharaj frequently over a period of seven years. Often they sat together far into the night. Sometimes Merwan sang. The longest stay was for three months at the end of the whole period. He asked one, Baily Irani, to write a biography of Maharaj, 'Sakorina Sadguru' or The Perfect Master of Sakori, and supplied him with much first-hand information, (Later it was

translated into Urdu.)

There were three people who were singularly blessed with service during this period: Gustadji; Yeshwant Rao, a farmer and disciple of Maharaj's who served Merwan with tea and pan during the long night sessions; and Durgamai whom Maharaj used to call his mother.

One day Maharaj said to Merwan, 'You are God descended in human form for the salvation of the world. I bow down to you.' To Gustadji and Yeshwant Rao he said, 'I have given my Charge to Merwan. Leave me and go with him.' And to Bua Saheb he said, 'Your friend is now spiritually perfect. Stick to him and obey him in everything.'

Maharaj also told his Brahmin disciples that Merwan was Avatar, but for too long had they been jealous of the attention given by their guru to this 'Fire-worshipper,' and their spiritual gullets rejected that Morsel of morsels — the news that God-Man was here. They had forgotten the glorious teaching of Krishna: 'Age after age I come': His Flute could not be heard above the ritual temple bells.

Merwan was now Avatar in every sense and meaning of that word and beyond all senses and meanings — God descended veiled and unveiled, but veiled again according to our veils; unknowable except by his Grace, yet because that Grace encompasses all things and everyone, it is easier to come to know him than to know oneself.

He now returned to Poona, taking Gustadji with him.

PART 2

8. *Kasba Peth*

THERE was a young Irani, Behram Ferdoon, whom Merwan started to teach Persian. He had an enormous moustache and Merwan nick named him Bua Saheb or Respected Sir. Shirinmai was delighted when she heard about the lessons — at last Merwan was doing something. She found some more pupils for him, but he refused them. So Shirinmai's even more active mind thought of another plan. She approached Bua Saheb with the suggestion that he open a toddy shop and take Merwan as partner. She would put up the money and take half of the profits, Bua Saheb would take half and Merwan would have some employment. Bua Saheb agreed, and found a shop in Kasba Peth. The business went well, and as Bua Saheb gave his share of the takings to Merwan, Merwan now had plenty of money to spend. Much of it went into buildings at Sakori and in feasting the villagers, always directing their attention to Maharaj and effacing himself in his beloved Guru. But he did not neglect his friends, and took them on picnics and spread tasty feasts for them prepared by Daulat Masi, Shirinmai's sister — always with plenty of bhajans to spice the Names of God. This was to be his principal 'teaching' during his world stay, and became reduced in its simplest terms to — Don't Worry, be happy. These men were so entranced with Merwan's way and manner that they became his life-long companions and disciples who vied with one another to pick up his words as he spoke and not let them fall on the ground. Later, the hardships came — as they must where love is concerned — but they were equipped then to bear them.

Gustadji worked in the shop during the day and

waited on Babajan through the night. At five in the morning when an Irani tea shop opposite opened he would fetch tea for her and then trot off to the shop, sweep it, receive the barrels of toddy and open the doors. On his way he would buy a bunch of spinach which he boiled in the early afternoon for his meal for the day; then sleep for a couple of hours and be ready for work again. Every night on his way to Babajan he would take half the day's takings to Shirinmai, and every night she would complain about the amount — so he would put the money on the table and escape as quickly as he could.

9. *The Story of Gustadji*

GUSTADJI Nusserwanji Hansotia was, as his surname indicates, of Hansot, a village in Gujerat; and his first name and father's name (Nusserwanji) declare that he was a Parsi of an earlier migration from Iran than Sheriarji's and Shirinmai's. He had four brothers: Manchershir, Sorat, Homi and Ardeshir (who later was nicknamed Slamson by Baba).

He was a short, small-boned man with fair and delicate complexion and of the same age as Merwan. He went to Bombay and got a job with a photographer who also imported frames and mounts and lithographs of Indian deities from Germany. He also took lessons in singing and harmonium. His teacher told him about Sai Baba; and shortly after he met Homi who had also gone to Bombay, and he also spoke of Sai Baba, and they decided to go together and have his darsban.

It was customary for visitors to the ashram to be asked by the Master to empty their purses, leaving them only their return tickets. He asked Gustadji but not Homi. After the evening darshan they returned to Bombay, and Homi went on to his job in a distillery up country.

Gustadji was deeply impressed with Sai Baba, and told his boss about him; and on some holiday when the shop was closed, took him to Shirdi, and he also became a devotee and hung a big picture of the Master in his shop. Gustadji met other devotees of Sai Baba and became thoroughly saturated with thoughts about him.

One day Ardeshir, who had a tea shop in Bombay, said that he was going to Shirdi to stay for some days. Gustadji couldn't resist the temptation of going too. Remembering the experience of his first visit of being left without his return fare, he put aside the amount

in a separate pocket, thinking with the native cunning of a man unenlightened that if the Master asked for money, he would give him what he had apart from the return fare.

After they had had his darshan, Sai Baba said to Gustadji, 'Give me what you have.' The immediate thing the Master was asking for was money, but the ultimate 'what you have' was his life. (The old English highwayman, it is said, used to level a pistol at a traveller's head with, 'Your money or your life.' But the Master under his breath was saying, 'First your money, then your life' — for to die in him one must become penniless.)

Gustadji gave what he had except for the amount put aside. Sai Baba asked, 'You have given me all you have?' 'Yes Baba.' 'Then how will you return to Bombay?' Gustadji said that he had kept aside his return fare. The Master said, 'So, you are trying to cheat me, are you? I said give me all you have. Come on, hand it over.' They stayed a week, paying for expenses out of Ardeshir's money.

Back in Bombay Gustadji became very restless, and after some time gave up his work and went to Shirdi to live. Leaving his bed-roll and trunk at a house he approached the Master and had his darshan, but the Master took no notice of him. He settled into the routine of the place spending the days in the Master's presence, but not presuming to sit near him, just squeezing unobtrusively into the back of the congregation; and after his evening meal at a small cafe, run by a devotee who was not after making money but only to keep his family and serve visitors to his Master, he retired to the end of a veranda for the night, for which he had obtained permission.

Gradually, over a period of time, he edged forward at the assemblies hoping that the Master would say something to him, but it seemed that the Master was unaware of his presence. Some two months went by and then one morning when Gustadji bowed to him before taking his seat, Sai Baba seemed to notice him as though he had just arrived: and after the assembly

broke up spoke to him privately. Assuming a look of helplessness he said that he was very short of money and could Gustadji arrange to let him have five hundred rupees immediately. Gustadji was so overwhelmed by the manner of the plea that he folded his hands before him and went to get it.

Gustadji had brought that exact amount with him, but had spent fifty rupees of it in advance for meals. He went and got the four hundred and fifty rupees from, his trunk and gave them to the Master who counted them and remarked that it was fifty rupees short of what he had asked for. Gustadji explained that shortage and added that he had given him all he had. Sai Baba said, 'Try and raise the other fifty rupees somewhere — I need five hundred very badly, and if you can get it I will never ask you again for money.' This appeal by the Master to *him*, when there were so many rich devotees to whom he could have gone was too much for Gustadji and he said he would get it somehow. But how? Should he telegraph one of his brothers to send the amount, or should he go round the town with a begging bowl and a plausible story? Then he remembered that he had brought with him a fine new blanket which he could try to sell. A rich devotee offered him fifty rupees for it, although it was worth nowhere near that. Gustadji took the money to the Master, who was very pleased with him.

Then one evening when he went for his meal he found that his credit had run out. Still he had a few rupees left which he kept in his trunk. But when he returned to his veranda spot, his trunk and bed-roll and even his hat had gone. Inquiries brought back nothing. No one was interested in helping him to recover them — to both Hindus and Mohammedans he was an outsider who had no business being there anyway.

He now slept under a tree. Earth is softer than hard stone. On the weekly holiday (Thursday, Guru's Day) when crowds of devotees came, there would be distribution of sweets and fruits. Whatever was offered him he accepted, but he never thrust himself forward. After six months of this subsistence he was like a skeleton and

his clothes were getting ragged, The Master seemed to have forgotten him again. Each day he went to the assembly. Today might be the day when the Master's heart would be touched and he would bestow on him at least a glance of encouragement.

Then, one evening, when the qawwali nightingales had laid siege to the Rose's heart, Sai Baba gave a little discourse on Grace by Action or Karma Yoga, saying that there was no action better than feeding a hungry brother. Some of the householder disciples took the hint, and for a while Gustadji was well fed — too well fed, for his shrunken stomach revolted at the rich fare. However, no one invited him twice and soon he was left again to starve.

So Gustadji continued until Sai Baba dropped his body. Then he went to Sakori, for he knew about Maharaj, and Maharaj in due course gave him to Merwan.

10. Kasha Peth (continued)

THE names of the early companions were; Sadashiv Patil, the landlord of the shop and Court clerk; Vithal Bhokri, a fisherman; Babu, who later opened a bicycle shop and became known as Babu Cyclewala; Bal Tambat, coppersmith; Sailor, Merwan's boyhood friend; Abdul Ghani, a homeopathic doctor and honorary-magistrate (munsiff); Bushev; Gustadji and his brother Slamson; Baily J. Irani; Munshi Saheb, P.W.D. officer; Abdulkarim Ramjoo Abdulla, cloth merchant and amateur lawyer who became Baba's tool for making something straight and simple, tortuous and complicated; Merwan's brothers Jamshed who was now a telegraphist in Poona, and Jal; Ferdoon Naosherwan Driver, a school friend of Jal's, later called Padri; Rustom Gustad Irani; Syed Saheb; Arjun Supekar, a fisherman and a wrestler with a thunderous voice and Merwan's favourite entertainer at this time; Vishnu Narayan Deorukhkar, a college student; one, Nervous; one, Barsoap; Rustom Kaikhushru Irani and his younger brother, Adi, who was then going to Deccan College and used to come to the Sunday night gatherings. Sadashiv Patil, Vithal Bhokri, Bal Tambat, Arjun, Vishnu, Babu, Munshi Saheb were Hindus; Ghani, Ramjoo and Barsoap were Mohammedans; and the rest were of the Zoroastrian community. There were many others but time has obliterated their names.

After about three years of the toddy shop doing a steady business Merwan told Bua that they should now close it, for he had other plans. As it happened, the other toddy and liquor shops had determined to close them down by outbidding them at the next auctions of licences. Soon after this the workers in the Gandhi National Movement picketed these shops.

Merwan went to Sakori for his last and longest stay with Maharaj. From there he wrote to Patil in Poona to have a zhopdi or hut erected for him on some farm land and near Chatarsinghi along the Ferguson College Road. To this hut he went on his return to Poona, ending his living with his parents.

The last child of Sheriarji and Shirinmai was then three years old. She had been named after Princess Manija, daughter of King Afrasiab in the Persian epic Shah-nama, which book the family had been reading in the evening when Shirinmai's pains began. Merwan took her to the hospital, and told the nurses, 'This time it has to be a girl'; and when it was so he told everyone, 'Now we have a sister in the house,' and he rocked the child, saying that she was most fortunate. He took Shirinmai's meals to the hospital every day, about which she once said, 'Merwan was a good son, he came to me in my need.' But now when he did not return home but went to the hut, Shirinmai declared that, the child had brought misfortune, for soon after her birth — two or three years was 'soon after' for Shirinmai — her most-loved child had left home for good.

11. The Zhopdi

THE zhopdi was tiny, about 7 feet square, made of bamboo and matting, and was used only by Merwan at night. Large numbers of people began coming on Sundays, and the Bombay and Kasba Peth companions would have warm reunions. Merwan would sit at the entrance to the zhopdi or in the shade of a tree and they would sit before him and sing bhajans. Occasionally they would play a game of iti-danda or atya-patya, and sometimes he would give explanations of spiritual subjects. The place buzzed with a kind of anticipation.

Merwan lived alone in the hut and kept only Arjun and Baily near him outside alternately to keep watch at night so that no one could approach. He told his watchmen that if they heard any strange noises from the hut they should on no account try to find out their cause; they should not even turn or look towards the hut. But one night Arjun, feeling that something was wrong in the hut, turned around and saw a huge man, as tall as the trees. He became so choked with fright that, he cried out with a terrible cry. Merwan came out and comforted him. If he had not, Merwan said, Arjun would have died. As it was, he began losing his strength and died five years later.

There were strict visiting hours for the companions. Ferdoon used to bring a can of lentil soup (dal) and a large chapati, a kind of bread. But then Merwan took pity on his age and the distance he came. Some of the companions suggested a young married Brahmin cook who had expressed a keen wish to cook for him, and Merwan accepted his offer on condition that he remain continent during the period of service. For a long time the man put his wife off with one excuse or another, but one night late he came to the hut shouting that he

must see Merwan Saheb. Merwan came out and asked what it was. The Brahmin said, I cannot put her off any longer, I want your permission to please her. Merwan gave permission and told him that he was now free from the condition of continence.

It was noticed at this time that Merwan was giving much attention to Gustadji, and in different ways impressing on the rest of the companions to pay respect to him. He put up a photo of him in the zhopdi and garlanded it and told them all that for them to garland it was equal to garlanding him, Merwan. He likened himself to a locomotive driver, Gustadji to the engine, Sadashiv the couplings between the engine and the carriages, Bua Saheb the guard and Baily the rails, while the rest of them were the carriages of different classes according to their respective connections with him.

Merwan now asked Ramjoo to sell his shop in Lonavla so that he would be able to go with him to Bombay when he went there shortly for an indefinite period. He told Ramjoo not to be anxious about anything; that besides being responsible for his spiritual future, Merwan would see to it that his affairs did not suffer — although he added in a ringing voice that the affairs of the world were merely imagination — not even a dream but a dream into a dream. In spite of his best efforts, however, he did not find a buyer, and Merwan told him now to say to everyone he met, ‘I have not yet sold my shop,’ before greeting him or saying anything else. This brought about, the most awkward situations Ramjoo had ever experienced — especially when he met friends he had known when he was on the Khalifat committee. So for fear of having to utter that terrible sentence, ‘I have not yet sold my shop,’ he rarely left his house.

Ramjoo suggested that he try to dispose of the place by lottery, to which Merwan acquiesced, and at the same time, to Ramjoo’s utter relief, cancelled the first order. But it turned out to be merely a replacement of one evil by another. With the ‘I have not yet sold my shop,’ he could at times at least adroitly handle the situation — as once when he was late at a funeral and was confronted by the chief mourner he murmured the

sentence and at once added, 'And consequent engagements forced me to be late.' But this hawking of lottery tickets — his relatives and friends thought he had gone quite mad. Merwan insisted that he finish up the matter soon.

For some time now, Usman — the same who had introduced Ramjoo to Merwan had been on the verge of revolt. Somehow his faith had been shaken. Baba wrote to him in Bombay to come and see him and offered to display to his satisfaction any supernatural phenomena as a test of his powers. Usman replied:

Dear Merwan Seth,

Yours to hand. You called me there, but I'm sorry I can't come. Nothing more to pen except my best salaams to you and all.

Yours sincerely,
S. M. Usman.

Merwan spent the days mostly between Arjun's and Patil's houses; and of course, there were qawwali and bhajan parties outside the hut sometimes. On one such occasion, inebriated with the wine of discipleship and desiring that the couplets of devotion more fully possess their hearts, Syed Saheb told Merwan that they all wished not to call him Merwan, or its more respectful form, Merwan Seth, any longer, but Meher Baba. He accepted the name, and shortly after called them together and told them that soon he would leave the hut and go out on the roads and each must make a decision whether he would go with him and obey him in all things. All but a few who had family responsibilities elected to go.

It should be mentioned here that although the name Meher Baba has been translated by some writers as 'Compassionate Father,' all through his life Baba never liked being called Father. He would say, 'Why do you make me so old? Call me Baba.' 'Baba' has many shades of meaning of respect and intimacy, and it is certain that his intimate disciples never thought of him as Father; it would have been too restricting. Even when they took their troubles to him, it was not to a Father but to their dearest and most-beloved Friend and Master. 'Baba,' to them, included the titles of all divine

qualities. (But the singers in their verses hardly ever use the title, preferring the name 'Meher,' as a permitted familiarity.)

On 15th May Baba took the companions to Sakori to celebrate Upasni Maharaj's birthday in a grand way. (He was the first to do this; but afterwards every year Maharaj's disciples kept the date fittingly.)

They all assembled at Sadashiv Patil's place and while Baba was giving them a song Ramjoo suddenly went down with fever. Noticing his trembling and dazed condition Baba called him over and asked what was wrong with him. Ramjoo said he couldn't make it out. A few minutes earlier he was quite all right, now he was like this. Baba told Doctor to feel his pulse, and Doctor said he had fever. Baba made him lie down and covered him with a heavy blanket, and telling him not to move, took up the song again. The chills ceased, but the heat became alarming and he wanted to throw off the blanket, but Baba had told him not to move. Suddenly he got the idea that he was dying. Conflicting emotions surged through his mind. Pictures of his wife and relatives on the one side floated through his mind, while on the other he could hear every syllable Baba was singing, for it was a ghazal he knew well — 'Fana kaisi, baka kaisi.' His feet became lifeless and this lifelessness gradually crept up to his waist, then up and up until his whole body was dead except his eyes. After some time the blanket was removed and he was being helped to sit up and Baba was giving him a drink and lovingly patting him.

They went, to the station and boarded the train and Merwan after making Ramjoo comfortable told him, 'Stop your mental film.' When he woke up in the morning the fever was gone. But Merwan did not allow him to walk the 9 miles from Chitali to the ashram with the others but sent him in a tonga.

For most of the companions this was their first visit to the ashram. After some time they were taken into Maharaj's presence. He received them standing in front of his hut, naked except for a gunny-sack tied around his waist. He was of middle height and powerfully built. Although they already had some idea of his personality

from photos, they were not prepared for so much magnetic attraction. From the flowers they offered him he gave one to each and said, 'Tumala Dev lavkar pave' (May you get God soon).

The celebrations lasted four days with bhajans, arti, and palki (Maharaj being carried in procession) and feeding the poor. Maharaj gave lengthy interviews and explained divine things in loving and fascinating terms. During one of these talks he said to them, 'Listen most carefully to what I am going to tell you: I have given Merwan the key to what I had, and you all should stick to him and do whatever he tells you. By God's grace you will soon reach the Goal.'

All these things had a magical effect on any who had had lingering doubts about the greatness of their Master, and they were filled with strength and purpose. Of course, at that early date none had any inkling that as well as being their Guru and Companion he was also the Avatar for the whole humanity. It was thirty years before Baba told them (and the world) outright that he was the Ancient One.

The companions left mid-morning on the last day, but Baba stayed on for some days keeping Gustadji and Bua Saheb with him. They returned on the 19th May and stayed at Kasba Peth till the 24th, and that night they all went to the zhopdi to bid farewell to the place of the first phase of his world work, and then returned to Kasba Peth and prepared for the road. The bed-rolls and gear were packed into a bullock-cart leaving them fairly free of burdens. While this was going on, Doctor, Adi and Slamson slipped away to a tea shop and filled their stomachs with bread and cream and tea. Somehow Baba came to hear about it, and although it was not a contravention of any order of his, he did not like the selfishness or greed of it. He told the three that they could drop out and return to their homes; but when after much hesitation they started to leave he called them back and told them they could stay with him, but in future they should be more responsible in their actions. This created a new sense of seriousness in everyone.

12. Mani and Sheriarji and Sheriarji's Ruin and Release

AT the time when Merwan and Bua Saheb opened their toddy shop in Kasba Peth, Merwan's father Sheriarji had his eighth tea shop, also a toddy shop, in Chorpari which was some distance from 765 Meher Dastur Road, but although he was sixty-eight years now he walked both ways every day. Mani, his daughter, remembers as a small child watching for his coming in the evening. 'When he came in sight I would call out, "Baba, khau-khau layo kay?" (Have you brought me something to eat?), and he would shout back, "Layo." (Have brought.) Sometimes he would pretend that he had forgotten. Often it would be bananas of which I was very fond. Sometimes he would bring sweets for all the children about in the street. Even after a day's work and the walk home, he would tell me stories before I was put to bed. One evening he was cleaning a big fish in the backyard and I was watching him and remarked how "rough" the skin was. Father laughed and said, "Not so rough as the soles of my feet in my dervish days." When I was a little older he would tell me a little about those days, and also about the persecution in Iran of the Community by the Mohammedans, which had brought mother's parents Dorab and Gollandan to India. The Mohammedans were so hated that many in the Community erected posts by their front doors as symbols of the oppressors and soundly whipped them before going off for the day so as to be rid of their hatred. Father always used to take me with, him to the Community dinners, and so respected was he that although the Community frowned upon Merwan's way of living and especially his attachment to "that Mohammedan saint" none dared to speak of it before him.'

Sheriarji was a true dervish (poor one) who lived in

the world because that, was ordained for him, but he was never of the world. Now he took a partner to whom he entrusted most of the business side and particularly the yearly auctions of the leases of the toddy palm trees, himself merely signing the necessary papers.

One evening the partner invited him to his house, and after a nice meal and talk of Iran said, 'Oh, I have bought so and so acres of toddy trees. All it needs is your signature.' Sheriarji signed, and a few days later found that he had signed away his share of the business.

Shirinmai was fury itself let loose. She went to a good lawyer who told her not to worry, no court would give a verdict for the partner. But Sheriarji would not fight. He simply said, 'He has made a debt which he will have to repay in future lives. For my part I forgive him.' 'Future lives!' Shirinmai stormed, 'I won't be here then.' She insisted on his going to court. The lawyer primed him on what to say. Sheriarji said, 'Yes. Yezdan, Yezdan' (God, God). Shirinmai said. 'Are you listening?' 'Yes, of course. Yezdan, Yezdan.' In court he agreed to everything the partner's lawyer said.

Shirin appealed, but the same thing occurred. Shirinmai was crushed. She had to sell her gold ornaments to pay for the case; and now, with the loss of position in the Community, she had to bear its increasing hostility to Merwan. Bravely she would dress in her best and go out into the streets or to a cinema where she would buy the best seats to show the people that she was not to be beaten. And whenever she met gossip her sharp tongue gave more than she received. Yet there was a certain queenliness about her, as though she knew that her son was a king and one day would come into his own.

15. Naja's Story

WE were living a few doors along from 'Pumpkin House.' I was seven or eight years old. Merwan, as Baba was then called, was about twenty years and often used to come with some of his friends in the evening and play cards or Indian chess. And he would tell us stories — always about the kings and heroes of old and of the past Perfect Masters and their disciples. And I would sit in a corner and see and hear. They would go on till late, long after I had gone to bed. That was after he had met Babajan and Maharaj. The stories were from the store which every household possessed; but Merwan would bring new life and meaning to them — although, of course, I did not know that then.

He had the attic in their house and kept a photo of Babajan on the table. He did not have his meals with the family but took them up to his room where he put them into a drawer sometimes later to take out and throw in the river. One day his Ma went up to clean the room and noticed a sour smell and found the box full of rotten meat-balls, vegetables and bread. She came round to Peela Masi or Aunt Peela, which was what everyone called mother, and told her that Merwan was not taking any of his meals. There was an accusing note in her voice as though her sister was at least partly responsible for her son's behaviour.

Merwan was then working in his father's toddy shop in Sachapir Street and every morning before going to the shop would call in and tell mother what time he and his friends would be coming that evening.

In those days Baba used to compose songs in Gujarati, Urdu and Persian and sing them in a very melodious voice. He would get the customers into a back room and get them singing bhajans.

We used to observe that his friends had great respect for him and what he decided they would agree to. Even people who did not know him would, when addressing him, add the respectful ‘Seth’ to his name. They knew that he was not of the world but was in the spiritual line. And they would bring their private difficulties to him and take his advice.

Those were the days when he used to visit Upasni and stay with him. Always before he set off for Sakori he would come first to Peela and tell her he was going; and when he returned he would tell her. He never told Shirinmai these things. Peela used to ask how Maharaj was and what was happening at the ashram; and he would say that Maharaj looked very robust and give her a picture of what was going on; and she would plead to be taken next time. Peela was very ill with asthma and used to keep a bottle of sweet water (brandy) in a niche above her bed. She said it relieved her. A snake also used to occupy it and she would give it a saucer of milk. Baba used to tell her, ‘Become well and I will take you.’ One night she got very bad and sent for Baba. He gave her some sugar-water, put a pinch of Maharaj’s dhuni ash on her forehead and she passed on in her sleep.

I was weeping. Baba said, ‘Why are you weeping? Mother has been liberated from all her pain; and you may take comfort in the thought that in her next birth she will be someone very great. If you feel her absence, am I not there to look after you?’ Hearing these words I was completely comforted and felt very happy and peaceful.

Baba helped with the funeral arrangements; but instead of the usual Four Days, One Month, and the End-of-the-Year ceremonies, the cost of which goes to the priests, Baba had the money used to feed the poor.

I went and lived with Daulat Masi (Aunt Daulat) and her husband Ferdoon Masa (Uncle Ferdoon). They had a tea shop in Charbaudi near Babajan’s Seat. This was at the time when Baba had the toddy shop in Kasba Peth. He paid daily visits to the house for a while and then changed to visiting the shop between nine and ten in the morning and taking a little scalded cream. He

did not eat anything else.

Every Thursday and Sunday morning at four o'clock Arti was performed at Kasba Peth and Baba distributed *prasad* of sweets, which Daulat Masi had made. The arrangements for these gatherings were given to Gustadji to fit in between his watch with Babajan and his shop duties — which meant that on those mornings as soon as the *prasad* was distributed he had to hurry off to give Babajan tea at five. The numbers who came increased — not for the Arti, Gustadji said, but for the sweets. Daulat and Ferdoon, who were both very good cooks, also used to prepare most of the feasts which Baba gave the companions.

Except when he was at Sakori, Baba used to go to Babajan every night without fail. Gossip made much of the toddy-seller visiting the Mohammedan saint. (Liquor is prohibited to Moslems.)

Baba had a hut built on Ferguson College Road, and after his last stay with Maharaj moved into it and the companions used to go to him every evening. He had one meal a day of dal and chapatis freshly prepared by Daulat and taken by Ferdoon on a bicycle.

Then one day with the companions, he left Poona on foot and went to Bombay.

14. Abdul Ghani's Story

I first came to know Merwan at school and college. Then he abruptly left college and we did not meet again for six years. In the meantime I had established a homeopathic practice in Bombay, and used to come to Poona now and again to see friends and relations.

The friends used to gather in the evenings at the house of Munshi Abdul Rahim, storekeeper P. W. D. (Public Works Department), to indulge in a 'feast of reason' and the 'flow of soul'; and I was always welcome, and enjoyed that sort of thing immensely.

One evening Merwan was there. I greeted him with the boisterous levity common to reunions, pouring out a volley of jest and questions to which he completely responded, telling the others that he and I were old school friends, and recounted many of our escapades together. Our host Munshiji frowned on my making so free with Merwan and quoted an old saying, 'A friend of the past is always an awkward customer, alas,' and despite Merwan's response I instinctively knew that things would be different now between us. It was evident that he was held in deep regard and reverence by all there. At the end of the evening we parted with Merwan's silent invitation to me to see more of him.

I set myself furiously to the task of finding out who was this Merwan to whom others gave such respect, and learnt of his meeting with the lady saint, Hazrat Babajan, which was the reason for his suddenly leaving college, and of his subsequent years with Upasni Maharaj.

Consequently I was astonished and overwhelmed when Merwan used to invite me to the Irani tea shop opposite Babajan's seat and initiate discussion on topics of interest, particularly politics — seeking my opinion on such burning matters as the common cause which the Khalifat Movement and Indian Congress had made, and listening with the greatest attention to my arguments.

15. *Baidul*

THERE was a young Irani of Jafrabad who was drawn to the country and city where the Avatar had taken birth, and had left his wife and small children and come to Poona where he got a job in the tea shop where Gustadji used to get Babajan's morning tea.

He was a big-boned man, heavy-handed and slow-footed as if through generations of following the plough. He was also inquisitive, and it was not long before he asked Gustadji about the 'saint' to whom he took tea every morning. Gustadji told him; and he went and took her darshan. Gustadji also told him about Meher Baba who was the Master of Masters, and he should lose no time in having his darshan because he would be leaving Poona soon.

The young Irani could hardly wait until the proprietor of the shop came, and then went straight to Kasba Peth. When he arrived Adi was playing a sitar, and the Irani bowing to him asked did Meher Baba live there. But because of his very limited Hindustani the only words the boy could understand were 'Meher Baba,' and thinking that he was being thus addressed became nervous and went upstairs and told Baba, who had the Irani called and spoke to him in his own dialect and told him that he would be leaving Poona soon with his companions and that he should leave his job in the tea shop and go with him wherever he went. And he went with him for the rest of his life. Later, Baba sent for his family and looked after them; and they grew up in his love.

The name he gave was Rustom Jafrabadi Irani, but later Baba changed it to Baidul. He was stubborn and shrewd, with great physical endurance. He was almost insensitive to pain: he once cured himself

of piles by squatting over a charcoal fire and burning them out. He had an unerring sense of direction even at night in both country and city — a gift that was to be of immeasurable value later on when Baba went out in search of his lovers hidden in the bazaars of cities and in remote places to fill their cups with the wine of the new Dispensation and listen to their heart-songs which were to become the folk-songs of the New Humanity.

16. Ramjoo's Story

FOR some few months I had had the impression that Merwan Seth was being regarded by our Circle as someone more than just one of us. Not only was he being-addressed by the respectful title 'Seth' (Merwan Seth) but his words were being received with a new attentiveness. That was in the beginning of 1922.

For myself I had wanted to ask him for his advice on my affairs, but in spite of his being at the houses of my friends Doctor Ghani and Usman in Bombay nearly every time I visited him, I had not been able to speak with him alone.

Then one evening in Lonavla, Usman told me about a pleasure trip that had been arranged from Bombay to Mandwa. Merwan would be going, and Usman invited me to go with him. I told him it didn't suit me, but I eventually agreed to go with him. As soon as the train arrived at Victoria Terminus we went straight to the docks, and no sooner had we boarded the launch than it cast its moorings and steamed off.

Besides Merwan Seth there were Munshiji, Dalvi. Latiff, Gustadji, Baily, Dr. Ghani, mostly called Doctor, and Abdulalim, and a professional singer. We soon did justice to the purees, bhajyas and other pastries and were chit-chatting and joking, when Merwan Seth drew our attention to the panoramic view of the city, pointing out its many towers and domes and factory chimneys set back from the calm waters in bright sunshine, and musing on its greatness. Suddenly he posed the question: Was a city great in itself or was it the seer who made it great?

A lively discussion ensued with Merwan Seth adding new points and creating such an atmosphere that it was as though we were entering a wonderful new life. Then

he drew our attention to the eye — that a small thing could contain so much.

After an hour or so the launch stopped and dropped anchor and we went ashore in a small boat, and after a few miles' walk we arrived at Dalvi's bungalow where we made ourselves comfortable. It was time for the evening prayer so I left the house unobserved, and finding a place behind some rocks, performed it. When I returned Merwan Seth was in an irritable mood. He said, 'We come for an outing together and some go off strolling and one goes off to say his prayers.' The setting, and the way he said it, stirred something deep in me.

After supper the singer began tuning his sitar, and the songs he sang seemed to have a new depth of meaning. Abdulalim began to weep and dance. Latiff kept on asking Merwan to command the snakes to come out of the jungle and dance. This was my first definite hint that Merwan was something more than an ordinary man.

Another evening when all of us were seated around him at Munshiji's house in Charni Road, Merwan asked each one in turn to tell about his worldly affairs, whether there were any obstacles or difficulties in his way. Although this was the moment I had been waiting for, now that it had come I hoped he would not call me to speak then, but see me privately sometime. Each unburdened himself of his troubles and I was the last, but Merwan didn't ask me to say anything. Usman, noticing this, called his attention to it, but Merwan said he would see me the next day since I would be on the same train that he was taking to Poona.

Merwan, Doctor, Gustadji and Baily took the 3.15 for Poona and I joined them as far as Lonavla. Earlier, Merwan had mentioned the circle of his disciples. He now said that there were twelve all-important ones, plus two, making fourteen in all; and there were also fourteen who were the 'shadows' of the first fourteen, making twenty-eight in all. The original fourteen would all become one with God, while the 'shadows' would only see God. Yet, even seeing God was no small thing. Out of thousands of yogis and mahatmas (*great ones*)

and walis (saints) who strive for Truth without the guidance of a realized Master, only very very few see God. For them to become one with the Oneness is quite impossible — they must wait for the Grace of a real Guru.

After a little while Merwan asked if I wanted to follow him. He said that if I wanted health, wealth, name and fame he would give them to me; but if I wanted to follow him I would have to do whatever he told me irrespective of mental or physical considerations, and so I should weigh the matter very carefully. But this newly charged atmosphere that surrounded this man swept away any hesitations I might have felt earlier, and I agreed to obey him in everything.

Merwan now questioned me about my affairs. Upon learning about my public activities in the Khalifat Movement he asked me to resign immediately, and said that after I had done that he would give me further instructions. At 8.15 the train arrived at Lonavla and I got down and walked home and Merwan and the others went on. That was on 27th January 1922.

17. Adi's Story

I first met Upasni Maharaj when I was fifteen years. I was home on vacation from the Parsi High School in Panchgani. My mother Gulmai by then had become a frequent visitor to Sakori, and one day she asked me to accompany her to the place. I unbraided her for running after some Hindu master instead of adhering to Prophet Zoroaster. She told me not to speak disrespectfully of any master and then appealed to my manliness, for there was no other male relative available and a woman never travelled alone. So I went with her.

When we arrived Maharaj was coming across the fields towards his hut. Gulmai greeted him with great reverence and garlanded him with a garland of fresh flowers which hung down to his feet. I had never seen a man of such power and authority and I immediately without thinking about it, bowed down to his feet. He was very kind to me and was obviously pleased with my mother's devotion. During my last year at school I wrote in Marathi many letters to him to which he replied through Durgamai. His letters were full of affection and advice to study hard and look after my health and all would be well.

After appearing for the matriculation examination I came home and waited for the result. My father had built a three storied house in the Shani Gally locality in the city and Gulmai was eager to invite Maharaj to the house warming-ceremony: but one of my paternal uncles strongly opposed it and most of the Community, which was about two hundred souls, rose against her. My father was pulled between Gulmai and Maharaj, and his fear of opinion: but Gulmai's love prevailed and Maharaj was invited. He stayed a week, and hundreds of all classes and religions came for his

darshan.

In the early years Gulmai had had to depend on charity. Then as business flourished my father had neglected her. Now practically the whole Community ostracized her.

She had often told me about Merwan who, people said, was Maharaj's chief disciple. On our next visit to Sakori he was there. He had very penetrating eyes and a slender body and was quick and agile in his movements. He moved about talking and singing as though he wished to conceal from others his oceanic depth of experience, never mentioning his own greatness, but all the time praising Maharaj and Babajan. He had a beautiful voice; strong, rich and resonant.

When he returned home I tried to emulate his indifference to dress and comfort but, of course, could not keep this up and soon realized what was important was to absorb his ever flowing love. The next time I saw him was when he came with Maharaj and Gustadji to our house warming. I had fallen ill with fever and Merwan constantly came to my room to ask how I was, and then to help me sit up and move about a bit. In a few days I was well again, and he invited me to accompany his singing on the harmonium.

One day I found myself alone with him and he brought up the matter of my future. If I joined him and become a fit instrument for his work, my discipleship would become famous among the devotees who would flock in thousands to him.

I felt an immense joy at being so asked. It was decided that since I had passed matriculation I should for now go to Deccan College and one day he would call me.

In Poona, although Merwan was often in my mind's eye and in my heart's embrace, I did not seek him out until I met one of his mandali, Baily J. Irani, who told me that Merwan was now staying with another of his disciples, Arjun Supekar, in Kasba Peth the other side of the city. With great difficulty I found the place and I was overjoyed to see Merwan again. I became a regular Sunday evening visitor; and found that Merwan was now being called Meher Baba.

He told me to keep my activity attached to my duty (which was to study hard), but to keep my heart attached to him. After trying to carry this out for some time I asked Baba should I try to think of him all the time simultaneously with studying, and he said, 'No. When you are studying give your mind wholly to study, but as soon as you put your books aside, remember me. To love one's mother or brother one does not have to force the mind to think of them all the time.'

18. Pendu's Story

MY mother was Baba's mother's sister. We lived nearby in the Butler Mohalla. My parents used to tell me and my younger sister, Naja, about Zoroaster, and I used to think wouldn't it be wonderful if in our lifetime there was such a one. I was about eight or nine years then. When I was ten Merwan taught me the Catechism and I used to think about it a lot. Early every morning Merwan would sing Monajatu, the Zoroastrian hymn, and his rich voice could be heard everywhere, and people would stop what they were doing and listen. I used to think, how lucky it would be for all of us if Merwan became Avatar. He is very religious-minded — he might easily do so.

In 1917, when I was fourteen years, we moved house, but it was not far from the old one.

By now Merwan was spending much of his time with Maharaj at Sakori. Always before setting out he would come and tell mother he was going, and on his return he would always first go to her and tell her he was back and then go to his parents' house. We, for our part, loved him very much and respected him as an 'old man' and took his advice in all matters; and the neighbours would come to our house for him to settle their quarrels. Often he would come in the evening with a few who had already become his disciples and play cards. Jal, Merwan's brother, was his mother's spy. She would say to him, 'Go around to Peela Masi's (Aunt Peela's) and see if Merwan is there and what he is doing.' And she would come round and fight with mother, saying that she was aiding and abetting her son's neglect of his duties and responsibilities and encouraging him in his visits to 'that man' (Maharaj).

Sometimes he would go to Bund Garden or to the

Tower of Silence for the whole night. When it was Bund Garden, he would bring back in the morning a bottle of water from river and come straight to our house and give some to mother and Naja and me.

We of course knew about Babajan. Merwan used to speak of her. At one time she used to spend the nights in a small masjid (mosque) in Rastur Wada, Rustur Peth and she would pass our house and mother would tell me to go out and take her darshan, but I was too scared because it was said she used to beat people.

Mother was always asking Merwan when he would take her to see Maharaj. One evening she had an attack of asthma, from which she had suffered for long, and asked him again, grumbling that she would die without seeing him. Merwan gave her some sweetened water to drink saying. 'Drink this and you will be better in the morning and then I will take you to Maharaj.' — She went to sleep happily and passed away in her sleep. Naja and I went to live with Daulat Masi, and father went to Ahmednagar for work. It was he who first told some of the Community there about Merwan.

Soon after this, in 1919, Merwan took Shirinmai, Daulat Masi, Korshed his brother's Jamshed's wife, and Naja and me to Maharaj. Maharaj told us that Merwan was a very great man — like Zoroaster. This greatly surprised us all because we had been offering *arti* to Maharaj's picture every evening. Merwan had composed it in Gujarati for us and told us that he would give a prize to the one who first learnt it by heart. We had naturally thought that the one to whom we offered this worship was the great one and that the composer was his devotee.

The Parsis and the Iranis are great meat eaters, but gradually, without any thought on the matter we found that we were eating less and less meat, and one day a week we fasted.

I was sixteen then, and because I did not wish to be a burden to Daulat and Rustom I left school, but did not find work immediately. Merwan at this time was holding bhajan sessions some nights over his father's toddy shop in Sachapir Street, and I used to attend regularly.

There was a restaurant keeper in Quetta in the north-west named Rustom Jehangir Irani who went to Ahmednagar for the marriage of one of his relatives. I was there too, and met him. He seemed to like me and offered me a job as cashier in his restaurant, expatiating on the natural scenery and the bracing climate. I accepted, and went back with him. I did not tell my father. I don't remember why — but he was a very hasty-tempered man, and possibly he was in one of his tempers at the time and I felt he might raise objections. When he did hear that I had gone he was very annoyed that I had not consulted him.

I stayed with Rustom as one of the family — always remembering Merwan and leading an austere life, not eating meat or eggs and bathing in cold water in a winter climate where country people wore charcoal braziers on their chests underneath their coats. The family, solid Irani mutton eaters, could not understand this, and to their inquiries I said that that was the way I liked to live, and vaguely mentioned that my cousin, Merwan, lived that way. There was a Pathan named Mirkhan, who used to press me for details about Merwan; and one day declared that if I ever went back to Poona he would go also.

After two years Naja came to Quetta with some relatives on a visit. She was bursting with the news about Merwan. He had left home and was living in a hut somewhere, seeing nobody except on Sundays when his companions came to see him. But their relationships had changed: they no longer regarded him as 'one of themselves' but as their spiritual master; and it was said that many of them would be leaving their homes soon and following him when he went wandering. They no longer call him Merwan, but Meher Baba. Not only had their relationships changed, but people everywhere were saying that Merwan was now someone very great. Indeed, it was said that Babajan had called him her child and that one day he would move the whole world. And some said that Maharaj had earlier given all his disciples to him. Naja said that she didn't know what it was all about but she felt it was all very grand.

But I knew — because in a moment my respect for my cousin became a living faith in him as my Master and Guide. And when shortly news came that Merwan with forty of the companions had gone to Bombay I left my job and went down to Bombay, taking Mirkhan with me. I stayed with some people in the Community and they told me where Merwan was, but said that he was not seeing anyone. I soon found the place. My father was sitting outside as watchman. He got up without speaking and went into the house. Then he came out, and without greeting me said that Baba would see me. I went in. Baba was sitting in just his shorts. He looked an entirely different man. The Merwan I had known was the most manly man I had seen, but this person was much more than that — and I immediately bowed down before him and placed my head on his feet. He asked me why I had come. ‘To see you, Baba,’ I replied, ‘and to be with you.’ ‘Would you like to stay with me?’ ‘Yes, Baba.’ He said, ‘All right. From here and now you are with me.’ And he sent for my luggage.

19. The First Tramp

ON the night of 24th May, Baba took the mandali to the zhopdi to bid farewell to the place of his first public work, and returned to Kasba Peth and prepared to walk to Bombay. They left Kasba Peth in the early hours, first going to Charbaudi where, excepting Baba who remained at a distance keeping Baily with him, the mandali paid respects to Babajan. Because of their not being used to walking distances, and the darkness and no sleep, progress was very slow, and it was four hours before they reached Chinchwad where Arjun had arranged for the first halt in a big stone bungalow opposite the railway station. Most of them were unsteady on their feet. Bua Saheb and Ramjoo were walking together. Bua Saheb was actually sleeping briefly as he walked and would lurch against the other with his sitar and regard him with half-closed vacant eyes. After good strong tea, biscuits and some rest, Patil and some others who were done in were sent by train to their next stop, Talegaon, and they tramped the distance in blazing sun, arriving at three in the afternoon. Here they found a group of big shady trees for their camp. It was almost an hour after Baba, Sarosh and Ramjoo arrived that the last one struggled in. Doctor was the most done up and had fever, for which Baba gave him quinine.

After a good night's sleep they resumed the road at five the next morning and after an easy walk for four hours came in good spirits to Khamset. Here, Abdul Tyab of Lonavala, with Baba's prior permission, met them with great pile of bread and butter and jam and made fine tea for them. They stayed there the rest of the day.

At five o'clock the following morning they were on

the road again — a pleasant road at that time of the day winding through hills painted a soft shining green by the pre-monsoon showers. Baba had an inflamed ankle and was in much pain, but he led the party at a brisk pace and they reached the outskirts of Lonavla by eight o'clock. Tea was brought from the town, and then they went on to Khandala, reaching there in another hour. Syad Saheb Jamadar, an ex-policeman, arranged for their stay in the shady compound of the mandir (temple), beautifully situated by a picturesque tank. Some big cooking vessels were procured from the town and Masaji prepared dhan-sak (a thick lentil soup). Masaji was a great cook, and he put his skill into the simple dish. It was their first proper meal since they left Poona, and they all overate; it was decided to stay there until the next afternoon. In the evening after supper they played iti-danda for some time and then in the best of spirits spread out their bed rolls for the night.

They left Khandala the next afternoon at five o'clock and one mile's walk brought them to where the Bhore Ghat steps down. The descent gave them much trouble with the bullock-cart until someone thought of tying a length of wood across the rims of the wheels and so breaking them. Suddenly it was found that Syad Saheb Jamadar and Chowdry were missing, and Baba became very upset. A token search was made — token because there was nowhere to search on the mountain, only the road behind and in front; either they had lagged behind or gone on ahead. The latter was the case; they had taken short cuts and were sitting by the roadside when the party arrived at Campali. Baba gave them a severe dressing down for leaving the party. Doctor tried to arrange with his friend Mr. Abdurrezak to stay the night in his house but Baba eventually selected a spot under a tree far out from the village along the bank of the 'Tail Waters' flowing from the Tata Power House. Being Thursday, Maharaj's arti was recited. Abdurrezak brought them mangoes and tea. But they were not allowed to rest for long — the long halt at Khandala had to be made up, and by nine o'clock they were on the road again with lighted lanterns under a dark starry night.

Asthma's feet were badly blistered and he was walking on his toes. Baba made him get in the cart with a few more in like plight; and they went on singing marching songs like 'Upasni Nath Guru maze ai, mazla thav Deva pai.'

At three o'clock in the morning they came to the village of Chowla where they were mistaken for dacoits (bandits), but the villagers soon saw that they looked more like people who had been robbed than robbers and directed them to a good camping site beyond the village. But it was no time for camp selection, they wanted to sleep just where they were, and Baba did not urge them on; and soon they all drifted into that heavenly state called sleep. They awoke with the hot sun streaming down on them, so they moved under the shade of a huge tree. There was a good well near by, and they stayed there until mid-afternoon when the sun lost its fierceness and then set out to Panel, reaching there at nine o'clock, where they put up at the dharmshala.

In the morning to the great surprise of everyone Baba declared that the tramp had come to an end. The limit had been reached and they would go on by motor lorry. So a couple of lorries were hired, and after breakfast they started for Bombay. Presently at a wayside tea shop Baba treated them to tea, sweets and aerated waters, even providing Khak and Assar with cigarettes.

They arrived at the city in the evening and drove to Abdurrehman Baba's shrine, where Baba told them to go and pay their respects to that former Perfect Master. When they returned they found Baba stretched in a shashtang namaskar (full-length prostration) with head towards the shrine. From there they drove to Munshiji's house in Charni Road where they put up pending finding a suitable bungalow.

All were roused at four o'clock the next morning and Baba had a gramophone record of some verses of the Koran played. A big awning was put up for the Id Namaz (prayers), and Munshiji arranged for an Imam Saheb (priest) to conduct them. After baths and change of clothes, the Mohammedans among them joined in the

prayers, while Baba and the rest of the mandali sat around and watched the ceremony. Quite a lot of Mohammedans from outside also joined in. After the prayers they all paid their respects to Baba and then sat down to a feast of tasty vegetables dishes prepared by Syed Saheb. There was much laughter and light-heartedness. They had made another giant step of committal to the Master out of a past constructed of steps; they had left behind them the authority of thousands of bondages. They were light-hearted and full of laughter.

20. *Manzil-e-Meem*

AFTER three or four days' vigilant searching a suitable bungalow was found at 167 Main Road, Dadar, near the G.I.P. railway station. Under Slamson's supervision one of two large ground-floor halls and four big rooms were partitioned into six by eight foot cubicals of framed gunny sacking, each for two men. The other hall was to be the dining-room. Upstairs there was a small room for Baba and Gustadji and separate small rooms for Sadashiv Patil and Bua Saheb. The rest of the space was for a meeting hall. The kitchen and latrines were outside in the compound which was quite large. They moved in on 7th June 1922.

The first thing discussed was a name for the place. After many suggestions Baba settled on *Manzil-e-Meem*, which means Where the Descended One lives, and this was approved by all. Baba paired off the room mates without reference to temperament, compatibility, religion or interests.

Baba had Doctor write out Seven Orders:

1. To follow to the letter the spiritual instructions I give.
2. To keep or break, on my order, any special connection one may have with another.
3. To totally abstain from intoxicating drinks or substances as well as sexual intercourse (except when allowed with legal wives) for twelve months.
4. To eat or drink and dress according to the residence pattern, and avoid fish, flesh and eggs under any circumstances.
5. To be present in the bungalow between seven at night and seven in the morning, barring accidents.
6. To perform faithfully the duties given to each.

7. Under no circumstances to leave me even should the whole world turn against me — unless I order him to do so.

If any of these orders are broken intentionally by anyone who binds himself to my orders, I shall lock myself in my room and abstain from all food and drink.

There was already an example of the second order. Adi had been ordered not to have any association with Slamson or Assar Saheb: he must not talk, touch, sign to, or even intentionally look at them until further orders. But this was not to be taken as any reflection on any of them. (The most noteworthy point was the punishment for breaking any order — Baba's locking himself up and fasting without even water.)

In the evening, Meelad, or the 'Birthday' of the place was performed.

Within a week, on Baba's order, most of the companions had taken jobs in government or private offices. Among those left in the manzil were Khak and Assar who were working on a translation into Gujarati of a biography of Maharaj entitled 'Sakorina Sadguru' (The Perfect Master of Sakori) which Baily had written. Baba had given him much information on Maharaj. Khak and Assar were now translating it into Urdu under the title 'Gareeboka Aasra' (The Protector of the Poor). Masaji was in charge of the general kitchen, while Chowdry cooked separately for the Hindus. The others were given general duties until they could get outside jobs.

It was decided that Usman Saheb and Bua Saheb in partnership should open a hardware store. Ramjoo and Slamson were to be accountant and canvasser, while Ahmedkhan would be office peon. Thus nearly all would have remunerative jobs.

Masaji was a first class cook and he was allowed to use plenty of ghee and costly condiments, so they did not miss their cradle food — meat. The daily menu was:

Breakfast: Bread and butter and tea in abundance;
Dinner: Dal, and rice and vegetables, which Masaji
cooked differently each day;
Afternoon tea:
Supper: Bread and another dish of vegetables.

Each bed had been provided with a mosquito-net. There was an occasional joy ride in a bus, or a cinema or a drama.

Each one, whether working out or remaining in the manzil, who had dependent relatives, was to be given a monthly remittance for them. The first of these remittances was paid.

Despite the good food and comforts and the zest of the adventure, the atmosphere was far from pleasant. There were orders for everything, and they were to be carried out to the letter. If for instance, one was washing his face and had applied soap all over it and was called by Baba just then, he had to go immediately as he was. If he were told to stand up he must remain standing until told to sit again; when ordered to sleep he must try to do so just where he was. A thoughtless jest could create a storm for an hour. Besides the seven orders there were countless unwritten standing orders for the common daily routine. One should not read or write anything without first obtaining permission, or see or talk to friends outside. One should not even read a signboard. One day Sarosh met a friend on the local train who greeted him boisterously. Sarosh turned his head away and stared into space. The friend thought for a moment that he had made a mistake, and looked at Sarosh more closely, and cried, 'Why, Sarosh! What's the matter with you?' Still getting no reply, he thought Sarosh had lost his mind.

After six weeks of residence, on a Sunday, they all went to Bandra and played games on the sea-shore.

Up till then Baba had not given any interviews to the public. But there was an exception with a Professor Sayani. While he and Baba were talking pleasantries Baba suddenly said, 'Nowadays when I go out I wear a Turkish cap.' Turning to the mandali present he said,

‘Is it not so?’ They corroborated the statement, for indeed lately he had been wearing a fez whenever he went out. But they wondered why he had mentioned it to the visitor. When the professor came out of Baba’s room and was about to leave he volunteered the information that his mother who had been sitting at Maulana Saheb’s shrine in Bandra for twenty years had asked him to go and see Baba and note what headgear he wore. Finding Baba bare-headed he was wondering how to inquire whether Baba ever wore any sort of head covering, when Baba himself gave him the information.

There was also some discussion between Doctor and Baba whether the former could continue his dispensary and at the same time observe all the manzil’s rules and orders, especially that of reaching the bungalow by seven in an evening. After some days of negotiations Ramjoo succeeded in effecting its sale on reasonable terms. And so Dr. Ghani’s American Homeopathic Stores Co. and Dispensary ceased to exist as a place of meeting for the friends. There is some evidence that Baba helped the matter along. Some months earlier he had asked Doctor to sweep out the premises each morning; and the sale was the result of the sweeping. Before Doctor had been finally ‘trapped’ Baba had told him, that his stores would develop so rapidly that at least half a dozen assistants would be required to handle the business.

As a time-pass Baba asked some of the mandali to compose verses. Hearing of this, Rustom Jafrabadi, the young Irani who came to Baba just before Baba left Poona for the tramp to Bombay, became fired with enthusiasm also to write and started writing poems in praise of Baba who greatly encouraged him by calling all the mandali together to hear each new piece of imagination set out in lines measured by a foot ruler rather than by any metrical considerations (if one line was two inches, the next would be eight), and rhymes were wherever they occurred. One day, lost in inspiration, he was over-carried in the train. When Baba heard of this he called a general meeting and told Rustom that in future he was to exercise his talents only when off duty.

Baba then said to the others that since Rustom was on his way to becoming a great poet a nom-de-plume must be found for him. Various names were suggested. Then Doctor said that there was a Persian poet of great repute named Be-dil; but since Rustom's verses were unique so should be his pen-name, and he suggested 'Baidul' or Marble. The reception of this was hilarious. Baba not only asked the new poet to adopt his new name but ordered the mandali thereafter to address him as Aga Baidul, or Lord Marble. But the best was yet to come. Baidul said that at times his pen could not keep pace with the flow of his mood and someone should be detailed to do the writing for him. So Baba appointed Doctor as his secretary and said that he was to be sure to always be on hand, when the mood seized the poet. This brought shrieks of approval.

Seven weeks had now gone by. The irksomeness of the earlier minutely detailed orders had vanished. The atmosphere was one of great harmony; all the duties were carried out precisely, smoothly and silently.

Khak and Assar worked on Maharaj's biography. Probably it was to do with this that Baba went with Khak Saheb to Sakori for three days. On his return he thoroughly inspected every room and searchingly inquired if any of his orders had not been obeyed during his absence. Only a few were taken to task for minor lapses. Baba said he was thinking of sending them all to Sakori for Maharaj's darshan.

On 6th August all the mandali under the leadership of Gustadji left by the Delhi Express for Sakori and arrived at the ashram the next day, just in time to join in the noon arti. After lunch they went to Maharaj's hut and paid their respects to him, and he gave them a long talk on Real Happiness and in the end enjoined upon them to stick to Merwan through thick and thin.

The next morning they were brought to the mandir and asked to sit on the ground while Maharaj served them fresh hot loaves of bread and tea with his own hands. He actually went round to each one and kept, on serving them until they had eaten their fill.

After paying their final respects to Maharaj and

Durgamai they left in the evening by bullock-carts for Chitali where they boarded the Manmad train at eleven-thirty.

The Parsi New Year which fell on the eleventh was a general holiday for all. The Zoroastrians went to their fire-temple and burnt sandal wood while they prayed, and in the evening there was a Mohammedan ceremony which many outside Moslems attended.

For some time now Doctor, Adi and Ramjoo had been given a curious duty. Whenever they were free from work they had to sit with Baba in the following positions: Adi on the right, Ramjoo on the left and Doctor in front of him, no matter where they were or what the circumstances, whether in the manzil or outside — even in a car or on a train. Of course, if it was physically impossible to be so seated they were excused, but they had to resume the ‘formation’ as soon as practicable. So many ludicrous situations occurred that were highly embarrassing; especially as at any moment Baba would ask one of them what was on his mind. And the iron discipline required them to answer forthwith. One situation is mentioned. One day they were so sitting with Baba upstairs in the meeting hall when one, Babu Ghante, came to see him, and during the course of conversation said something that made Baba get excited, spring up and seizing him round his neck pull him down. In spite of the man’s huge bulk — he must have weighed two hundred pounds — Baba handled him like a child, dragging him across the hall, down the stairs and rolling him like a barrel across the compound. The trio had to run after him in case he wanted to sit down there. Suddenly Baba stopped and turned round and they nearly ran into him. Seeing Ramjoo directly in front of him, he gave him a resounding slap. Then just as suddenly as he had become excited, he became calm with not a trace of excitement, and petted him with many loving words. And the atmosphere was serene again with not even a shadow of the incident remaining.

Durgamai came to the manzil from Sakori to stay for a few days. Speaking about the Circle Baba said that it always contained two females: one, the spiritual

Mother of the Sadguru, and the other, the spiritual Sister of the Circle. Durgamai, Baba said, was the spiritual Mother of Maharaj and Gulmai was his own spiritual Mother.

In celebration of the marriage of his adopted son, Munshi Saheb arranged a singing party (qawwals) for Baba and the mandali. Accordingly they went to Charni Road, and after an excellent supper of various vegetables specially cooked by Syed Saheb they all took their seats around Baba and, the bridegroom having paid his respects to him, the program began. Baba enjoyed the songs which the divine singers sang — songs of glory in humility, and absence and presence. And they went on until late into the night.

Late in August it was decided to go for a two-day picnic to Ghodbunder, which is said to have the finest scenery around Bombay. Doctor, Slamson and Vajifdar went ahead and made arrangements, and the party followed in the early afternoon. They found the scenery wonderfully fascinating, but an old dilapidated church, their only shelter, was dull and dark and weird. There were scores of birds' nests, and the consequent shitting and fluttering, together with lizards racing all over the walls, would have made a suitable meditation seat for a great sinner. Despite the beauty of the surrounding hills and the shimmering water, most of them were wishing they had remained at home. However, at Baba's suggestion, they tried to improve the atmosphere and wake the dead building by playing a game of French cricket in it. So they filled in the time till evening, and after supper they spread their bed-rolls for the night with the decision to march, off the first thing in the morning and pass the next day somewhere else.

When they woke up they were not refreshed; the atmosphere had, it seemed, even affected their sleep. So they started almost right away and walked to Borivli where they caught the train back to Charni Road. After taking some refreshments there they went to Sion to Mr. Dalvi's place where they had more refreshments and then returned home, arriving just after noon. One of the mandali surmised that perhaps the whole thing was a

sign that picnics are not always picnics and it was time for them to take their pleasures in the more serious things of life.

Baba and most of the mandali went to Munshiji's place, from thence to see Vajifdar play cricket.

The month of Moharram came round, and with it the majlisses or community gatherings. For the first time Baba asked the Mohammedan members of the mandali to take part in a majliss which was held each day just opposite the manzil. These were paid for by public subscription, and Baba paid for this one.

Khak Saheb and Assar Saheb had almost finished the life of Maharaj. As Baba intended going to Ajmer shortly with a few of the company, Khak and Assar were sent in advance to Delhi so that the latter could see his family, and the two of them could try to get an Introduction to the book written by Khwaja Hasan Nizami, a well-known spiritual leader.

The 6th September was Adi's birthday and all were given a special treat of sweets. On the 7th they went to the pictures. The 10th was the second Parsi New Year (Pateti) and the manzil was gaily decorated. In the afternoon a snowwhite pigeon came into the house. It seemed ill or exhausted, and when some went to catch it, it surrendered without a flutter. It was taken to Baba who took it in his hands and stroked and petted it. Several times during the evening Baba went to see it. In the morning he told them that it had died during the night, sitting back on its legs with back bent and head on its breast as though performing a namaskar (obeisance).

Baba asked could any of them make anything out of its sudden appearance and death. None could. Then Baba reminded them that a little while ago he had told them that shortly he would receive a very important message from Babajan. The pigeon was the bearer of that message; and such was the gravity of it that the messenger had died soon after delivering it. The bird was buried by Baba and the small grave was covered with a green sheet and flowers. Later on Baba wrote a poem on it.

In the evening Baba sent most of the company to their respective homes while he with a few went to Ajmer where they stayed eight days. Arrived there, Baba quickly began to show signs of serious illness. The following day they all took complete rest. Baba's condition remained the same. He passed many loose stools in various colours: green, brown, black and grey. The next day, the 14th, Baba asked them all to fast for twenty-four hours and then go to Khwaja Saheb's shrine and pay their respects. There was no change in Baba's health — rather he looked worse.

On the 15th the mandali went sightseeing to the Jain Golden Temple, Daulat Baug, and the picturesque lake called Ana-sagar. The Mohammedans also went to the Shabejehan Mosque where they offered the Friday prayers. On the 17th, the day before leaving for Bombay, Baba told them to visit Pushkalraj, an important historical place of pilgrimage for Hindus ten miles from Ajmer. Seeing that there was no improvement in Baba's health the companions did not want to leave him by himself, but he told them that if he remained alone there he would recover completely from this trouble by evening; but if he went with them it would not leave him till after fifteen days from the date of their arrival there. He went with them. It was a rough drive.

The temple is the only one in India dedicated to Brahma, the Creator aspect of the Hindu Trinity. The mandali, including Mohammedans, were subjected to all the ceremonies of pilgrimage: the bath in the sacred Bhima River, having a 'teeka' marked on the forehead by the Brahmins after their chanting of mantras and paying respects to the Symbol itself. They got back late in the evening to the rest-house where they were staying. They left on the 18th and returned to Bombay.

There was a gradual improvement in Baba's condition. Doctor kept almost continuous watch over him; and on the fifteenth day he was quite well again and, accompanied by dhol and sitar, sang to them.

Naval had a dream in which Maharaj was seated amidst triangles of light. Baba came and took his position in the central triangle. There was a crash like

thunder and splendid lightning and the scene vanished. On 28th September, the following was written by Baba on the notice-board:

To come in force on 1st October — till God knows when:

To sleep at nine o'clock at night and get up at four in the morning.

From four to five to finish with calls of nature, bath, etc.

From five to six engage in devotion to God in the manner to be explained by me one day previous to its coming into, effect. — Merwan.

This was followed by a line of verse:

Zood shauv beedar ai dil khidmate maikhana kon.

(O heart! quickly wake up and hasten to the door of the Tavern.)

On 29th September for the first time physical labour was required of the mandali. Baba asked them to clear and level the back of the compound for a playing area. Accordingly the whole day was spent in collecting stones and glass, digging and raking and tamping.

The next morning they were roused from their beds at three o'clock and Maharaj's arti was recited. Then they were asked to continue with the work. Swearing and muttering under their breath — for most of them had never held a tool in their hands, much less done plain coolie work — they worked in lamplight. Doctor suffered the most and thought out a brilliant escape. When Baba appeared on the veranda in the afternoon Doctor started chanting a well-known couplet accompanying himself vigorously with a wooden earth-beater:

Farhad-ko taklif na do kohkaniki

Shirin tera ashik hai mazdoor nahi hai.

(Don't trouble Farhad by asking him to dig through a mountain —

He is your lover, not a labourer.)

At first all were amused at Doctor's sudden activity, until he kept on repeating the couplet and its meaning dawned on them. Baba also was highly amused, and calling Doctor to him he asked them all to note well the face and features of his lover. He then exempted him from further manual labour that day.

Baba had Doctor write to a Professor S. Abdul Kader. The letter reached him while he was sitting with friends, and upon reading it he exclaimed: Here we are settling between ourselves to go to Dadar to see Meher Baba this afternoon, and this letter comes telling us not to come until called.

The compound work continued. A big roller was borrowed and the ground was watered and rolled. Because of his poetical protest the day before, Doctor was again exempted from hard labour, and worked on the proofs of Maharaj's biography.

At six o'clock all assembled to hear Baba's instructions regarding the new routine which was now read out in four languages: Urdu, English, Marathi and Gujarati, Baba then gave a lengthy explanation: 'The main object of the program is to have you awake in the early hours of the morning, especially between four and five o'clock. That is the most valuable time of the day from the spiritual point of view. The important prayers in every religion as well as the practices of the advanced yogis are done at that time. In fact it is imperative for the yogi to be awake in the early hours.

'I am not going to ask you to follow any yoga or any particular religious ritual (shariat); what is in my mind is quite different from both. I simply want you to keep awake in these hours. Besides what I have just told you from the viewpoint of religion, study, meditation and yoga, the early hours are important from the higher spiritual point of view, too. It was between these hours that Babajan gave me the 'Experience' and also it was the same time that Maharaj brought me back out of the Ocean. The Circle too will get realization in those hours.

'But now the question arises how are you to fill in the time after getting up? Certainly not in lolling about

or playing cards or draughts. Being in the spiritual line as we are it would not become us to do those things.

‘Then the best way of passing the hours will be: from four to five attending the daily necessities; from five to six engage in repeating prayers according to one’s religion for some time, such as Namaz (Mohammedans); Kusti (Parsis); Puja (Hindu); but spend the major portion of the time repeating the Name of the Almighty, this too, according to one’s faith — namely, Allah, Yezdan, Ram, etc. But it is to be done mentally and while in one fixed position. Although the repetitions are to be done in the mind without moving the tongue or lips, the eyes should never be closed. Once having taken the position, one should stick to it throughout the period till the bell rings for breakfast at six o’clock without changing the position, and keep on repeating in the mind the Divine Name with a free heart without thinking of time etc.’

All were then asked to tell Baba the names they chose and the positions they would use. Baba then said that each was to stick to the Name and position he had chosen for ten months without any change. He added: ‘This is my first spiritual instruction of its kind, and do not fail in it.’ With this the meeting closed.

Baba had told them that this sitting and repetition was nothing but bhakti (devotion), yet most of them were expecting to feel or see something unusual — to have some kind of spiritual experience. Also Baba had once said that the mandali would get experiences in September. For them October was near enough to September. Hence, experiences were the talk of the day.

All got up, or rather were routed out of bed the following morning at four o’clock, to peer at the world through heavy eyelids. But the cold water soon brightened their faces and mood and the devotions began. Exactly at six o’clock the bell rang and all tramped into the dining-room for the inviting tea and bread and butter. After breakfast the watering and rolling of the playing area was continued.

Throughout the day Baba was cheerful, but about bedtime he called Doctor upstairs and complained of

burning fever. On feeling his pulse Doctor found a little fever, but not, he said enough to explain the extreme heat of Baba's face and chest. Baba told him that this sickness was quite different from the last one and that there was much pain in his knees and feet. A dazed look came over his face and he started muttering incoherently. The great heat (despite the open windows) turned to chills, and after telling Doctor to cover him up carefully, Baba told him to go.

In the morning the following was found on the notice-board:

For the whole night fever was my strict companion. Tell me now, how with sleepless nights, being still weak from last illness, and this fever, all three combined, how can I hope to avoid the fated sickness that has begun its attack?

— Merwan

That meant, as Doctor said, that the fever greatly developed during the night when they all were asleep under their mosquito nets. At breakfast Baba told them that he had actually cried in the night, and Gustadji confirmed this, saying that he had seen Baba crying. Baba added that he wished that the nights he was passing through should not fall to the lot of even an enemy.

Baba again referred in the afternoon the subject of his illness when Sadashiv Patil was present. He said that this illness was the third in which he had cried. He also said that in all he would die twenty-eight deaths for the Circle in this way and each time he would cry. This present fever was for Patil who was always suffering from fevers. From this it was concluded that the two previous ordeals were for Gustadji and Bua Saheb. Baba said that the next batch for whom he would have to fall sick would include Doctor, whose number was perhaps the fifth or sixth. But after a little consideration Baba said that Doctor's name was seventeenth in the Circle, and hence very important, especially in this respect that the one with this number always remained with the Master even after Realization. The next three or four illnesses would be a bit troublesome, but after that they

lessen in severity a great deal.

After some time the subject of blessings and curses came up for discussion. Baba said that a Sadguru neither blesses nor curses: he works. Saints and mahatmas bless; their words simply bring about the desired result. Baba then explained the difference between worldly joys and Divine Bliss. He said that an ocean of worldly joys was merely the shadow of a single drop from the Ocean of Bliss. It was for this reason that the Sadguru is addressed as Sat-chit-amend.

In the evening Baba again became very restless, and in the night was heard muttering, 'They are beating and torturing me.' This reminded one of them of Baba's once saying that he was likely to suffer at the hands of some advanced yogis and mahatmas.

Patil went on to Sakori. In the morning Baba had photos of Maharaj and Sai Baba sent to him. Adi's continued attendance at college was discussed at length and it was settled that he should remain with Baba. In the evening Baba played a game of draughts with Ramjoo. Although he played in an offhand manner, Ramjoo was swept off the board. A discussion took place as to who was the best player among the mandali, but the issue remained undecided between Jal, Vajifdar and Ramjoo. Baba then said that if he were to put his mind into it he could beat any expert or champion. Doctor asked him what he meant by putting his mind into it; and Baba gave the following short discourse.

'One who is the slave of his mind belongs to the ordinary run of human beings; one who conquers his mind but at the same time is overpowered by it is called a majzoob; while one who is advanced on the path of Truth belongs to the spiritual planes. The first is a worldly state of mind and the second is a Godly state of mind, i.e. a state of mind that has Divinity manifested in it. But the Sadguru or Salik takes his stand apart from all beings and can experience and enjoy all states of mind whenever he wishes.

'A Sadguru is rarely required to put his mind into things of the world, though sometimes he does so for the sake of his Circle. As an example: the residents of

Kamatipura are subjects of His Majesty King George. But does His Majesty know anything about Kamatipura — whether such a place exists, let alone about individual people there? If however he does wish to know something about this village or even about a particular resident he can be furnished with the information in no time through the different departments and services of his government — the Post Office, Wireless, Secret Service, and so on. Similarly, a Salik can reach to the very source of anything and everything he cares to know — that is, puts his mind to. Generally he does not do so. The interest he seems to take in things which belong to the world is offhanded however serious it may appear to others; he simply *does things as they occur to him* almost mechanically without thinking about it.’

The compound was now like a billiard table and Baba took a few rounds of it on Asthma’s newly purchased bicycle. Asthma’s proper name was Khodadad K. Irani. He suffered from asthma, and one day Baba started calling him Asthma, and told the mandali to always call him that. Since this renaming he had been completely free from the disease.

During the afternoon a Mr. Jehangir Moos was announced, and Baba said he wanted to be alone with him. He was the first Bombay Parsi to come to him.

In the evening a notice was put up on the board:

None except Asthma himself should ride his bicycle. Remind me tomorrow evening at seven to tell you the wonder of Jehangir Moos’ case.

— Merwan.

After supper Baba discoursed at length on the subject of yoga study and Mukti. The important points are here recorded.

A yogi, even if he attains the highest yogic state, does not reach Freedom (Mukti) because he still has the sanskaras or impressions of his mind to finish up. Sanskaras mean the impressions left behind after doing any action good or bad. Even a thought creates a sanskara. Talking, hearing, thinking, seeing, eating, sleeping, etc.,

in fact even subtle movements, cause sanskaras which have to be experienced without let-up and with mechanical exactness unless removed root and branch by a Master's grace or nazar. Our present existence with all its related experiences of pain and pleasure, virtue and sin are the result of our past sanskaras, or 'Amal' as Moslems call it.

The very breath we breathe, the eyelid we twitch, the finger we lift, are all due to past impressions. Our present existence is the mere unfoldment of past subtle impressions in gross form; and again, it is our present gross actions that create more impressions, and so on. A good word or action has its good result compressed into an impression, and a bad word or action likewise stores up a bad result. Good actions in this present life necessarily bring a happier state in the next life; and similarly bad actions in this life bring about a bad result in similar form. In either case there is that tie which has not been untied.

Good actions bind a man with a golden chain, and bad actions bind him with spiked, iron chains. But in either case the chain is there and he is not free. Yoga and other studies are good actions, and they give the person a better chance in the next form; but they do not give him Mukti and set him free. To gain Freedom one must have neither virtue nor vice, i.e. 'Din and Dunya' (faith or the world) to one's credit or debit. The mind must be a clean slate to obtain that state described in an Urdu couplet:

Na hum junnat-me jayenge, na hum dozakh-me
jayenge,
Khade dekha karenge hashar-me surat Mohammed-
ki.

(We shall neither go to paradise nor to hell.
We shall keep standing till the day of Judgement to
see Mohammed's face.)

This is impossible to reach without the grace of the Master, but for him it is but the work of a moment. The vast and almost infinite impressions of a person may be likened to a huge heap of dry grass which has

to be removed blade by blade; and that removing actually creates more blades. The Guru merely strikes a match and applies it, and the heap is consumed in a moment. But the Sadguru mostly only uses his matches for the members of his Circle, and, at the right moment brings them to his own level. However, even those who have no direct connection with him can derive the greatest possible benefit from association with him.

Ek ghadi adhi ghadi aur adhi kibhi adh,
Sangat hove sant-ki to kate kot aparadh.

(To be in the company of a saint for one moment,
half a moment or even half of a half of a moment,
is to be released from millions of sins.)

One morning when the mandali had finished their baths and were about to sit for the Name repetitions, Baba told them that again he had not been able to sleep, the reason being the noise of hammering in the background. It was done, he said, by a spirit who always accompanied him in those days wherever he went. It was the same spirit that Baily saw outside the zhopdi in Poona. Maharaj had entrusted it to Baba. None should be afraid of it if it were seen, nor should anyone be fearful in moving about the house or outside.

Ramjoo had been one of those who was sent home when Baba went to Ajmer. Now he mentioned to Baba that he had run into his old friend Usman in Lonavla who greeted him with some taunting remarks and quoted a couplet from the poet Sadi's Gulistan, or Rose-garden:

Raftan be paye mardiye hamsayah dar behesht
Hakka ke ba ookoobate doozakh barabar ast.

(Verily it is worse than the tortures of hell
To walk into heaven with the feet of another.)

Hearing this Baba said that Usman Saheb was cent per cent right in what he said. 'Behesht or paradise,' he said, 'should be earned by one's own exertions, it

should never be gained by favour or by the help of another; it should be deserved. To enter paradise merely through favour or grace without deserving it, is not only equal to, but worse than, burning in the fires of hell. Hence, as far as Usman Saheb limits himself to this meaning, he is perfectly right. If, however, his intention was to ridicule you for following me, then he has ridiculously failed — for the question of heaven or hell does not concern you at all.

Na ham jannat-ke shaida haina dozakh-se gorizan.

(Neither am I fascinated by paradise nor am I fleeing from hell.)

‘I have held out to you expectations of something much higher than a dream of paradise. By remaining with me you hope to find Truth, God, and so fathom the secret of the universe. This knowledge is impossible to obtain without the help of a Murshid or Guru; attempts on one’s own in that direction are useless. That divine poet Hafiz exclaims:

“Without a Guide, don’t enter the Path of Love;
A hundred times I attempted it and each time I failed.”

Continuing, Baba said, ‘Maulana Rumi whose Masriawi Usman Saheb is so fond of quoting corroborates Hafiz when he writes:

“Since I see my Friend throughout both the worlds
What do I care about heaven and hell and the houris.”

‘Poor Usmau Saheb does not understand what he says. To claim that Rasool-e-Khuda will lead all Moslems to paradise is a beggary that beggars description. His case is so hopeless that instead of searching for Truth he leaves even the question of paradise for himself entirely in the hands of Rasool-e-Khuda, and at the same time insists that heaven is to be earned and deserved — otherwise it is equal to hell! To preach that which you

don't practise is the worst form of hypocrisy.'

After purchasing the bicycle mentioned earlier, Asthma had fifty rupees left. It was now decided to spend half of it on a treat for the mandali and half was given to Doctor and Slamson to buy food and clothing for the needy around Abdurrehmari's shrine. They were asked to also take with them a Mr. Burjorji Engineer, the author of a book called 'Karamate Khuda.'

This gentleman had come into Baba's contact recently, and one afternoon when most of the mandali were present Baba asked him to tell us of his 'state.' Sitting in the middle of the hall surrounded by eager ears and searching eyes and quoting profusely from, scriptures and literature he said:

'Some years ago I was working as an engineer drawing a good salary. Somehow, I tumbled into the spiritual line and with great efforts managed to reach a stage where I could foretell important events and at times have my prayers fulfilled simply for the asking.

'This went on for a long time until I started to use my powers in connection with cotton prices and other forms of gambling. So I ceased from service and attended this new "business."

'To my horror' (and here he cried like a child) 'I found that the Divine Gift had escaped from me. Now, in spite of efforts greater than those by which I had received the Gift, I cannot regain the intense joy and bliss of my first communions with Him. I cry day and night, but there is no response from Him. Although I have lost that treasure, still I can feel and perceive things unseen and unfelt by people generally; and hence I need no introduction to Meher Baba or explanations about him. He is a very extraordinary manifestation of Divinity, and I firmly believe that he can restore my treasure in the twinkling of an eye if he so chooses. He is very great indeed.'

Baba with Gustadji and Bua Saheb went for a ride with Munshiji in his newly purchased second-hand car. It was bought (on Naval's recommendation) for only one hundred rupees, and two or three hundred were spent to get it going. Eventually it did go after all and

even climbed the Malabar Hill with but a few stops and tinkering with the over-heated engine. Baba described it afterwards as a far from comfortable ride. The old engine made such screeching and spluttering noises punctuated by occasional phuts from the exhaust that they had to shout at one another to carry on a conversation.

A letter had been received by Baba from Assar Saheb with a few specimen copies of poster advertisements for Maharaj's book.

At dinner time Baba told some of the mandali to water the playing area after half past twelve. It being Friday and the Mohammedans having been strictly enjoined by Baba at the beginning of their life with him never to miss the Friday prayers even if their lives were in danger at the time, they were in a dilemma whether to go for the prayers or water the compound. Not being able to decide, they went to Baba for the solution; but he simply told them to use their common sense. The order was *after* twelve-thirty. The prayers finished at two o'clock. Could not the watering be done then — which was after twelve-thirty?

The dhobi (washerman) having mixed up some of their clothes with other people's was severely taken to task by Baba and told not to come again. But when he was found waiting in the compound Baba told him he could continue to do the washing provided he remained in the bungalow and took in no work from outside. He would be paid fifty rupees a month. The dhobi was, of course, very happy with this. And so one more was added to the manzil residents.

About three o'clock one afternoon Doctor was called to press Baba's body. After awhile Baba said, 'Doctor, tera khuda bhala kare.' (Doctor, may God bless you.) On hearing this Doctor laughed, and when Baba asked him the reason for his laughter replied, 'We generally find it very difficult to follow the drift of your utterances; your words seem to have a deeper meaning than they show. For instance, only yesterday you remarked how healthy I looked, and particularly how thick and strong my neck had become — and now today it is stiff and

pains very much.’ He said that he was reminded of the oracles of Greece they had read about in Greek history, and asked, ‘Were you as adept in oracular jugglery then as you are now?’ Baba replying in the negative, Doctor then asked, ‘How is it that some time ago you told us that the worldly knowledge, education, and cleverness in a person before Realization remains the same after Realization?’

Baba said, ‘What I told you was right. There are two kinds of knowledge: worldly knowledge or the knowledge relating to the material world (neech bhan), and Divine Knowledge (Oonch bhan) which one receives after having become one with God. So when a person having become one with God deals with matters relating to the material world, his actions and words reflect the Divinity within him although no Divine Knowledge is used therein by him. Hence, the utterances and actions of a person are invested by a sort of secrecy and grandeur. This is not known by worldly people — as a ruby in the hands of a country fellow will not be really appreciated by him, although to a jeweller it will speak its value.’

Continuing, Baba said, ‘The person who has become one with God is able to make the best use of his worldly knowledge on the strength of his Divine Knowledge, which however, as just said, is not drawn upon in the least. This is the difference between the words and actions of the ordinary person and those of Divine Personalities.’

Baba then asked Doctor to bring him a little oil, which he did, and Baba rubbed it into his neck and said, ‘After this you will never suffer again with a stiff neck.’

At tea-time the matter of using the twenty-five rupees which Asthma had left over was brought up. Suggestions of a motor-spin, cinema or drama did not meet with sufficient majority. At last it was decided to go for a picnic the following Sunday where they could play iti-danda and fly kites.

After supper poor old Syed Saheb’s plight came into the talk. Because of prolonged illness in his family he had written to Baba a few days earlier that his house

had become a regular hospital. When he came in the evening Baba lectured him for an hour on his complaining. In his defence Munshiji put in, 'He does not mean what he says — it is his nature to grumble.' Baba immediately took up the word 'nature' and spoke further on the question Doctor had asked in the afternoon about one's nature persisting after Realization. He said, 'The nature or "tabist" of a man after becoming one with God remains the same, but in a different light. His former anger, curses and strong language were for himself only because there was Khudi (egoism) in him. Where there is ego there is no God, and where there is God there is no egoism. His actions and words in the divine state have no self-motive, but the streak of nature within him remains after the final Experience. When given outlet through moods they do nothing but the greatest good to others. Hafiz says that it was ingrained in his nature to see various and different objects, but now after seeing Him he does not want to see anything else.

'Thus it is clear that the nature to see is still there, First he wanted to see a variety of things; now he wants to see God only. The desire to see remains the same, but undergoes a change — that of the removal of egoism. Likewise the habit of anger and beating people is ingrained in a person, but if he becomes a saint a gigantic change takes place in the action: it has no personal motive. It is simply an impulse with Divinity behind it, and is of great benefit to the recipient.'

After this explanation Baba played cards with Munshiji and some others for about an hour. Suddenly he became very excited, and began abusing the Hindu members of the mandali in general and Patil and Arjun in particular because they had not eaten all the food that he had arranged with Chowdry to bring. He told Arjun that his house would be swept by plague.

The next day news came by telegram that Arjun's wife had died of plague in Poona. Baba had foretold this plague two years earlier at Bhanburda while playing a game of iti-danda. Some of the mandali recalled Baba saying that the plague would begin at Bhanburda,

spread towards Kasba Peth and then gradually affect the whole city.

A few days before Arjun's nephew had died and Baba had dropped a hint of further calamity; and now there was the news about his wife's death. He begged Baba to let him go home for two days. Thereupon Baba gathered all the Hindu mandali together and told them that one member of each of their families would be taken, and those who wanted to return home should do so immediately — otherwise none should at any time talk of going home. All except Arjun said they would stay; he said that in any case he wanted to go.

Hardly had this matter been concluded when Gustadji, who was walking aimlessly about, butted in, and so drew Baba's fire. Baba said, 'Gustadji, about your food, please take it whenever you feel hungry irrespective of the time.' Gustadji replied that that was what he was now doing — trying to create hunger by walking about. It was the cupful of ghee that he had had to take at ten o'clock that had taken away his appetite. 'I don't like custards and puddings in and out of season,' he said.

Baba said, 'You keep harping on the same theme again and again. It is this that puts me out of temper. Just do exactly what I tell you. It is because you do not pay attention to what I tell you that you make mistakes.'

Gustadji: 'You know full well that I am doing my best to please you. Sometimes I am eating less and sometimes more according to the vagaries of my stomach. I cannot understand why you force me to eat more against my will and wish. If, because of that I fall ill who is there to attend to the petty and trifling affairs and matters in the house as I do from morn till eve?'

Baba: 'These words of yours show that you have a very poor understanding. If I do not know the pros and cons of an affair, if I ask you to do a certain thing the consequence of which I am quite ignorant, then I am no Sat-Purush at all, and no earthly good can come out of your staying with me.'

Gustadji: I came to you under Maharaj's instructions to listen to you and follow your orders in everything. That is why I am staying with you.'

Baba: ‘And that is exactly what you are not doing while remaining with me. Hereafter I will not tell you to do anything. You give me a program and I will follow it.’

Gustadji: ‘If the situation was really like that I would not have come to you; on the contrary I would have taken you to my house. If you mean to try me then I do not see the necessity of it since I have already suffered enough at the hands of Sai Baba and Maharaj. You are welcome to try the novices in this line. I work with them just to keep them company. Just when things appear to be going smoothly, every second or third day you bring up some matter and cause mutual annoyance. Such incidents damp my spirits and I feel disheartened.’

Baba: ‘Having such a grand connection with me, being actually my “dark side,” does it befit you to suggest that my orders and actions are at random, with no sense or meaning in them? I have not gathered you all here to try you. Maharaj made me sit in filth after my final Experience. Where was the necessity for it? Should I have considered it as a trial? I don’t intend to try anyone; I only ask you to do just what I tell you to do. In so doing you will help my work.’

Gustadji: ‘I am always ready to obey your orders, and with a clear conscience I can say that I have done my best up till now.’

Baba: ‘Don’t try to read my actions — you will never fathom them. Even if I were to offer you a cup of poison, drink it without the slightest hesitation. And in so doing you would greatly ease the burden of my work.’

Later on, Baba went to Doctor’s room and asked him what he thought of the episode. After thinking awhile, he said, ‘A person, no matter how keen he is about the spiritual line, without “Experience” is, after all, human; and so there is a limit to his patience and forbearing. Gustadji has at least spoken his mind.’

Baba said, ‘Gustadji tries his best to help me, but in his own way, rather than in the way I want. All can see that he is the one who looks after my comforts from morning to night.’

In the afternoon glass-powder, thread, cooked rice and other necessary ingredients were distributed among the mandali to prepare cutting thread for competitive kite-flying and fighting.

Baba again passed a sleepless night and was moving about most of the time.

For a week now while sitting for the morning prayers the mandali had heard a dull knocking sound. At first it was thought it might be the Spirit Baba had told them about earlier, but Gustadji, who although he got up with the rest of them was exempted from the prayers, said it was Baba knocking his head on the floor. It had been noticed lately that he had been tying a handkerchief round his head. Obviously it was to cover a wound. He had been seen earlier to have actually shattered a window frame with blows of his head.

This clearly showed that Baba was suffering greatly day and night; yet for all that he was as 'alive as electricity,' as one said, in the general management of affairs, keeping an eye on the conduct of all and their mental and physical needs, as well as sharing keenly in their sports and games. Indeed he was the fittest and the quickest of them all in these things. Whenever he seemed worried or anxious, it was because one of them was out of sorts.

The day for the picnic came round. Vajifdar had arranged for it to be at Juhu, which is on the seashore, and a Mr. Narotam Morarji had offered them the use of his fine bungalow. But seeing that Baba was in no condition for an excursion the companions told him that they did not want to go. But Baba said he was going, and when they started off he was like a schoolboy going on vacation. They arrived, and after refreshing themselves with the aerated waters they had brought, rested till lunch-time.

Baba served the meal of puree, potato-bhaji and shrikhund to each one with his own hands; and afterwards said they should take it easy during the hot hours of the afternoon.

About two o'clock Baba asked Doctor to see what they were all doing. He reported back that some were lying

down on the sofas, some sitting in easy chairs, some talking, and one, Vithal, was snoring. Baba had him called and told him to return to his home immediately. Then, he had them all called, and said, 'In spite of my wretched condition, I have brought you all here to give you some sort of change. It is for the sake of you all that I am undergoing all these sufferings. What does it matter to me whether I am at Dadar or here? It grieves me to find that you have no regard for me. Here I am lying on the ground with excruciating pains in the stomach while you are lounging on sofas and easy-chairs.

'I know full well that you come from high families and have been used to all kinds of luxuries. Now that on my word you have discarded those things for the time being, you should not let go your hold on your mind on such as this present occasion, but at once remember the line you have taken and the Goal you have fixed as your Ideal. You should simply think of yourselves as being in jail for the period. That is all. You should not let your minds go to that which you have discarded for the time being the moment a chance comes your way.

'You do not, however, have to undergo real hardships in this line with me; you are simply required to go against your will and wish and not to do certain things which you have been doing up to your coming to me, and to do certain things which you have no liking for. For example: When you were hungry you used to eat. Now you are asked to eat when you don't wish to have food, and not to touch it when you have a keen appetite. You used to sleep during the day; now you are not to do so. You never did any manual labour; here at times you are asked to work under a blazing sun. These are a few instances of going against your mind, and by them you will gradually learn to control your mind.

'Look at the Indian leaders like Gandhiji and the Ali Brothers. For the sake of their country and its people they have left the luxuries of liking and have been undergoing the hardships of prison life for long periods.

For the sake of their country and the good things of life for all — which is a mere dream — these leaders are suffering so much. How much more should you do for God, the very Source of all that is! Hafiz says that one should go out from the abode of his nature, temperament and thoughts, for unless he does that he can never know the love of Truth.’

‘People have discarded the world and undergone untold hardships for the sake of God, but how fortunate you are that you are to realize Him so very easily. Living with me as you are, you are considered to have discarded the whole world in spite of living in it.

‘This whole universe with all its vastness and grandeur is nothing but mere imagination! In spite of so much discovery and research and so much scientific knowledge, the creation remains a great riddle. With all the latest inventions of steam and electricity humanity at large is quite helpless against nature and its so-called freaks. The greatest warriors, scientists, doctors and astrologers have without exception to bow low to one of nature’s commonest laws, death. Everyone in the world is helpless, and ignorant, and is for himself; and the worldly ties of relationship are mere hypocrisy.

‘Swami Vivekananda says:

“They know not Truth who dream such vacant dreams

As father, mother, child, wife and friend.”

God is for all; then comes the Prophet and the Guru. Barring these, no one in the world possesses true love. — See how very anxious Maharaj is for me — always wanting me to go to Sakori so that he can take upon himself a share of the terrible sufferings I am undergoing.’

Then the subject turned to religion and Baba continued: “The spirit of Zoroastrianism has been spoilt by its followers. It was once the highest form of Sufism. If Zoroaster were to come again in this world he would find it very difficult to recognize his own Shariat tenets. The same is true of all religions. The mullahs, pundits and dasturs have mutilated the original teaching to

gain their own motives.'

After this they all played iti-danda with Baba taking part for awhile, and then retiring to the bungalow telling them to continue. After about an hour they were all called in. Baba said he was too weak to walk back to the railway station, and so Vajifdar was sent to bring a taxi. He told the mandali that this illness was his fourth in connection with the Circle. Baba left in the evening in the taxi with Gustadji, Rustom, Sarosh and Jal, while the others walked to the station and caught the train to Dadar. Reaching there they found Baba lying in the dining-room in a very exhausted condition. He had had four more motions since his return.

While they had been away, one Abdulla H. Jaffar had come expressly from Poona on Baba's invitation to see him and had twice been turned away. He came again shortly after the party's return. Ramjoo went and in a low tone of voice told Baba that Abdullabhai had come. Thinking that he had said Abdulalim had come, Baba said, 'Tell him to go away, and tell him to tell Munshiji and Syed Saheb that my condition is critical and hopeless.' In hardly half an hour Syed Saheb came rushing from Charni Road asking was it true what Abdulla had said, that Baba was in a hopeless condition and was dying. When he found out that he had acted rather foolishly — especially since his wife and children were all sick in bed — he started grumbling at Ramjoo as though he had been the cause of it. But since it was his wont to grumble, Ramjoo took no notice. Syed Saheb said that Munshiji hadn't been taken in. When he had heard the same message he had said, 'If Baba's case is hopeless it does not matter — all my hopes are in him.' Baba was amused at all this, and asked Ramjoo to write a note to Abdulla which Syed Saheb could take back asking him to come at once and he would see him. By the time he came (about nine o'clock) Baba had passed four more stools.

When they got up as usual at four in the morning Baba was not seen about anywhere; but when the prayers were done, and, in response to the breakfast bell, they trooped into the dining-room they found him

sitting there. Save for signs of weakness there were no traces of the previous day and night, during which he had had nineteen motions; he was quite cheerful. Perhaps the 'fourth illness' had been passed through. For breakfast, instead of their usual fresh crisp bread, there was a pile of purees left over from the picnic the day before. Using the excuse that kept-over purees are doughy, and it needs exercise to digest them, Baba first had them sweep the compound and then play a game of 'running round in circles' in small batches — at the end of which Rustom and his lot were declared the winners.

In the afternoon when there was some discussion going on with some of them and Baba, the subject of ages came up. Baba said that Doctor's, Adi's and Ramjoo's were respectively twenty, sixteen and ten. When asked for an explanation, he abruptly changed the subject.

So far the expectation of witnessing extraordinary sights or sounds during the early-morning prayers and repetitions of God's Names had enabled them to tear themselves away from the arms of sleep. But so many days had passed without a single one among them reporting any sort of spiritual experience, that their prayers were no more than what the word generally means. Behramji the 'awakener' in the beginning used to go the round of the cubicles calling each one's name, and each would answer and a moment or two later appear. Now, the 'awakener' himself came with half-opened eyes, calling in the tone of an exhausted gramophone, and while waiting for the replies took lightning naps leaning against a door post. Nor was it uncommon that two of them still drugged with sleep bumped into one another in the darkness lit only by the light of two to three feeble lamps. In the two bathrooms the scene was even more pitiful as each one nerved himself for the first mug of cold, cold water to the accompaniment of strange noises in strange languages Doctor's indeed, almost sounding like a mantric formula: 'Sheen, Shoe, Shocah,' followed by a peculiar hissing sound as the water poured down.

So, the devotions and expectancies. A sort of mania

in CLEANLINESS set in. Everyone started washing things and sweeping and dusting. It probably began when the mandali noticed that Baba was observing strict cleanliness — using a lot of soap when he took his bath, insisting that his clothes, bed-sheet and towels were scrupulously clean. He had his own kitchen corner set up and Gustadji cooked his meals separately.

This was in great contrast to the beginning of the stay there. At that time twice a week Baba used to clean with his own hands the gutters running from kitchen-waste and the privies, allowing no one except Gustadji to help him. Later on he allowed some of them to partake in this work.

It was strictly enjoined on them not to sit on the bare ground but to sit on mats. Formerly even in wet weather they could sit or even lie on the ground if they wanted to. Water was not to be taken from the chattis or water-pots with their glasses, but with a dipper provided for that, and then poured into the glasses. Shoes or sandals should not be worn in certain areas, and wooden slippers were provided outside the latrines to be put on before entering. On top of all this everyone had to kill about fifty mosquitoes every day so as to get rid of these fever-bearing insects. This provided many funny scenes. At any odd hour, in nooks and corners, hunters could be seen crouching and springing and clapping, trying to make up their 'bag' for the day and as quickly as possible.

There was no trace of recurrence of the recent illness, and Baba was very cheerful. He told the mandali that he felt very fresh after one and a half hour's sleep and he attributed that to some ghee Maharaj had sent by Patil to be massaged into his head. In the afternoon Baba told Doctor to remind him at supper-time to tell them all about an exciting game that was going to be played. Just at the moment that Doctor was going to remind him, Baba asked him not to speak or make any sound until the meal that had just been brought was finished. But when the meal was finished Baba said that Doctor had not carried out his order of reminding him about the explanation, and so it was postponed.

Doctor objected that he had not forgotten; on the contrary he was eager enough to remind Baba, but at the exact moment he had been gagged by a fresh order. Baba said that the second order simply made him be silent; he could still have reminded him through signs. Everyone agreed with this, and in the end Doctor pleaded guilty to an unintentional disobedience.

As soon as the plates were removed Baba asked all to play dhappa-dhappi, and this was indulged in heartily for half an hour. In this game which is played with a tennis ball the players sit round in a square. The one who has the ball throws it at the head of another and he catches it and throws it back, or at someone else's. Full liberty is given to throw as hard as one can, but without malice or anger, and Baba as target was not exempted. He and Doctor were reckoned the best throwers — he, for his terrific speed and Doctor for the way he cunningly twisted the ball and concealed its direction.

One morning the alarm did not go off and they all were ten minutes late in finishing their baths. Baba made a great scene of this, telling them that their prayers were cancelled. For the next half hour there was dead silence throughout the manzil, waiting for the hurricane to unleash its violence. When such moods occurred, Baba seemed to possess the unstoppable progress of a steam-roller and the energy of lightning. How that apparently fragile body contained these was a mystery to all. However nothing happened and Baba asked them to go to their rooms and repeat God's Name as usual.

In the afternoon Baba asked Doctor and Adi to put two sitars which were lying around, back in their cases. The others wondered why, until a decomposed rat was found in one of them. It being reported to Baba he told someone to wash the case out thoroughly with phenyl, he himself helping him. He explained to them with great emphasis that unless strict cleanliness was observed in all things a serious disease would break out in the manzil. He had Doctor write on the notice-board:

A dead rat was found in one of the sitar cases when the sitar was being put back into it. This shows that a serious disease like plague is likely to invade the place unless it is kept scrupulously clean as already ordered.

— Merwan

But shortly afterwards the notice was rubbed off before many had read it lest it cause a general stir and fright and the following was written in its place:

Tincture of Iodine should be applied on ringworms, pimples and other skin troubles.

— Merwan.

In the evening Ramjoo, Doctor and Adi were sitting on the front steps talking about nothing in particular when the topic turned to their present situation and how, gradually, Baba was making things more and more difficult for them. Lately afternoon tea had been stopped, hours of sleep curtailed; they had to forcibly stuff their stomachs after eating their normal fill, but no fresh bread for breakfast; and so many new minor orders like the killing of mosquitoes. They were feeling resentful about it all. Doctor said that he felt Baba's grip on him tightening and getting stronger day by day.

Hardly had he said this when Adi was called by Baba, who was in his room upstairs. Then Doctor and Ramjoo were called, and Baba began reprimanding Doctor for not doing any work himself and at the same time trying to make others idle too.

He kept at it for some time and ordered the three of them not to talk to each other for ten months. After awhile he asked them had they felt anything. Adi and Ramjoo said they had. Doctor said he hadn't; on the contrary he was wondering how, with his faulty memory, he was going to remember this new order all the time. Thereupon Baba cancelled the order to Adi and Ramjoo, but told Doctor he was not to speak to anyone in the manzil for ten months. Ramjoo was ordered to write the following on the notice board:

Everyone in the bungalow is strictly forbidden to talk or have any communication by signs or through writing with Doctor. — Merwan.

At supper-time Baba again enjoined on all not to have any connection with Doctor and to act as though he were not there. Baba himself, having stopped conversation with Doctor, asked Gustadji to ask Doctor had he felt anything. When he replied that he hadn't, Baba became more excited and began shouting at Doctor saying that if he, Baba, was anything he would surely make him feel. Then he had the following written on the board beneath what was there: 'If Doctor has any sense of shame he will leave the bungalow at once.'

During this excitement Baba asked them had they received their Money Order receipts. Hearing this, Doctor went to his room and brought the receipts that remained to be distributed, and gave Ahmedkhan and Kondiram theirs, which they accepted — thereby breaking Baba's new order of no communication.

Seeing this, Baba now turned on them and ordered them to leave the place as soon as possible and take Doctor with them. Ahmedkhan broke out in a sweat and Kondiram looked bewildered and lost; and after a little while Baba excused them, accepting their plea that they had not properly understood the order. Doctor wouldn't budge from his position despite all the excitement. Baba changed tactics and said, 'I have ordered you to go to Poona; but I am not sending you away for good. You can let your things remain in your room here and come and stay with me one day each month. Your connection with me will remain intact, and I shall surely do for you what I have to do.'

Doctor replied, 'I am bound to follow your orders, but I don't like the prospect of living in Poona and being with you only one day a month. I do not know how I will fill in the time there.' Baba said, 'This shows that you have felt my order.' And Doctor said he had. Whereupon Baba asked him to write on the board,

Doctor is excused because of his admitting that he had felt. — Merwan.

After this the atmosphere again became normal and all breathed a sigh of relief. They played dhappa-dhappi for some time, after which Baba had Doctor put up the following notice:

I beg all here not to convey in their actions and words bad intentions to the others. — Merwan.

On 12th October before they sat for the early morning' prayers and repetitions Baba delivered the following lecture:

'There are two states: internal and external — divided by a mental curtain. Now to cleanse the internal is a matter which is not in the hands of any mortal being; without the help of a Sadguru it is an impossibility. Therefore until one can come across a Salik or Sadguru one should, try one's best to keep the external, i.e. physical body, clean. This is what the Shariat tenets of all religions teach. *By following Shariat to perfection, one has a chance of coming into a connection with a Sadguru or Salik.* The observance of external cleanliness does to some extent also brighten up the internal.

'Since cleansing the internal is the work of a Sadguru only, without his presence the next best thing to do is to look after the external as laid down in one's own Shariat. In all the Shariats you can see that it is all external only: reading, sitting, standing, keeping the body clean with ablutions and observing cleanliness of one's clothes and food. With the eyes you can look at good religious objects, with the tongue and lips you can utter prayers, with the ears you can hear divine recitations, and so on. Thus the rules of all religions are external only, and hence, all the prophets from the beginning of time have enjoined on their followers to follow the tenets laid down for them.

'The middle course, as adopted by yogis and those given to studies, is a complete failure because it depends upon, or takes the help of both internal and external for realization of their goal. By bringing the mind to work in the process of concentrations and imaginations, and bringing the upper and lower breaths into contact in

the brain, they depend on the internal; by sitting, reading and fasting they make use of the external, i.e. the body: and so they inevitably fail to obtain Realization. Therefore until fortune brings one into the range of a Salik's influence, it is best to follow the tenets of religion as much as one can.

‘When the internal is cleansed by the favour of the Sadguru — that one who has realized God — the external is no longer cared for and is completely neglected. It is for this reason that saints are generally seen in the most filthy states externally. What do such people care about the external, which will perish in the course of time.’

While Doctor was preparing his bath in the early afternoon Baba sent to the bazaar for chocolates which he distributed among them, asking did they like the taste of them. All except Arjun did. After a few minutes he asked were they still enjoying the taste of them, and when they said No, Baba said, ‘When a good thing is offered to the mind it is pleased, but soon after settles back into its original condition before its pleasure. If a bitter medicine is forced upon the mind it revolts, but again after a while returns to its normal state. This proves that both the pleasures and pains of this world are so very short-lived. Just now you enjoyed the taste of the chocolates, but almost immediately after, the enjoyment had become a thing of the past — *since no result from it has remained*. Such it is with all worldly pleasures, and pains. The highest kind of pleasurable sensation in this world is sexual intercourse. But how long does it last? Only a few minutes. Now this highest of all material pleasures compared with Real Happiness is as a shadow of a drop from the ocean — not even a drop itself, but its shadow. The pleasure passes; but Real Happiness, once experienced, is enjoyed every moment forever.’

In the evening Baba sang for awhile a ghazal of Hafiz, and then explained it to them. Being Thursday, Guru Day, Maharaj's arti was recited, and for the first time the companions were allowed to pay their respects to Baba.

The usual routine was followed in the morning until ten-thirty, when Baba called Doctor and Adi. He asked them to keep their minds free and cheerful. He said, 'If there is a cause great or small present then a result must follow accordingly. Now the griefs and sorrows of this world are imaginary and *self-created*. Being so, there is no cause for them to bring about a result. A result, in order to be substantial and therefore knowable and acceptable, must have a cause. If the cause be absent then it naturally follows that the effect or result is insubstantial or imaginary. Why then worry about the sorrows and griefs and pleasures of this world which have no cause behind them other than mere imagination? Be a passive spectator of what is passing before you and keep the mind free and happy. Hafiz says,

“Both the sorrows and happiness of the world are passing away:

Hence it is best that I should remain always happy.”

After the Friday Namaz the coldness and ill-feeling that existed between Slamson, Ramjoo and Sarosh came up in talk. Baba said he felt sorry that in spite of repeated warnings and the frequent notices he had put up on the notice-board, such a state of things still existed in the manzil. He gave the three of them a sound lecture and took a promise from each not to entertain ill-feelings towards the others, but to live on amicable terms in future on pain of being sent away.

After supper the mandali were all sitting on the ground in the sports area playing korda, when Baba came out and immediately noticed that they were sitting on the bare earth. He wrote on the notice-board,

I regret to say that the whole mandali have broken the order not to sit on the ground without spreading something under them. — Merwan.

That which had slipped the memories of over forty persons, Baba, in spite of his multifarious activities — spiritual, mental and physical — immediately noticed.

One day, when all had gathered in the dining-room

prior to the early morning prayers, Baba asked had anyone had dreams. Doctor recounted seeing himself sitting on the footpath of the main road near Bhendi Bazaar dressed in dirty coloured clothes, when some old friends passed by and pointing him out to one another said, 'This is the doctor we knew of old.' Abdurrehraan said that in a dream he had, Khak Saheb was talking with Baba. Baba said that if what he had said was right. Khak Saheb would come that day from Delhi (to where he had been sent in connection with the biography of Maharaj).

After breakfast Baba asked all to play a cricket match. Abdulla and Ramjoo, who hardly knew how to hold a bat, were to captain the teams. Doctor made much of this and Baba enjoyed his witticisms. After the game, Khak Saheb accompanied by Assar walked in after no news from them for the last ten days.

Dirty clothes having accumulated beyond the dhobi's capacity, Baba asked all to give him a hand. They went to it, washing, drying and ironing with great enthusiasm, and the atmosphere underwent an extraordinary change. Soon the back compound looked like a miniature Mahalaxmi Dhobi Ghat in Bombay.

After supper Baba called all together, including Munshiji and Vajifdar who were present, and brought up again a subject that had been partially discussed during the afternoon — whether Baba should go to Sakori. He invited their opinions.

Baba said, 'My sufferings are becoming unbearable; and if I go to Sakori, Maharaj will take a little of my burden off my shoulders; but in doing so he will have to suffer. On the other hand he may even beat me and disgrace me in the presence of all at Diwali time. I have told you before that advanced saints and mahatmas have disgraced and beaten me, for the spiritual world is against me at this time. It is just possible that Maharaj may also do this. If I remain here I shall have to suffer still more terribly.'

Munshiji and Vajifdar were against Baba's going, the rest thought he should go; and accordingly Baba decided to leave for Sakori that night.

He then asked Doctor to bring Swami Vivekananda's book and read out a passage, an explanation of which had been postponed so many times. The passage was:

“The only true teacher is he who can convert himself, as it were, into a thousand persons at a moment's notice — who can come down immediately to the student's level and transfer his soul to the student's soul, see through his eyes, hear through his ears and understand through his mind. Such a teacher and none else can teach.”

Explaining this, Baba said, ‘A teacher, an M.A. teaching the alphabet to children must necessarily bring himself down to their level and read, write and repeat ABC along with them. Then only will be able to impart the knowledge to them and gradually bring them up to his own level. If he does not bring himself down from the heights of his achievements, then the labour bestowed by him on the student will be wasted. Similarly, a Sadguru who comes down to the ordinary man is, in the course of time, able to impart his knowledge to him. It is because he can do this he can make others like himself — a thing impossible for Majzoobs and Masts (who are divinely drunk to such an extent that they are not even aware of their own bodies). Such being the case, how could they give understanding to others and show them Truth. Rasool-e-Khuda himself (Mohammed) came down to the level of all men to such an extent that when harassed by his enemies and his life threatened, he acted like an ordinary man and fled from his birthplace to Medina. See now! The Master of the world running away just as any human being would.’

Baba then came back to the subject of his sufferings. He said that things that were to happen in Poona were taking place there in Bombay. ‘I told you in Poona,’ he said, ‘that I would have to suffer so much that my eyes would sink into their sockets. And that has happened here. I told you that I would be beaten severely by people so it is just possible that, that, too may occur

here. All my words will come true how, where and when, that I alone know: you would not be able to understand them. To understand and talk on such subjects special ears and a different tongue are needed.'

Continuing, Baba said, 'My sufferings are twofold since my charge comes from Maharaj. Maharaj knows this, and so is all the time sending word so that he may take some of the burden from me and ease my sufferings a little. But then the old man would have to suffer greatly. So I am between two fires. Anyway it is decided that I go.'

Baba asked Doctor to tell Khak and Assar Saheb about the new Order of early rising, prayers and repetitions that were being followed since the first of October. Assar Saheb raised some sort of objection to the particular prayer to be said. When Baba heard of this he became very angry with him for finding fault with his instructions; and Khak also came in for hot words. Baba ordered all the Mohammedans to discontinue the morning routine and do what they liked best. Cooling down a little, Baba said, 'who is there amongst you who knows more about Shariat than I? Who is a better Moslem? I am what I am externally. Who knows what I am internally? Prayers and formal worship are meant only for God; but you being so wrapped up in the form of it and its details you leave God out and worship the prayers.'

Feeling that these remarks were pointed at him, Khak Saheb lost his temper and tried to throw the blame for the scene on Assar who all this time had been silent. But now he burst out with counter allegations against Khak. What had started as some trifling objection about the form of Baba's order, had become a full-scale quarrel between two friends. Assar even went to the length of asking for a separate room as he no longer wished to share with Khak. At this Baba stepped in and insisted on their coming to amicable terms with each other, or leaving the manzil. Baba left for Sakori after taking promises from Khak and Assar that they would mutually forget and forgive and be their old selves again. The

order to the Mohammedans was rescinded.

There was at that time a standing order that whenever Baba stepped out of the manzil, any mandali at home should follow him. So when Baba set out to walk to the railway station in the evening of 14th October most of the mandali followed him. After awhile he stopped and turned round and waved them back. They halted. But as soon as he stared again, they again followed. This went on two or three times until he told them he was going alone and ordered them to go back to the manzil. Gustadji automatically and by common consent took over the leadership during Baba's absence.

Khak and Assar gave a good account of their visit to Delhi and Ajmer, and especially of their meeting with Khwaja Hasan Nizami. They had asked him to rewrite the Biography but he said he had too many commitments. But he glanced through the book and then wrote a short introduction which, interestingly enough, covered the book very well. Seeing a photo of Sai Baba, he said he remembered meeting him, and held a very high opinion of him. There was also some discussion about the coming great Personality who is expected in many quarters. He was told that a long time ago Sai Baba had said the new teacher (Imam Medhi) would manifest soon, and it would be in Karachi rather than, according to Islamic traditions, in Jerusalem. Nizami said that there was not much importance in that point: Imam Medhi would be a perfect Salik or Sadguru as termed by the Hindus, and so could, if he wished, appear in hundreds of places at one and the same time.

On 17th October, while they were spreading cow dung over the back compound, Baba arrived. After going through some letters which had come during his absence he wrote the following on the notice-board:

If anyone during the last two days has broken any order of mine, slight or important, knowingly or unknowingly, he should tell me about it by eight o'clock tonight. — Merwan.

Everyone began telling their mistakes. Doctor had

read a ghazal of Assar Saheb's in the Urdu daily 'Bhashard' and as 'fine' had to go to the market and buy a volume of Vivekanand's works. And so were faults confessed and adjusted.

After this Gustadji mentioned that there had been a long discussion on music between Rustom and Naval. Naval said that 'Maigh rag' if sung properly could bring down rain. Rustom argued that it was impossible to do so through the mere science of singing; it could only be done by the exercise of some sort of spiritual powers.

Hearing this, Baba agreed with Naval that it was possible through the science of Raga to bring down rain. He explained: in general terms it can be said that rain falls as the result of vapour-clouds "dashing together." Now, sound travels in waves and consequently takes time. This can be observed if you watch a washer man washing clothes. When he beats them on a stone you see the movement a few seconds before you hear the slap.

'In Maigh Rag, when the voice attains the required pitch of vibration it reaches the clouds and creates a disturbance which results in rain. It is quite a natural phenomenon, and what is there to disbelieve about it? Compared with this the fact of wireless telegraphy is much more difficult to believe since without a connecting link (a wire) sounds and messages are made to travel great distances between two points.

'Now, what is voice, from where does it originate? It must already be in existence somewhere before it issues from the mouth. Really speaking is everywhere in the universe. God is voice, as He also is light. Voice has been given a door, the mouth, to manifest from. When a sound is let out of the mouth it becomes lost in the universal Voice which is everywhere. So what wonder is it if the voice emanating from the Rag reaches the clouds which are only a couple of miles away. There is nothing spiritual or supernatural about getting rain through sound-waves.

'Sound, being vibration, travels and creates various vibrations. It is for that reason that one should read the Holy Books, although the meaning may not be under-

stood. The words of the Zend Avesta of the Parsis and the Holy Koran and other Scriptures are so put and arranged that when read, the voice or sound created come very near to being in unison with the Universal Voice, and that goes a great way in effecting real spiritual values in one.'

While Doctor was preparing Baba's bath in the afternoon, Baba suddenly asked Ramjoo who was standing by if God had a mother. He said he didn't know. Where upon Baba took him to task for not knowing the ordinary tenets of Islamic faith. To finally decide the issue Assar and Khak were called. Assar said that Ramjoo was right. How could one tell with certainty whether God has parents or not?

Baba then said, 'Since you yourself are not certain whether God has parents, why should you cry down the Christians for believing that Jesus is the son of God? Whatever it may be, you should not put aside your Shariat so very easily.

Assar continued his defense for some time but ultimately gave in to Baba's logic. Then turning to Doctor Baba asked, 'Has God any children?' Doctor said, 'Yes.' Baba asked him to explain. He said, 'Having heard you tell that Rasool-e-Khuda is the father of God in the ordinary sense, what harm is it to imagine that God has children?'

Baba said, 'Having a father does not necessarily mean that one must have children. But certainly, God does have many children. The multifarious powers that emanate from Him can be said to be His children. According to the Hindus God is called Deo, and the thirty-three crores of powers of God are the Deotas.'

Baba then said, 'There is besides our two external eyes an internal eye situated between the eyebrows which the yogis, too, know about. At the height of their attainment they see, with this internal eye, God or Brahman as they call it, "contained" in the skull. A Sadguru however can see these things as it pleases his fancy. With the internal eye he sees God; and with the external eyes he actually sees everything that exists as coming in the form of innumerable circles — out of himself

through the point of the third eye. It is for this reason that those who see Brahman can be counted by the hundred, while Sadgurus are always very very few.'

After this Baba fell asleep in the dining-hall while Doctor was pressing his body and did not wake up till six o'clock in the evening. He thought it was morning, and asked Gustadji if breakfast was ready. When informed that it was supper-time he said that never before had he had so sound asleep, and added that he had brought the sleep with him from Sakori.

After supper he told all the mandali about the visit. Instead of talking against him, Maharaj had made everyone there pay homage to him. He had slept well the night he was there. What with the concourse of people wherever he went or sat, there was little opportunity of talk with Maharaj. He was at the ashram for eighteen hours, and he had arranged with Maharaj to send all the mandali to Sakori for Diwali.

After supper the next evening all were called to the upper hall and Baba explained that from the first November he would begin his internal work very seriously, and those who wanted to remain with him throughout should put their signatures to a stamped paper to that effect. Before doing so they should think twice and be prepared to stick to him even if there were a calamity in their families. An agreement was read out and translated by Doctor: 'We, the undersigned, in full possession of our sense, of our own free will and accord, hereby agree not to leave Meher Baba under any circumstances from first November 1922 to twenty fifth April 1923. We also agree to stay here with him regardless of any family events such as the death of any near relation or friend. At the end of the said period Meher Baba binds himself to fulfill the promises by the tenth June which he has already verbally made. If any of us fails under any circumstances to stay with Meher Baba then he, Meher Baba will not be responsible to fulfill the promises given.'

The paper after being read and some explanations given, was passed around for signatures, which were put by all except Assar Saheb. He refused point-blank to

sign, and would give no reason. At this, Baba asked him to leave the compound. Assar begged that he be sent away for one night only; but Baba said that once one left the place without signing the new Agreement that night, he left for good.

Now a word fight developed between Doctor, Gustadji and Behramji. Doctor was severely rebuked by Baba, and consequently became very dejected. Sometime later Baba asked him why he was depressed. Doctor replied that it was some personal matter and he would tell him afterwards in private. But Baba asked him to unburden himself on paper there and then. This he proceeded to do, and the time he took over it showed that he was taking full advantage of the temporary release from the ban on writing. Baba read it, laughed a little and asked Doctor to remind him about it the following day.

All were dismissed except Assar Saheb whom Baba kept back to talk to.

In the morning the mandali came to know that Assar Saheb had left. Baba had sat with him till eleven o'clock. He had, however, signed the Agreement before he left, so he could come back later on if he wished. Even then he had added the words, 'Shall do as much as I can.'

Baba asked Doctor to go with Khak and Patil to the printers and binders where Assar Saheb worked and ask him to return by noon. But he didn't come. Baba then had Doctor write letters to Sharmohamed and Papsyan in Poona telling them not to come to Bombay with students on the twenty-sixth as had been arranged. He asked him to show the letter to Assar, and if he returned by the evening, well and good, if not then post the letter.

Accordingly Doctor took the letter and showed it to Assar. He also tried personally to persuade him to return. But Assar wouldn't come. When Baba heard Doctor's report he ordered Jadhav also to leave the manzil-thus directly or indirectly breaking the connection with all who had come to him through Assar.

Assar's revolt, the departure of the mandali to Sakori on the eve of Diwali, negotiations going on for the

purchase of a flour mill by Rustom, Behramji and Asthma to provide occupation for those who still had not got jobs as well as the daily routine of early morning baths and prayers, play and mosquito killing being rigidly kept to had created a tense atmosphere.

With the exception of Khak, Doctor, Munshiji and a few others who stayed back with Baba, the mandali went to Sakori.

On 22nd October Maharaj received them graciously, and during the three-day visit often sat with them giving explanations and advice; impressing on them to stick to Baba through thick and thin. 'Hear and obey Merwan's orders,' he said. 'In doing so it will be necessary to suffer a little, which suffering you should bear cheerfully. However, if the limit of suffering is reached, then the matter should be humbly placed before Merwan and he will lessen the sufferings a little. Put up with things comfortable or otherwise, but on no account let go your hold on him. God is manifesting more and more in Merwan every day, and good days are to come for all who are with him. Stick to him at all cost and cherish his word.

Durgamai, Maharaj's spiritual Mother, looked after their food.

Leaving Sakori they went to Poona for Babajan's darshan, as Baba had instructed them. Khak Sahib and Rustom joined them there and they returned to Bombay arriving early afternoon. After they had refreshed themselves, all went to the upper hall and Baba asked them to narrate the experiences of the visit.

After this Baba asked Doctor to fetch the Agreement they had all signed, and told them to reconsider their decisions, and if anyone still felt hesitation or unwillingness to have his signature on the paper he could withdraw; and Baba would willingly free him from the undertaking. But all declared their determination to stick their promises whatever happened; and the Agreement was finally declared binding on all except Assar Saheb, who was left free in spite of his having signed the Agreement unconditionally during their absence.

(It transpired that while they were in Sakori, he had kicked up a great row about the Agreement and his signing it. But eventually through Munshiji's persuasion he gave in.) Baba said that although he had bound himself over in black and white Assar would be left free, and was given to the end of the month to decide whether he remained with Baba or returned to the worldly life.

The life of Shri Maharaj was out of the press and was being bound, posters were being stuck up and other advertising negotiated.

A flour mill was bought. It was situated on the Elphinstone Road beyond the railway over-bridge in a thickly populated mill area amidst gutters and sewers. The premises were in keeping with the surroundings, being dark and dilapidated. The machinery consisted of three engines and half a dozen mills, all in a very dirty condition and requiring extensive overhauling and repairs.

On 27th October the following program was put up on the notice-board.

28.10.22 to go to Victoria Gardens

29.10.22 to feed the poor and blind

30.10.22 to go to Kalyan. — By Order.

Doctor went to Poona on some business or other. When he returned he told Baba that many tongues in that place were wagging about him and the mandali, spreading all sorts of exaggerated and false stories. With the exception of the very few who knew Baba, the general opinion was that the 'Irani Pir' and his assorted followers were up to mischief with the Bombay public.

For the excursion to the Victoria Gardens Vajifdar had managed to get special facilities from the superintendent who was an old friend of his. Especially the party enjoyed the picnic lunch under fine shady trees with water flowing by in the canal and flowers of all colours and shapes everywhere. They went on to the zoo part of the Gardens and Baba told them about the positions of some of the animals, especially the monkeys and bears, in the chain of Existence. In the evening,

preparations were to feed blind and the poor the next day. The mandali were to fast until the feeding was finished.

The first thing in the morning Doctor and Ramjoo were sent to Bhendi Bazaar to buy one hundred shirts to be distributed to the poor after feeding them. Then the hunt began! Almost all the mandali were let loose to search out and bring to the manzil the most disabled and needy, especially lepers and the blind. One would think that in a city like Bombay it would be easy enough to pick up a thousand such people, but leaving aside the professional beggars whom they were told not to bring, it is not so easy to separate the really needy from the needy. After walking three miles Doctor collared only one who measured up to standard. Vajifdar, in the heat of the search tramped as far as the bazaar where he came across a bunch of eligibles. But how to get them to Dadar? However, the champion cricketer proved equally sharp in this game also. He persuaded one of them to stand the tram fares on the promise of repayment and also the return fare: and so to the amazement and dismay of the other passengers Vajifdar with a pick of the city's neglected society boarded a tram.

Ramjoo had to go as far Byculla Bridge where he was successful in getting some. Luckily he didn't have to beg from the beggars for conveyance fares as he came across an old friend from whom he borrowed a rupee. Even then it was not easy to keep them together and some tried to slip away when it occurred to them that they were being taken to an institution.

One hundred of Bombay's most needy were given a good meal of soup, rice and a vegetable, and clothed. Some were even bathed by Baba, and two were garlanded by him. The feeding finished at two in the afternoon, and the mandali broke their fast with the same breakfast the beggars had received.

Early morning of 30th October Baba and the mandali took the train to Kalyan where a couple of motor lorries were engaged to take them to the foot of the hill on which is Malang Shah's tomb. But the roads were so bad after the recent monsoon that after about six miles

the drivers asked the party to finish the remaining distance of foot. They would wait and take them back to Kalyan. So they set off, but after walking for an hour found they were just as far from the hill as when they started. Baba selected a certain tree and asked them in the name of the Master to place there the flowers they had brought, just as if that spot itself was the tomb. They were also told to ask that their failure to reach the actual tomb be excused, and they promised to come another day. They set off back to where it was thought they had left the lorries, but eventually after much walking came out on the road a mile on the town side. Presently the drivers came along in a bullock-cart. They had concluded that the party would not be returning until evening, so had decided to back to the town for a few hours. When the party got back to Kalyan Baba allowed them a hearty meal. They reached Dadar and the manzil about five-thirty.

Baba remarked that the trip was not unsuccessful but was according to program. 'Kalyan,' and not 'Malangash,' had been written on the notice-board. 'Another time,' he said, 'if they wanted to go they should take care and write "Malangash" on the board.'

The next Friday the principal mosques were to be attended by the Mohammedan mandali. Each was given a number of advertising posters for Maharaj's biography to stick on the walls. It was a brave sight to see Doctor going forth with posters and handbills and a bottle of gum to fight the great fight, cringing at the thought of being laughed at by friends and acquaintances. Baba gave Ramjoo the Jakaria Masjid to attend — the very last place he would have liked in view of its being situated in the heart of a locality where every second or third man would be an acquaintance. Seeing the revolt going on in his mind Baba gave him another place and Abdurrahman was given Jakaria Masjid.

The big posters were stuck in prominent places on doors and walls; and after the prayers Ramjoo took his stand at the main entrance and distributed the handbills to each and everyone coming out, including Usman Saheb and his brothers. It was a great relief when it was

all over and they returned to the 'good old manzil.'

Book-selling was now the thing of the day. Rustom and Vajifdar were working full time on distribution and almost everyone in the place had been sent out to sell copies.

The atmosphere of the Manzil was never one of laziness, but a good part of the day could always be spared for chit-chat and pastimes. Now every spare hour was being utilized hawking the book that it seemed few wanted. It required great persuasion and an extremely cool head to bring friends round to buying it. The following notice appeared on the board:

Please be telling the truth — Merwan.

Over the last four days Ramjoo had disposed of hardly a dozen copies of the book, and in one day Doctor had sold only two. But some funny incidents occurred such as it being required of Ramjoo to give a short address at a wedding and the wedding party insisting that he explain the merits of the book.

A Mr. Nasir Ahmed who had been to Baba one morning told the mandali afterwards how he had come. He had just returned home from seeing his brother Aziz Ahmed who it was said had become unbalanced mentally, when one of his servants told him that a guest had arrived and was at the moment praying in the mosque. He was found to be a very old man, who introduced himself as Abdul Wahad, and during the course of conversation asked Mr. Nasir why he did not go to Meher Baba. He replied, 'Because he, Baba, is not a Moslem — at least externally.' The old man said, 'Fakirs have no religion. Meher Baba is the First of this time; his station is such that in a moment he could turn anyone he embraced into a wali (saint) if he wished. Go and see him and give him my salaams.' Almost at the identical time the supposedly unbalanced brother had been told by a Voice to go to Bombay and see Baba; and he had gone.

The following was found on the notice-board one morning:

As previously arranged no one should even speak about going home till the month of April 1923.

— Merwan.

Ferdoon, Ramjoo, Barsoap and Slamson were given duties at the flour mill. It had turned out to be hopeless investment. Hardly a day did it work without stoppages — and the consequent jumble and excitement could only be imagined. The stinking smell from the sewers and the ‘crying’ and ‘groans’ of the machinery made it all a horrible experience.

When Syed Saheb came home he told of another strange incident regarding Aziz Ahmed. He had gone with Munshiji to Abdurrahman Baba’s Shrine, and at the moment of kissing the covering (ghilaf) over the tomb a Voice from within spoke in his ears.

‘Shaikh Baba Merwan-ko hamara salaam, kardho, aur voh salaam Munshi Abdurrahim ke zaria wahan tak pahoncha dho.’

(Say our salaams to Shaikh Baba Merwan, and convey them there through the person of Munshi Abdurrahim.)

In accordance with the prevailing practice of not giving interviews to outside people, when the brother of the Maharaja of Hyderabad on Babajan’s advice came down to Bombay specially to see Baba he was turned away. When Baba came to know the details of this, he had the following notice put on the board:

If a visitor of any caste, creed or position comes from Shri Upasni Maharaj or Babajan, I should be reminded to admit him even though I were to refuse him in the first instance. — Merwan.

Baba put on the notice-board that an impure action had been committed by someone whom he referred to as ‘the innocent hypocrite.’ At first the mandali generally thought this to be merely a reminder for all to be on

their guard against any slip; but subsequent persistent notices, such as promising secrecy of his guilt a clear pardon, set them all thinking.

Then appeared the notice:

Unless the culprit confesses his fault concerning impure action within three days, he shall leave the bungalow. — Merwan.

The all-engrossing problem of the day was the unknown black sheep in the fold. Directly or indirectly everyone suspected someone. Expressions on faces and any unusual movements were carefully noted, to no avail. Most of them were ready to rule out the possibility of any such action ever being committed in the manzil. But there were the repeated notices on the board — the latest of which was:

Only one day now remains in which to confess the fault concerning impure action; otherwise I leave the bungalow. — Merwan.

As the day advanced the excitement grew. The third day was nearly over and the culprit had not come forward. It was now pretty well taken for granted that the whole affair had been made up by Baba with some different object in view. Then suddenly, to the utter amazement of everybody, Baba confronted Mahboob with the guilt. At first Mahboob denied it, but Baba gave clear details about the particular place on the premises where the action was done, the circumstances of it, and even of a second party outside the mandali involved in it. It was just as though Baba had been present. Then Mahboob made a clean breast of it. He had, he said, done the action when Baba and the mandali were not on the premises. He was all tears, and Baba forgave him; but he was not allowed to remain with the mandali, and was sent over to Charni Road and Munshiji was asked to find a job for him.

There was an explosion at the flour mill caused by

a piston in the 20 h.p. Grossley cracking the cylinder head. Slamson was slightly injured by a flying piston ring. A policeman came in to investigate, but he was told it was not an explosion but an experiment, and he went on his way.

When the mandali came home to the manzil in the evening they came to know that Syed Saheb's wife had just passed away. The serious calamities in the families of the mandali that had been predicted seemed to have started with Syed Saheb.

Kaiser-i-Hind the Gujarati daily came out with an article against Maharaj, causing a flutter among the mandali.

Naval, who had just passed through a serious illness, had a dream in which Sai Baba came to him and said: 'Whatever suffering you have been through and whatever difficulties you are experiencing have been given to you intentionally by Meher Baba. Because he is young, you and the others do not know who he is. If you called him Rasool-e-Khuda (Messenger of God) it would not be wrong. Do not leave him. Of your mandali only fourteen will remain. I and Maharaj will try to keep you in the mandali till the last.'

On 16th December some shuffling of room occupants was done.

Because, Baba said, the mandali were not quite trying to do their best, he retired to his room at four o'clock in the afternoon with the intention of keeping aloof from the company and not eating or drinking anything.

Two notices appeared on the board:

1. If the sale of allotted books is not completed by thirty-first December, Manzil-e-Meem will be out of bounds to those who fail. — Merwan.
2. Because I am keeping aloof, that does not mean that minor orders are not to be followed. The more you all are careless about my instructions and do not treat them seriously, the more will I keep to myself. If you all desire to see me playing, eating, chatting and working in your com-

pany, please follow the orders sincerely.

— Merwan.

In the morning of 24th December Baba called fourteen of the mandali to the upper hall. A message was sent to Ramjoo at the mill to also come. Baba explained that his retirement upstairs was due to special spiritual circumstances. He also said that Maharaj had imprisoned himself in a cage in voluntary suffering for the Circle. Baba talked to them at length on two things: 1. The real spiritual work had begun; 2. None should leave him. All present again gave their solemn promise that they would stick to him through thick and thin under any circumstances according to the Agreement. At the end, Doctor and Khak were sent round to Charni Road to give Munshiji and Syed Saheb the substance of the talk.

On the 27th Baba had all come to the upper hall. This was the fifth day he had remained aloof and had not eaten or drunk anything. He broached the subject of doing away with some of the minor orders, and invited the opinions of all on the matter. A heated discussion followed. Finally it was agreed that twenty-eighty of the minor orders should be retained and the seven principal orders, should be typed and a copy given to each of the mandali.

This matter being settled to the satisfaction of every body, Baba declared that he would come down and have the evening meal with them. He added that from that day he would be taking food only once every twenty four hours until further notice.

Baba now said that since all the mandali were present they should have a good qawwali program in the evening and asked Doctor to arrange for the qawwals that the bookbinder had been recommending. He was not to invite anyone else. Accordingly Doctor went and arranged it, but somehow or other — probably because of his own enthusiasm to hear good qawwali — invited the bookbinder. When he told Baba of his mistake Baba expressed

his displeasure, and told him that when the man came he was to turn his back on him. For the next two or three hours Doctor was wondering how to get out of this ridiculous situation of inviting someone and then turning away from him — especially since the one invited had arranged the program. But when the party arrived Mirza Saheb was not with them and sent word by a servant that he had suddenly gone down with fever.

On his returning from the mill Ramjoo found that he had lost the day's takings. For some time he fumbled through his pockets. When he became convinced of the loss he was shocked. Cold beads of perspiration, he later said, broke out on his forehead. The room became dim and blurred — not because of the loss, that was negligible, but because of his failure in duty. Since even casual negligence was sometimes treated very severely, he could not imagine what the penalty would be in this case; but to his utter amazement when he told Baba about it he smiled and told him to dismiss the matter from his mind and enjoy the singing with a free heart.

The qawwal, Bakri-Idi, entertained them with choicest ghazals till half past nine, when he was given twenty-five rupees.

On 28th December the following notice was put up on the board:

Parsis and Iranis are allowed to read their Avesta; Mohammedans, Al-Koran, and instructions for prayers; Hindus, their Gita. Maharaj's life may also be read. All previous orders concerning reading are hereby cancelled. — Merwan.

Shortly afterwards all were called to the upstairs hall and type-written copies of the twenty-eight Orders and the Seven orders were distributed. The texts ran as follows:

In addition to the Seven Special or Principal Orders which were written down at the time they were given, 7th June, the following Twenty-eight Rules are to be observed.

1. Baths should be taken daily. Extra baths are allowed after haircuts.
2. One hour between 7 and 8 a.m. is reserved every morning for cricket (or another such game). Those who have duties do not attend.
3. Rooms to be cleaned once a day by the occupants.
4. Dining hall, top hall and back compound are not to be walked on with shoes.
5. Entering the latrines without putting on the wooden sandals supplied for the purpose is strictly prohibited.
6. No one should enter anyone else's room without the permission of one of the occupants.
7. Ringing of the bell means the prompt attendance of members in the dining hall, except the five o'clock bell in the morning which indicates the starting of morning prayers.
8. The respective food and clothing of the mandali should not be given or exchanged among themselves.
9. Eating less than full satisfaction is strictly not allowed. Report should be made in case of inability to eat even in spite of hunger, and in case of no appetite after accepting the food.
10. Any unfavourable change in health should at once be reported.
11. Books, magazines, newspapers, and others' letters should not be read.
12. While out on duty more than two annas should not be spent on drinks, and money should not be kept in possession when off duty.
13. Beating anyone under any circumstances is strictly prohibited even in self-defence. Wrestling and boxing are prohibited.
14. Lies, abusive language, and ill-feeling towards one another to the point of breaking my order are not allowed.
15. Visits to relations are not allowed unless permitted.
16. Letters are not to be posted unless previously sanctioned.
17. Permission is to be taken before going out.

18. In order to avoid impure actions, even to touch anyone while the mind is occupied with passionate thoughts is strictly prohibited. Vulgar stories or passion-exciting topics must be avoided.
19. Touching any woman, except one's one mother or sister, should be avoided.
20. Food not cooked in the manzil, or any eatables from outside must not be eaten unless ordered.
21. Any action indicating lust or passion should at once be reported.
22. Shaving and haircutting are only allowed on Thursdays and Sundays before 12 a.m.
23. No report should be made for breach of orders except when asked to do so.
24. None should enter the office of the manager Rustom Kaikhushru Irani of Circle & Co. except with his permission, and his writing table should not be touched during his absence from his office. Adi, Rustom's younger brother, is appointed assistant manager.
25. Ears should be covered before going to bed either by putting in cotton wool or tying a piece of cloth over them.
26. Everyone must sit down while drinking, and plates should be removed by every member himself after every meal.
27. Bath-rooms should not be used as urinals.
28. Falling at the feet of Meher Baba is strictly prohibited.

Spiritual Orders

Getting up 4 a.m. and attending morning prayers from 5 a.m. to 6 a.m. Attending the places of worship every day according to respective religions, or carrying out other individual spiritual orders.

28.12.22

On the morning of the 29th the following message was written on the notice-board:

As a great scarcity of money is facing the Circle, please do not incur unnecessary outdoor expenses and each prosecute his bookselling duty with full vigour. — Merwan.

Baba continued to take food only once in the twenty-four hours but remained as active as ever.

At dinner time when Baba was serving the food (as he had been doing since he began fasting) Doctor said that he had no inclination to eat even though he felt a bit hungry. And so the signal for a great storm was given. Baba told Doctor that he had broken one of the Twenty-eight rules; Doctor maintained that according to his understanding he hadn't. Suddenly Baba seized the pile of tin plates that Bua Saheb was holding and dashed them on his head. The storm passed over as quickly as it had come; but Doctor was greatly depressed and dejected throughout the rest of the day and shed many tears. The same night he had two dreams.

In the first dream Shri Narayan Maharaj was walking along the street with a throng of people including some of the mandali following him. Doctor approached him and salaamed most respectfully. Narayan asked him many questions about his life which he answered and then added that he had now discarded the world and was in the service of Meher Baba. Narayan then took Doctor's hand in his and sat with him for some time; then he turned it over and looking at the palm said, 'You are twenty-five years.'

The second dream. Doctor was in the street in front of his house. There were many people, some standing, some loitering. Assar saheb was talking in a loud voice and cracking obscene jokes. Finding doctor turning a deaf ear to him he remarked, 'Why would Doctor want to listen to us — he has become a wali (saint).'

Shortly a cry was raised by the people, 'Upsani Maharaj ki jay.' Turning round Doctor saw Maharaj coming along the road. He was covered with dust from head to foot and was groaning as though he had walked a long way. Khak Saheb (who had joined him) and Doctor were to approach Maharaj and kiss his

hands. It was understood that internally Doctor offered him his Shashtang-namaskar, but because of the many Mohammedans about, refrained from doing so outwardly.

Maharaj then went into Doctor's house, where at that time of the day there were only the women. They kissed his hands, and he sat down on the floor, and they asked his permission to spread something under him. Pointing to a piece of sacking, he asked Doctor to get it, and he spread it himself under him. Khak Saheb had not come into the house.

Speaking to the women, but indicating the mandali, Maharaj said, 'I have come down to speak something to those people (i.e. the whole mandali) who don't understand anything and misinterpret everything. They are trying to creep away into corners to escape the severity of Merwan's orders instead of facing them boldly.' Then addressing Doctor directly he said, 'Are you a child not to understand these things? Do you eat fowl's shit? Be particular about your baths.' The dream ended here and Doctor woke up on hearing Khak Saheb's call to everyone to get up.

When Baba heard these dreams he asked Doctor to get them typed and put up on the notice-board so that everyone could read them.

On 3rd January 1923 in the morning when all the mandali were present upstairs, Baba suggested that an hour or two be set aside each evening for discussion of domestic and recreational life in the manzil. All favoured the proposal, and some rough preliminary rules were formulated for its conduct. After much discussion it was decided that the meeting be called a *gutta* or wine shop. Everyone of the mandali had the right to attend, take part in discussion and vote on issues. Doctor was to be the secretary and keep notes on the gatherings. Baba would be chairman. Everyone was asked to take a keen interest in the discussion, and to give his own opinion freely irrespective of what others said. All were asked to speak one after another with permission of the Chair so that the evenings did not fall into chaos. To get permission one should silently raise one hand.

And so was given birth a local self-government in the midst of the autocracy of the manzil.

The most important work going on now was the distribution of the Book. Vajifdar and Rustom were the principal salesmen. But the life of a Brahmin (Sat-Purush) with a Mohammedan guru and a Parsi chela (disciple), written in Urdu — and being sold by a motley collection of salesmen who professed to be leading a spiritual life but were keen about getting money — was not an easy book to sell. And on top of this there were the rumours and newspaper items seeking to discredit Baba and his mandali.

Tipoo Baba sent a garland and a bouquet of flower to Baba and he in return sent him a garland and flowers to Baba and he in return sent him a garland and a flower sheet for Abdurrehman's shrine.

A mood of depression settled down over the mandali, and Baba explained to Doctor and Khak the reason for it. He said that in the spiritual line one generally experiences three stages. In the first there is a fondness for the idea of Truth and an intense desire to know the unknown and the consequent expectations of pleasant experiences. Then comes the second stage—that of disgust, disappointment and apathy. And lastly Realization. All of them were now in the second stage. This is generally a long one; hence they should put up with it cheerfully for it could not be avoided; and none should leave him.

Ramjoo had gone home for a few days on family affairs. When he returned he found that the sports area had been turned into a parade ground and all the mandali were doing military exercises to the ringing commands of Ahmed Khan who once had been a drill sergeant in the army. Before Ramjoo could take in the scene completely Baba pushed him into it. After about an hour of left-turns, right-turns, and about-turns, the drill came to an end, and he then learnt that Kakaji to celebrate his daughter's birthday had brought a feast for them. Apparently the drill was to sharpen their appetites!

Two weeks went by, and the following message appeared on the notice-board:

Last night was a terrible night for me. (Written at
2 a.m.)

— Merwan.

While Doctor was reading the poet Amir's Diwan, 'Miratul Ghaib,' to him, Baba asked him to write on the board the couplet:

Kooch-e yarme avval to goozar mooshkil hai,
Jo goozar-te hai zamane-se goozar jate hai.

(In the first place, it is difficult to find the entrance to the street where the Beloved lives;
And those who enter, pass away from the affairs of the world.)

At the beginning of the manzil stay Baba asked Khak Saheb to sell an old car he had, but Naval, looking at it with eye of tenderness, chipped in and said that the engine was a beauty, and a small amount spent on it would be well repaid. He named it 'Raw Gold.' So Baba told him to go on with the repairs. Naval had worked intermittently on it ever since, but had not found a buyer. Now it had been disposed of by raffle. The winner had the impressive name 'Shri Sat-chitananda Bhajan Mandali of Mahim.'

When Doctor was alone with him in the night Baba explained to him some aspects of love. He began with a quotation:

Love originates first in the heart of the beloved;
Unless the lamp burns, the moth will not become
mad after it.

It is assumed that there is a beloved and a lover, and the link connecting them is love. Although God is Love Universal, let us for the sake of the tale say that at first God begins to love and attracts one to desire Him; but the desirer, not understanding what is going on also resists. The moment that sufficient love is created in the

lover, the beloved becomes indifferent. In this, a process of attraction and repulsion goes on for a long time, ultimately ending in the union of the two. Hafiz tries to explain this in the couplet.

With one end of a hair in my hand and the other in
the Friend's,
For years now a tug of war has been going on
between us.

Baba continued, 'In proportion to the love you have for me, at some moments you will also hate me. This hatred, or repulsion, is the resistance offered by you to my trying to draw you to me. In time, you will begin to respond to my love with equal force. And then the fire of my love will die down and I will become indifferent.'

Vajifdar returned from Nagpur where he had gone to play in a cricket match. He had visited Tajuddin Baba.

The publication of a pamphlet answering the false rumours about Baba that were being circulated was discussed.

Doctor was exempted from the morning game of cricket and could spend the time in sleep on a sofa in the dining-room under the windows which opened out on to the playing area. These windows had become a target for Baba's powerful drives and it was the funniest thing to hear the crash of splintering glass and see Doctor's head emerge with blinking eyes. About half the windows were broken, but still, for the most, he slept sweetly through it all. However, Baba now told him that he could take his extra nap in the afternoon, instead of in the morning.

Although outsiders were not given interviews, when Chhagumyan Cawayya, a singer, came for Baba's darshan and to sing to him, he was immediately given permission — so fond was Baba of music.

There was no *gutta* that evening. Instead, Baba, Behramji and Khak Saheb played cards. Doctor sat back to back with Baba to give him support.

Doctor went into the Circle's office about some matter,

and talked to Adi in a jocular manner. Baba, who was there, told him not to talk in that tone to Adi who was an officer of the Circle. Doctor became excited. And that made Baba angry, and he told Doctor, along with Khak, to leave the place and go to Poona and come back in April. Baba then went up to his room. After about an hour he had Doctor called. When, after a little while Doctor came down he told Khak and Ramjoo that when he promised not to speak in angry tones, Baba declared peace.

Baba had then explained that when a certain kind of Master (Buzurg) was in the most perfect and peaceful internal state, or that when some internal work was nearing completion there was sometimes an overflow of the internal state. That overflow outburst was the shadow of the internal perfect state and was quite its opposite, and so took the form of abusive language or beatings. But whoever received that abuse or beating was fortunate, for the abuse or beating was of great benefit to him especially in his external affairs. ‘Now you people who have been connected with me from the Day of the Beginning (Roz-e-Azad), have no further need of abuse or beatings, and so I have completely put a stop to them. If you cannot even bear my words, then it will be troublesome both to you and to me, and I shall have to give up mixing with you altogether —and then it will go very hard with you all.’

Gustadji made the mistake of not putting Baba’s meal in the exact place where it was always kept, and it was thrown out. When told about it, Baba said it didn’t matter — he would not eat that night. He also did not take his bath as usual.

On 3rd February the information appeared on the notice-board:

I have decided to take only liquids: tea, butter-milk and aerated waters till the fifteenth.

From eleventh to fifteenth — bhajans.

On fifteenth — feeding of five hundred people and clothes for one hundred poor. — Merwan

The *gutta* was opened at four in the afternoon because of a program by Bakri-Idi Qawwal in the evening which Doctor had arranged. The qawwal and his party came at seven and sang till ten o'clock but Baba didn't seem to take a very keen interest in their songs and most of the time was in his room. He looked very ill and weak. After the qawwals had gone Ramjoo sat up with Baba until midnight.

During discussions on many subjects Baba explained to them: 'Realization is one. The difference in Buzurghs is the difference between having the power, and the authority to use it. That which is given by a Master to his Chargeman is not power — that is already in him — but the authority to use the power. A Sadguru, that is one who is in body-form, can work a lot more good in the world than one who is without body consciousness. That one, after he drops his drops his body enjoys eternal Bliss; and the power is there with him, but not the authority to use it. So wherever there is a tomb or Samadhi of a Master there is the power; but it is the devotee's faith which becomes the medium that utilizes that power. That is why people generally derive benefit from the shrines of saints. *Internal* benefit can, however, only be imparted when the Master is bodily present. From Eternity without beginning there is only *one* Sadguru that has come to the world from time to time. Maulana Niyaz Ahmed says:

“The names and signs of my Friend are different in every epoch.

In features and in distinctions there is difference, but in fact it is all One.”

And the last and perfect form of that Sadguru is Rasool-e-Khuda.

‘There is nothing outside ourselves. All the seven heavens and spheres and earths and planes are within us. The Sadguru gives us nothing. He shows us the Treasure that is within us. Duty therefore is authority. It is for this reason that the saints want to leave their

bodies which are keeping them from enjoying the eternal Bliss. They don't want the authority that keeps them away from their Beloved.'

After breakfast the next morning Baba told Gustadji that in case he fell ill and became senseless and was in a very dangerous condition, no one should send for a doctor even though he ordered one to be brought.

The *gutta* was called for two o'clock, and each was asked to bring paper and pencil. After some minor domestic affairs had been discussed, parts were allotted for a play that was to be enacted in the coming Birthday celebrations. As samples of their talents, Arjun, Rustom, Asthma, Nervous and Jal put on turns imitating drunkards. Between five and six o'clock a few games of Kho-Kho were played, while preparations for atya-patya at night were made. After supper at nine o'clock the game began. Naval had strung lines of lights round the compound and it was brilliantly lighted. All were in high spirits and Baba seemed to be enjoying it very much after being reserved and seemingly brooding since supper. The game had been going on for half an hour and was in full swing, when Baba and Babu (Cyclewala) collided with terrific impact. Baba ran into the house limping on one foot. He seemed to be suffering excruciating pain. His face was ghastly pale and beads of perspiration broke out on him. Then he vomited. He kept on saying he was dying; that he had wanted to do one thing — keep the gay mood that everybody was enjoying — and the very opposite had come about. Twice or three times he asked for a doctor to be fetched, and Rustom and Nervous went out for a bone-setter. (It seemed that a toe had been dislocated.) They all had forgotten Baba's order in the morning of 'No doctor under any circumstances.' He said it wasn't the toe which was causing all this pain. Even if the leg had been fractured it would be nothing compared with this pain. It was internal shocks that were taking the very life out of him which in his weakened condition due to fasting he

could hardly bear. He said it was one of the phases of his inner working, which not being spent in the direction desired, had returned back upon him with great severity.

After an hour or more the shocks ceased. Suddenly Baba got up from the couch and ran round the compound without the slightest limp or lurch — just to show them all that it wasn't the toe. Soon after this Rustom and Nervous returned with a bone-setter whom Baba immediately sent away after paying him the full fee of thirty-five rupees for consultation and treatment. The Doctor was not happy to receive that amount since he hadn't given any treatment; but Baba said that it was enough that he had come that time of night.

Then Baba asked could anyone guess what was the meaning of the episode. A few imagined this or that, but of course none knew. So Baba said, 'You remember I have often told you that a certain one is the most unfortunate of the Circle and that either he will go mad, or die.' All remembered. Continuing, Baba said, 'These shocks that I have just suffered were on his account. I tried to save him but could not. He is really the unfortunate one, and you will hear something about him within a week or so.'

It was then midnight and Baba asked all except Doctor to go to bed.

In the morning Doctor told them that he was sitting with Baba chafing his hands, and after some time he was wondering how to know when it was one-thirty (the time allotted him for that duty). If he didn't leave at the given time he would be breaking Baba's order, and if he got up to look at the clock his sleep would be disturbed. To his relief and surprise Baba moved in bed, opened his eyes and asked what time it was. Doctor got another surprise. It was just one-thirty. When told this, Baba asked him to put out the lamp and go.

On the following morning a little after four-thirty when they were all taking their baths, a call came from Baba. Just as they were — some with tooth-brushes sticking out of their mouths, some with towels wrapped around them — they hurried to the upstairs hall thinking

that something momentous was afoot. But it was merely to admonish Naval and Masa for having in a burst of confidence talked about the affairs of the manzil to outsiders. All were warned to keep a check on their tongues. The manzil affairs were Baba's and theirs, and not for others.

Then Baba asked if anyone had had dreams. No one had dreamt anything interesting, so they were dismissed, and returned to complete their toilets.

At supper time the parts for the play were handed out, and a notice was put on the board:

Everyone should particularly note that only during leisure hours should the part-learning and rehearsing of the play be done.

A huge Shamiana (awning) was put up for the coming Maha Shivratri and Baba's Birthday celebrations. Other arrangements also were in full swing. In spite of being keenly interested and very active in these things, Baba looked very pulled down.

While sitting up with Baba after the others had retired for the night and reading to him 'Tazkir-e-Gonsija,' Doctor asked him why Gonsala Shah had found it necessary to acknowledge nineteen Murshids or Masters. Baba said, 'Really speaking, there is one Master who gives Realization. It is for Knowledge (Gnyan of Irfan as the Hindus and Moslems respectively call it) that it is sometimes necessary to approach more than one Murshid. It also happens that the Murshid or Master who gives Realization also gives the Understanding. In any case, Babajan gave me the realization; and for Talim (Understanding) I had to go Maharaj who took eight years to finish the process. If I had had connection with others I would have had to go to them for their part of the process. Such Masters who advance the aspirant are entitled to be called Murshid, although in the real sense there is only one Murshid.'

Doctor asked him about the Sanads of Vilizat in relation to Hazrat Ahmed Ali Saber, and Baba said, 'That is one of the ways of giving "charge" externally.'

During the last months that I was with Maharaj in Sakori I had to externally take the “charge” in writing.’

Baba was still not taking any solid food. He was passing six to ten loose motions every day.

The players began a rehearsal of ‘Julius Caesar,’ but so few of the actors knew their lines, and what was memorized was so over-acted, that during the *gutta* later on it was decided to abandon it.

On 11th February a time-sheet for the day was put on the notice-board:

9-00 — 11-00 a.m.	— Any games.
11-00 — noon	— Dinner.
Noon — 1-00 p.m.	— <i>Gutta</i> meeting.
1-30 — 3-30	— Rest.
3-30 — 5-00	— Any games.
6-30 — 7-00	— Supper.
7-00 — 8-00	— Bhajan.

The chief topic at the *gutta* was whether because of the plague in Poona, the mandali women relatives who were to come from there for the Maha Shivratri and Baba’s Birthday celebrations in two days’ time, should be allowed to come. It was decided that upon arrival in Bombay they should go and take sea baths before going to the Manzil.

Daulat Masi, Baba’s aunt, had had the wish to put on a grand feast for this celebration of Baba’s Birthday and had obtained his permission. She went out and purchased the necessary ingredients: wheat flour and vermicelli, pickles, ghee, sugar, almonds, pistachio nuts and the various spices, which she gave to Patil to take — for he, with the Kasba Peth families, was going up to Bombay beforehand, and she and Shirinmai and Gulmai from Ahmednagar were to follow the next day.

Patil and party arrived late and Baba flew into a rage and told them to take everything they had brought and throw it into the sea and not come back until they themselves had bathed.

That was on the 13th. Since there was to be a program

that night, the Poona and manzil mandali were allowed to sleep after dinner till five in the evening. They retired as usual at nine and were roused at midnight when the bhajans began under the shamiana.

Beside the Poona party led by the old but spirited Biculla there was a party of fifty from Mahim. The two parties made a grand din, each trying, it seemed, to out-noise the other, shouting and 'pealing' their tals (a small-hand-rhythm piece) till half past four in the morning, when the manzil mandali went to their rooms for their prayers.

Baba had spent most of the night upstairs in the manzil with Doctor. At some time in the early hours Baba sent Doctor to call Khak and Ramjoo and asked them would they want to take part in the arti at the end of the programs. Doctor and Ramjoo each said he had no scruples on any grounds so long as it was Baba's order. But Khak Saheb hesitated, and Baba told him not to attend either the arti or the rest of the bhajans.

The program for the rest of the day after prayers and breakfast was:

Sleep from 12.30 to 2.30.

Attend bhajans from 3.00 to 7.00 with tea and sweets at 4.00.

Complete fast for mandali for twenty-four hours.

On the 15th Baba fed eight hundred of the poor, and the mandali broke their fast; but Baba continued his.

Preparations for the Birthday celebrations were completed.

Baba talked for some time on the importance of Shariat or formal religious observances with or without a Murshid. The talk was mainly for the benefit of Khak and Rustom. Later, Baba went to Khak Saheb's room and put his mind, which had been restless for some days, at rest.

Later on, while Rustom Doctor and Khak were in their rooms repeating 'Ya Mohammed Mustafa,' as lately they had been doing for one hour daily under

Baba's instructions, he came and asked them to give more importance to this duty and repeat the Name in a sweet tone with regular rhythm. This was not, he said, a study or mediation, but a kind of pure bhakti.

The next day another shopping was done; and Daulat Masi and her helpers were bent over the cooking range which had been set up in the compound, when Baba came along and said that the amount being cooked was insufficient, and kicked over the pots. Everyone fled into the house and closed the doors, and there was complete silence. Someone peeped out. Baba was sitting in stillness by the dinner's wreck, serene.

A third lot of ingredients was procured. This time there was no interference, and from early hours the cooks and off-siders prepared the feast.

People began coming, and soon the manzil was full of merriment and animation. The shamiana had been kept over the Shivratri, and Naoroji — who comes into the tale later on — had built an arbour of bunting, shrubs and flowers.

Baba came down at 9.30. It had been decided, or rather agreed on, that Baba would take orders from the mandali on his Birthday, but when they asked him to go into the arbour and sit on the cushioned seat, he demurred, but in the end yielded to their love-wish. A great lot of garlands were hung round his neck and flower baskets placed on his feet. Many had brought gifts, but he immediately distributed them among the mandali.

Then they all sat down to the feast and enjoyed the many tasty dishes which the cooks had prepared with love.

The afternoon passed; and after a light supper they all settled down to a night of song by famous singers. There were three parties of these singers, and they would sing in turn. And this went on until the dawn opened the door of night on to the world of another day, and the mandali took up their stations of prayer, after which, leaving out breakfast, they slept till eleven. After dinner they played sports with much zest and laughter, and Baba joined freely in the fun. He said

that laughter was good for digestion. And so ended the first Birthday celebration of the Birthless One.

A certain maulvi had been standing by the bungalow gate all evening without trying to enter or speak to anyone. Baba sent Gustadji to question him. His name was Abdul Wahid of Hyderabad and he had come down to Bombay in search of a friend. Not finding him, he was almost stranded and so took shelter in the mosque opposite the manzil. He told Gustadji that in his meditations a second time he saw a halo, in the centre of which were the words 'Manzil-e-Meem.' Hearing all this, Baba asked Doctor to take the man to Munshiji's place and ask him to feed him and find some work for him possibly in some school. At Munshiji's place Doctor came across an Aziz Ahmed and he, in the course of talk, said that if he could stay with Baba for only a couple of months he would become a different man—such a grand feeling he had experienced by just standing for a few minutes on the veranda of the place.

At the *gutta* in the evening, the principal point discussed was why people outside the Circle like Aziz Ahmed and Maulvi Wahid were receiving such experiences while they who he had said belonged to the Circle, were still in darkness. Baba explained it at length — and the mandali were just as wise as before.

He now reminded them that on the day of the injury to his toe he had told them that regarding the one among the Circle who was the most unfortunate there would be proof in a week or two that he was. This proof was contained in some letters Baba had now received. He would show these letters to one of the mandali (to be selected by majority vote) who would be sworn to secrecy; and he after reading them, would say only that he was or was not satisfied. Later, sometime, they would be shown to everyone.

A letter from Usman Saheb to Munshiji demanding the monthly remittance which he had been receiving before his defection was read out to the mandali. This

ridiculous and impertinent demand amused them all. Munshiji had replied that he would send one more amount and that would be the last, and he should not expect any further help.

There were great crowds at Mole Station, Ballard Pier, to receive a flag sent by the Sultan of Turkey to the leaders of the Khilafat Movement. Baba sent Doctor, Abdurrehman, Ahmed Khan and Arjun to hawk Maharaj's biography among the crowds. They returned at eight o'clock after having sold one copy.

Some two hundred poor, blind and maimed were fed, and fifty of them given clothes.

At supper after taking a few mouthfuls Ramjoo told Baba he had no appetite. Baba asked him why he hadn't told him to put less on his plate. Doctor stuck his nose in and said, 'But you don't ever allow that.' With that Baba flared up and told them to leave the table.

When later the *gutta* was opened, the Seven Special Orders and the twenty-eight Rules were read out; and Baba said that they could be cancelled if that was what they all wanted. An hour later the atmosphere became calm again and all the orders and rules were declared to be still in force and binding on everybody.

After the Birthday celebrations were over, Shirinmai, Daulat Masi and Gulmai went to Sakori. When they returned Baba asked them how they had got on.

They said that Maharaj was still in the cage and looked very weak. He often spoke Merwan's name. Daulat Masi asked him how much longer his self imposed imprisonment would continue, and he said. 'Still there is time; and when I do come out I shall either leave Sakori or drop my body.'

Then suddenly his mood changed, and reaching through the bars he caught hold of Shirinmai and shook her. She tore herself free and would have left immediately, but the others restrained her and she stayed on for the rest of the day. Maharaj had called forth against Baba and the mandali, saying that Baba was an impersonator and not a real Master.

Baba asked the mandali what they could make of this

seeming chaos — this treatment of Shirinmai and sudden abuse of Baba — the opposite to how he had received the women and his often mentioning Merwan.

When none could understand it Baba told them that he himself had started the game by writing a letter to Maharaj telling him that he had no concern with him, Durgamai or anyone else. The letter had had the desired effect of rousing Maharaj to the course of action he had taken — a course he wanted to take. Baba continued, ‘This game has been started by me, but will not end with me. The end is in Maharaj’s hands. I have said I have told you all many times that the whole world, even Maharaj, will go against me; this is the beginning of it, so be prepared. Everything will happen as I have said it would. The month of April is coming round after the interval of a year.’

After dinner Baba had Adi write a letter to Maharaj saying that he did not like the way he had talked about him before Shirinmai and the Sakori people; and that he was disgusted with the ‘sticking to Merwan’ that Maharaj had urged on all of them.

The letter was read to the mandali, and all were told to be on their guard not to be taken in by the buffoonery that had been started.

Following this provocative letter, Rustom was sent to Sakori to bring from Maharaj a message for the mandala — if there was one.

A ping-pong table was bought to the manzil. Baba played for some time with Doctor and others, and it seemed that he would be hard to beat in this as in all other games.

At midnight the next night Baba asked Doctor, who was keeping him company, to wake Ramjoo and Khak Saheb to play cards with him. They played till three-thirty, when he told them to sit for prayers and then go to bed and not answer the four o’clock call.

Baba got into a temper over some mistake that Khoda had made. Immediately, the mandali were served with the notice, ‘All should tear up the Orders that have been given them.’ When this order was complied with by all who were in the bungalow he got more excited and

told everyone to leave with. For the first time the mandali refused to obey Baba. He became more and more heated and the whole manzil was in a state of excitement, in the midst of which he was heard to say 'I am tired of all this. Either you all go, or I go.' After half an hour of abuse he said, 'I will remain on one condition, that from now on none should obey orders.' The mandali replied, 'Be it as you wish, but do not leave us.'

After another half an hour the following appeared on the notice-board:

All orders should be followed as usual. — Merwan.

And all breathed freely again.

On 2nd March at sunset the 'Holi' fire was lit in the compound and some Hindu legimwalas (who dance accompanying themselves with shaken rings and small bells) performed before Baba. After supper the mandali indulged in singing and dancing, and Syed Saheb filled the whole place with neem-leaves' smoke to destroy the mosquitoes.

A new notice was put on the board:

None should touch my body purposely. — Merwan.

Bhajans were sung around the 'Holi' fire after breakfast. Rustom returned from Sakori, and all eagerly flocked upstairs to the meeting hall to hear his report.

He said, 'I reached Sakori on the evening of the first and had Maharaj's darshan. He talked with me as usual. For the whole time since he imprisoned himself he has ordered that there should be continuous tal-beating day and night. At four o'clock the next morning I was invited by the people there to take part in it for a couple of hours.

'When I again went to Maharaj for his darshan he began shouting at me and abusing Baba. And when I went the third time just before leaving to come back there was a great outburst of fury from him. He gave the following message for the mandali: "All should

take their own course. Merwan is not a Sat-purush, and I will not be responsible for anything now.”

‘During it all I could not help remarking to Maharaj, “This cage is connected with your great spiritual working we do not doubt; and granted that by this imprisonment you are suffering for our sakes. But we do not want it and would like to see you become free.”’

‘Maharaj said, “Then break it.” I at once started to do so, whereupon he became more infuriated. He told me to stop, and a carpenter was called to repair it. Maharaj asked me why did I break his cage. I replied, because he had told me to. He said, “Will you do whatever I ask you to do?” I said that I would. “Then,” he said, “bring that big stone over there and beak my head with it.”’

‘He continued to shower choice and select adjectives on Baba, me and the mandali as whole. After some time I left with his great voice ringing in my ears.’

When Rustom had finished his story Baba asked all who were present if they still wanted to stick to him now that Maharaj had begun to talk against him. All except Doctor declared that they would stick to their promises not leave him under any circumstances. Doctor said he would consider the matter and give his reply later. This was rather a bomb-shell for the mandali and set them all wondering what was the reason for his hesitation in confirming his promise along with the rest of them. He was last man they thought would be easily affected. Baba again told them to stick to their word and not leave him under any circumstances — no matter what Maharaj said, or what Babajan might say. It was just possible, he said that both of them might denounce him publicly; but the mandali would always mark that under any circumstances he would own them as his Gurus and the greatest spiritual personalities of this age and in every future time.

After the meeting dispersed Baba asked Doctor if he had finished considering his position. With a laugh, he said that he had only been teasing him. Thereupon Khak Saheb was called to put the information on the notice-board:

Doctor's delay in giving his position was with the object of teasing me and not for any other reason. He has no concern with anyone except me through whom he first approached Shri Maharaj. — Merwan.

Just at bedtime a large centipede was killed and the Order of stuffing ears before going to sleep was repeated.

The chief topic of discussion the following day was Doctor's constant tendency to sleep.

All were summoned upstairs in the evening, when Behramji was asked by Baba what the row was at cricket that morning. He said that in the excitement of the game Adi had intentionally struck Vishnu. Baba invited the opinion of the mandali whether Adi had broken one of the Twenty-eight Rules or not. The mandali returned a verdict of not guilty. But Baba took him right and left and humiliated the lad greatly.

Baba now turned to Vishnu and asked him to repeat before all a confession he had made to him some days before that while chafing Baba's limbs passionate thoughts came into his mind; but he had immediately stopped what he was doing and made some excuse to withdraw. Later he had told Baba about it.

Then they all retired for the night, but Baba called Adi and spoke to him very lovingly, telling him not to be upset over his humiliation. It was one of the ways a Master used to cleanse the heart of his disciple. Ramakrishna had humiliated Vivekananda in the presence of a throng of admirers and visitors by speaking to him in an insulting and derogatory tone. But soon after, he had sent for him and when he came had embraced and caressed him.

Baba went to his room where he asked Doctor whether he wanted to obey in the matter of sleep or follow his own inclination. Doctor, thinking the former to be the safer said he would continue to obey him as he had been doing. And there for the present the matter ended.

In the morning when Baba was sitting on the veranda in the only chair in the bungalow Doctor again become drowsy. Suddenly Baba said to him, 'You can now do

as you like, sleep any time any number of hours. I won't tell you anything, Go!' And Doctor went quietly to his room and slept till eleven o'clock. After dinner he tried to play ping-pong with Jal, but soon gave up and went again to his room and slept till five o'clock.

Baba said nothing. But after supper he started a new exciting game by sending Khak Saheb to Doctor's room to tell him that he could go to Poona or anywhere else he preferred immediately. Doctor refused to comply with 'second-hand orders.' Baba summoned him, and there ensued a hot discussion. Doctor refused to accept the order to leave, saying that he had not broken any order. Baba asked Nervous to take out Doctor's trunks and things from his room, but he still refused to budge. Baba then began reasoning it out with him. At last peace was made on Doctor's agreeing to try his best to keep himself fresh and free-minded and avoid drowsiness. Then Baba added, 'As you have slept a lot today, sit by my side tonight until two o'clock.' Doctor heartily accepted this.

After supper Baba and a few of the mandala played at verse-making and were very much enjoying themselves when Baba said that he felt like going to the latrine but didn't like to break up the game, so would they like to go with him. They said, yes. So Baba went to the centre one of the three latrines, Doctor and Adi to each side, and Ferdoon, Asthma and Ramjoo ranged themselves in front. Thus they continued for over half an hour.

The shamiana or awning that was stretched over the compound had not been returned to the hiring firm after the Birthday celebrations, and the area was now decorated for Rustomji's engagement ceremony on the ninth of March, two days hence. Yassin Qawwal and his party had been engaged, and all were looking forward tremendously to the occasion.

In the evening Baba came to know through Doctor that Syed Saheb was in a very depressed condition mentally and physically. Taking Behramji, Gustadji, Ramjoo, Adi and Vajidar with him Baba went by car to Charni Road. Baba stayed two hours and gave Syed Saheb a

big dose of ‘feekar mat karo’ (don’t worry). They got back to the bungalow at ten-thirty to find that Yeshwantrao, Gopalrao and Trimbak had arrived from Sakori. They came to try to induce Baba to return with them. Maharaj had entreated them to go and bring Merwan, otherwise he would stop eating altogether. But Baba refused to go with them. They then said that if he did not go with them, Durgamai herself would come and fetch him. But it was to no purpose, they left empty handed.

And so this invisible tug of war between Maharaj and Baba went on.

‘The secrets between the Lover and the Beloved are even beyond the knowledge of Kiramoon and Katibira, the two recording angels that sit on either shoulder of everyone and note down all good and bad action and thoughts — even the most secret.’

Rustom’s engagement was another gala day. The beautiful decorations, the scores of gaily dressed people, the cooks and serving men, all bespoke everyone’s happiness at this betrothal. Over two hundred mats were laid on the trestle-tables and many varied dishes were served. At each place a small piece of soap had been put on a small plate for washing hands after the meal. One of the mandali (Abdurrehman) picked up his and put it in his mouth, paused for a moment, made a wry face and hastily put it back on the plate. Several noticed it, and soon everybody was laughing and wondering. When Baba heard about it he sent for Abdurrehman and asked why he was eating the soap. He replied that at many people’s tables a piece of cheese was served at the end of a meal. He was so nervous that all the time he was speaking he was rubbing his toes together. This caused more peals of laughter.

Baba had the bell rung and the notice-board brought and the order written on it: Henceforth all should call Abdurrehman ‘Cheese.’ A little later the bell was rung again and the message changed to: ‘cheese’ is changed to ‘Barsoap.’

In the afternoon Yassin’s singing began and went on

with a break for supper till ten-thirty. Then the guests, full-fed physically, mentally and spiritually, departed — the local people to their homes, and the Poona and Ahmednagar people were accommodated upstairs. Shirinmai, Daulat Masi and Gulmai were given Baba's room.

Doctor was asked to keep awake in the night from nine till one o'clock; for compensation he could sleep from seven till eleven o'clock in the morning.

Baba went to Charni Road one morning at six-thirty, and by noon had not returned. Instead, a note was received by Gustadji asking whether the mandali wanted him back at the manzil or was it all right for him to stay where he was. All assembled and discussed the reply to be sent. The outcome was that Doctor was asked to answer on behalf of all, beseeching Baba to return as soon as possible. To their relief he came late afternoon.

Baba and the Parsi and Irani mandali with a few Hindus and Moslems went to see the comedy 'Patal Pani.' For the first time Baba sat through a whole performance. At other times he had left half way through just as the story was getting interesting and, of course, they all had to tramp out after him. They wondered whether his staying to the end of this play had some significance.

When Ramjoo returned from the mill one evening, he learned that Khwaja Hasan Nizami had come to see Baba and had just left. Gustadji had told him that Baba did not see anyone. Khwaja Saheb then invited Khak Saheb, Rustomji and Ramjoo to see him the next day at his hotel. The three went. When during talk he learned that Ramjoo was Cutchi Memon by caste, he expressed surprise, saying that in his experience he had known the Cutchis to follow only Pirs and Fakirs who conformed to the external standards of big flowing beard, green turban and voluminous robes. Therefore it was strange that he should be interested in Meher Baba.

Questioning him directly Khwaja Saheb asked, 'Why are you living with Meher Baba?' Ramjoo said, 'Because I hope that by doing so I will come to understand the mystery of my existence and Truth.' But how, 'Khwaja

said, 'do you know that that that understanding will come through Meher Baba?' Ramjoo replied, 'Simply because I believe in him and have no other reason or support beyond faith.' Thereupon Khwaja Saheb advised him to stick to his faith and belief. 'And,' he added, 'the goal will surely be reached.'

At the end of March the following notice appeared on the board:

I am preparing to send most of company to their homes in the beginning of April, and with the remaining few, go to Ahmednagar by the end of the month. — Merwan.

No one had had the slightest idea that the stay was coming to an end.

Negotiations with landlord were set afoot to vacate the bungalow yet retain the outhouse as the office of Circle and Co.

That night Baba called all the mandali into the compound and talked with them. The Manzil-e-Meem, he said, was at an end for good. Shortly he, with few of them, would go to Ahmednagar for Rustom's marriage and after that he might settle down at some convenient place and call them all to him again. But, he said, the way of living would be very difficult and strict. Besides the restriction with which they were bound in the manzil, they would have to do actual labouring work and undergo various hardships. So all should think well over the matter during a month's vacation at their homes, and come with firm determination about the future if they wished to join him again. The special Orders: I, II, III, IV, VII, and Rules: 1, 9, 13, 14, 18, 19 and 25 remained in force for those going to their homes.

The end of the first week in April saw the bungalow almost restored to its original state with the partitions knocked out and disposed of; and those who were not remaining with Baba had left for their homes. For the few remaining with Baba there was nothing to do but pack and wait for his word of departure. By the nineteenth

only the flour mill remained to be sold. But Baba decided to leave that night. The heavy luggage was taken to the station, and they were just about to leave the house when word was brought that the mill had been successfully disposed of.

The party boarded the 'Raichur Passenger' for Ahmednagar. At Poona all the Kasba Peth people and friends and relatives were waiting to garland Baba.

21. *Rustom's Wedding*

ARRIVING at 'Nagar Baba was taken by Rustom to his father's house 'Sarosh Manzil' and the mandali were accommodated in what was later called 'Khushru Quarters.'

Rustom's father was Bhadur Kaikhushru Sarosh Irani, and his father, came from Iran and was of the Zoroastrian faith. Kaishushru when he grew up went into business supplying the British Army and gradually prospered. He married a girl named Gulbai or Rose Sister; and he had a sister with same name, but later she was called Gulnar.

Gulnar was the first one in the large joint-family to hear about Maharaj, and she told the others; but she herself did not become his disciple. That was about 1918.

Kaikhushru and Gulbai had four children: Rustom, Ardeshir, which became shortened to Adi, and two girls, Piroja and Dolly. Gulbai brought her husband and the children to Maharaj and they all came to love him and respect his word in all things, but not as she did for she suffered much at the hands of the Community because of hers. Moreover she had to suffer without the support of her husband who became more and more absorbed in business and public affairs.

Their love for Maharaj naturally included his disciple Merwan, and they became wholly his when he took over Maharaj's share of whatever it is that the perfect Masters share. He changed Gulbai's name to Gulmai, Rose Mother, for, he said, she was his spiritual mother.

The marriage was to be on 9th May, and preparations for it had begun. Baba kept himself aloof. On 1st May he called the mandali and walked to Happy Valley, fourteen miles away. It is a secluded spot at the head of a small gully with a small pool of clear water.

It is said that Rama on his wanderings with his wife Sita and his brother Lakshman came to this spot and Sita was thirsty, and he shot an arrow into the rock and water bubbled forth. Baba stayed three days. It was during this time that Aspandiar got the nickname Pendulum because of his habit of swaying from side to side when sitting before Baba — later it was abbreviated to Pendu and Ferdoon Naosherwan Driver became Padri on account of his tall figure and solemn expression. On the third day the mandali fasted for twenty-four hours and some villagers were fed. Just before midnight arti was sung, and they raced back to 'Nagar covering the distance in two and a half hours.

Adi was an orderly and messenger between the manzil and the quarters. Every evening Baba would enquire of him of the guests, who they were, how many, and so on.

Now one of the people who had been invited to the wedding spoke disparagingly about Baba, and Rustom replied hotly telling him that if that was the way he regarded Baba it would have been better if he had not come.

When Adi took word of this to Baba he got up and left the house, sending word to the mandali to follow immediately. When they caught up with him he struck out across the fields and picked up the road to Arangaon. They halted under a tree by a well just before the village was reached and refreshed themselves. There were a lot of dilapidated buildings about, and Baba inquired of Adi did he know what the place was and who owned the land around and buildings. Adi said that he seemed to remember some while back his father telling them that he had bought an area of land with a lot of old buildings just outside Arangaon from the Army. This might well be the same place.

Presently Rustom came in great distress at Baba's sudden leaving and begged him to return. Baba said he would not return. Rustom said, 'All right Baba, in that case I will not go on with the marriage, for a marriage with such a bad beginning could not be successful.' Baba soothed him, praising him for standing up boldly

to the opposition on the Community; but since that opposition had raised its ugly head it would not be fitting for him to be present. But he would come the day before to Sarosh Manzil, and after the ceremony in Khushru Quarters Rustom and his bride should come to him for his blessing. Rustom went back to 'Nagar and brought all the bedding and gear; and Gulmai, his mother and Baba's spiritual mother, sent out tastily cooked food. When it was beginning to get dark, a man from the village brought a lantern. Baba said to him, 'Little do you know to whom you have brought this light. For this you will have a light all your life.'

Meanwhile Doctor and Ramjoo were called from Bombay and Lonavala. Arriving in 'Nagar they went to Rustom's place and were told where Baba was, so after taking some refreshments they hired a tonga and went to the place. As they approached they were surprised to see Baba and the mandali washing their clothes, and when they came up to them, dismayed to see many of them with blistered feet (from the fourteen-mile walk) and bruised hands (from handling slabs of stone). They had thought that the period of 'hot' service was to begin after the marriage not before. When night time came Baba told them to sleep over by the low well wall, as he and the others had done the night before, and where a snake had been killed.

In the morning Baba discussed Doctor's and Ramjoo's future. He said that those who stayed with him would have to work as common labourers or get work in 'Nagar and cycle the distance every day. Alternatively Doctor could return to Bombay, and Ramjoo to Poona or Lonavala, and follow his instruction — as three quarters of the mandali would be doing. External separation, he told them, made no difference to spiritual workings — they would be just as near him and he would be just as much with them there or elsewhere. Ramjoo decided to remain with Baba and Doctor said he would go back to Bombay.

Baba and the mandali went to 'Nagar the day before the marriage, he to Khan Saheb's house and the others to Khushru Quarters, where they were asked by Baba to lend a hand to Behramji, who was in charge of food

arrangements. He put some of them on to washing and cutting up vegetables, much to their disgust. Ramjoo remarked that the old Man must be pulling some strings from where he was at the manzil to deliberately humiliate them in front of all the people. Surely there were many other things more suitable to their positions. Moreover such work was bad for hands that were unaccustomed to such rough work. One of them cut his finger, and Khan Saheb who happened to be passing put snuff on it — it was soon healed. He looked a bit askance at the whole matter and murmured that he couldn't see the necessity for it.

A huge brilliantly-coloured mandap (awning) had been stretched across the courtyard and the bamboo poles supporting it were wound with bunting. In the center there was a raised platform for the ceremony.

The wedding guests began arriving early. All the Kasba Peth and Charni Road mandali came, and they and the 'resident' mandali had a happy get-together and exchange of news.

The non-Parsi men, that is the Moslems and Hindus, found themselves in a situation they could not quite handle. The hosts more friendly and more sophisticated than they, did not 'pay attention to the formalities that should be observed with guests.' On the other hand, poorly dressed as they were and some of them having been seen at menial work yesterday, they could not mingle with the guests as brother disciples of the bridegroom. The only useful purpose they served was as reminders to everyone that the controversial Meher Baba was just a few hundred yards away: a reminding sweet to believers but bitter to the Zoroastrian orthodox.

The ceremony took place in the evening. The mandap was packed with distinguished people — English and Indian. The supper afterwards was sumptuous, and the army band entertained them. But round at Sarosh Manzil, Yassin Qwaal and his party brought from Bombay were tuning their throats for the sweet utterances of separation and union. Besides all the mandali only Rustom's near relations were permitted to enjoy that feast which went on late into the night.

The following afternoon Baba talked with the Kasba Peth men about which line wished to take, as he had with Doctor and Ramjoo: to stay with him or return to their homes — knowing that either choice would not affect their link with him. Most of them opted to go home. It had already been decided that Khak Saheb, Munshiji and Syed Saheb would go back to Bombay.

Those remaining with Baba were: Gustadji, Behramji Adi, Ramjoo, Slamson, Barsoap, Baidul, Pendu, Nervous, Masaji, Padri and Jal — thirteen in all. The rest left that evening. Barsoap was permitted to go to Poona for a few days to, in his own words, improve his weak health.

Baba now set off for Arangaon, but halted at the dharmsala near the railway station where a meal of one cooked vegetable and bread was eaten. He seemed disinclined to go on. Presently he told Behramji to find a man with a cart and go and fetch all their things including firewood they had collected. When he came back the cart was unloaded, and dividing the lot into small parcels, each was told to take one on his head to Khushru Quarters. At this ‘coolie’ treatment Ramjoo was seething again and went by back streets so that he would not be seen by people he knew. Baba, with one of them, remained at the dharmsala. Khan Saheb came and entreated him to come back to his house. Baba’s mood changed again and he said they would all go back to the Camp outside the village and settle down to a regular program of work. Khan Saheb was delighted that Baba would be so near, and told Baba that all that area and buildings belonged to him and Baba could do whatever he liked with it. So they returned there. In the evening Rustom brought back all the luggage.

The place had been a British Military Camp, and when it was closed down the buildings, which were of mud or mud-filled cavity walls, soon fell into disrepair. Only the Post-Office, which was more solidly constructed, and a big stone-lined water tank on the top of a rise some four hundred yards away were intact. The Officer’s

Mess, a large building with two halls and several rooms, would, with some work done on it, be serviceable again. This Baba and the mandali in conference decided to repair. It was also decided to start farming the fields around which could be watered from the well when the pump was overhauled.

It was with the enthusiasm of wanderers who have found a place to settle down in, that they threw themselves into this work. Twelve days later the Mess Quarters were finished including white-washing the floors thoroughly the mandali spread their bedding in one of the halls. Besides the early afternoon dal-rice there was also now a supper of potatoes and bread. So it was with the greatest satisfaction that they prepared for bed that night.

Gustadji felt a lump in the bedding, and turning it back found a small snake coiled up. Baba ordered them all to remove to the post office, and in the morning they would leave the place; leave the district, leave the state and the country. Morning came and Baba had not changed his mind about leaving Arangaon. He asked the mandali if anyone knew of a place where there were no snakes. Pendu said, 'Yes, Quetta.' Baba said, 'All right, we'll go to Quetta, spend some time there and go on to Persia.'

The whole day was spent discussing this new turn of events and in preparations for it. The buying of two bullocks to work the fields had to be cancelled. The repaired engine arrived and was sent back to Rustom's place.

They left at ten o'clock the next morning, 25th May, and walked along the railway tracks to the station. There was quite a crowd waiting to farewell them. Gulmai, Peelamai, Masaji, Sarosh and some others went with them.

22. *The Terrible Walk*

THEY spent six days reaching Karachi, visiting various places on the way; and a week of sightseeing in Karachi, and then went on to Quetta where they were met by Rusi (Rustom Jehangir Irani), the restaurant-keeper mentioned earlier in *Pendu's Story*.

They stayed there for eighteen days, enjoying pleasant walks among the orchards of apricots and other fruits, and in the evening Rusi's cooking — Gustadji and Behramji resumed having normal meals — and his conjuring and sleight of hand greatly astonished Baba.

Rusi had a daughter, Goher, who met Baba for the first time. She later became a doctor, taking her degree in Bombay, and became one of the six women who accompanied him on his visits to the West and stayed over the later years.

One day Baba announced that they would not go on to Persia now but spend six months in India and then go. They would walk from Kashmir to Bombay dressed in Kafnis or mendicants' robes, and beg food as they went. The material was bought and a kafni made to Gustadji's measurements, and it being satisfactory, the rest were made up; and everyone put his on to see how he looked. Some group photos were taken.

Munshiji in Bombay wrote for permission to apply for another position. Baba gave it, but said that he could join the Walk for a month first if he liked. Sadashiv and Vajifdar were written to and invited.

Baba now called his companions together and asked them were they sure they were ready for this new phase of fakiri, or poverty. If not, they were free to drop out and would not in any sense be considered a severed from Baba. After some discussion Baba gave out four points to which all agreed:

1. That those who accompany Baba on tour by foot do so of their own free will and responsibility.
2. No one under any circumstances, will leave Baba before the tour ends, but if anyone should be ordered by Baba to leave he will do so and go wherever he is ordered.
3. As Asthma persists in wishing to be in the party he may go with them if his parents give their permission.
4. None expects any supernatural acts of help from Baba under any circumstances, even to save someone's life. Baba told them that at a certain stage he will be quite helpless and might have to suffer further at the hands of yogis and mahatmas both internally and externally, as Maharaj, Swami Vivekanand and Gous Ali Shah had.

All put their signatures to the agreement on stamped paper. Asthma was sent home to Ahmedabad to obtain his parent's permission for the tour.

It was now decided after much discussion initiated by Baba to go to Calcutta and walk from there to Bombay, and not from Kashmir. Sadashiv and Vajifdar were wired to that effect. Then there were more discussions — for with these men discussion was the act of *being* — and the Calcutta plan was dropped, and the new kafnis were superfluous: they would buy and cook their food as they went. Sadashiv and Vajifdar were wired the change of plan. A small bag of rice and one of lentils were purchased. They were the same weight, but different in bulk, and Baidul, to provoke Barsoap, picked up the smaller, whereupon Barsoap said he should take the bulkier, because that was what Baidul looked like — a sack of lentils — whereas he, Barsoap, should carry the smaller one because 'it was handier to his size.' Each appealed to Baba, and he advised them to stop bickering; there would be plenty to really complain about after they started the walk. Some water buckets and cooking-pots were purchased.

On the morning of 25th June accompanied by Rusi and family they walked to the station and entrained to

Ahmedabad at 4.55. Rusi was weeping silently.

The whole day was spent in the train. At Marwar they changed and a ticket inspector wanted them to bring out all their luggage and weight it on the platform scales. They refused to do so. The inspector called the police, but still they wouldn't budge. So the station-master was called. He turned out to be a reasonable man and told the inspector he could weigh the general small pieces but not the beddings; so he sent for hand scales. The station-master spoke such excellent Urdu that they thought he must be a Moslem; but he said he was a Brahmin. He in turn asked about the party, and Gustadji indicating Baba, said that he was their Pundit. The station-master took the word in its literal sense, so Gustadji told him that he didn't mean a parrot or priest but a Realized One.

The train was about to move and he got down. A man with scales appeared. Baba suddenly asked Gustadji to give the station-master the copy they had of Maharaj's biography. When, flipping through it, he came across a picture of Baba he ordered the inspector to clear out from the compartment and leave the party alone. They reached Ahmedabad that night and were met by Vajifdar. Sadashiv and Asthma, Gulmai and Sarosh were also there on their way back to 'Nagar. All the baggage not being taken was handed over to Sarosh.

Baba talked with Sadashiv for about half an hour. Then he told them all that it had been decided that Sadashiv would not be going with them but would return to Poona that night. Slamson had arranged lodgings with Parsi dharmshala in the heart of the city; but when the party arrived the manager objected to Ramjoo, Barsoap and Baburao as Mohammedans, saying that the place was strictly for Parsis. However, he agreed to allow them in as servants.

Baba asked Asthma how he had got on with his parents, and he said that they had first of all given their consent to his going with Baba, but an uncle who was opposed to him intervened and persuaded them not to give permission. Baba comforted the boy and told him that it would make no difference to their link.

In the morning after tea they all went sightseeing in an open motor-lorry with no seats under a blazing sun. They returned late afternoon, and Ramjoo and Barsoap went to the Jumma masjid for prayers, and then paid their respects at the tomb of Sultan Ahmad who had had the mosque built. Baba continued his fast.

The next morning, 1st July, they got up at half past two to begin the Walk, bathed and packed — dividing the camp gear between the stronger companions. At four o'clock they left the dharmasala, walking through the dimly-lighted streets with the dogs barking after them, and soon came to the city gates. Here Baba told them to begin repeating the Names of God: 'Ram, Ram,' 'Ya Allah,' 'Yezdan,' 'Ahura Mazda,' and the morning was filled with sound of the glorious Names.

It was already hot: as though the sun had not gone very far away during the night and was only waiting behind the horizon for the dawn to open the doors for another inferno of a day. By 7.45, after only ten minutes, they came to the village of Jatalpur. The camp gear was proving very troublesome — not so much its weight but its awkwardness. So a halt was called under a tree by a small lake, and firewood collected and a meal of dal-rice cooked. One of them, going to the well for water let the bucket-rope slip out of his hand. When this was reported others of the mandali went and stared down into the cool depths and made useless suggestions, until one of the villagers said, 'Get a biladi from the temple.' None of the mandali knew what a 'biladi' was, but presently Slamson appeared with the villager carrying an iron hook fastened to a rope which he let down and skillfully caught the bucket and drew it up.

It was a beautiful spot. The lake was surrounded with trees and green bushes and there were many peacocks dancing and flying about. It was some sort of a holiday, for going by the number of bullock-carts, people had come from some distance. It was decided to camp there the whole day and continue the journey in the morning to Kaira.

Ramjoo, poking about inquisitively as was his habit,

came across a bit of information that branching off at Bareja just four miles from where they were was a short-cut of some twenty miles to Kaira. Baba, as usual with proposed changes of program, readily agreed to go by the short-cut. But he said, 'Let us not waste time here — let us have an early supper and go on to Bareja.'

They reached that place by sunset where, by the courtesy of the vice-president of the local Board whom they had met back on the road a bit, they stayed in the dharmasala. The air was heavy with dust, which made the eyes smart, but Baba kept awake until ten o'clock, and then had them keep watch in pairs.

The 'short-cut' turned out to be a bullock track across fields with a fine-powered surface into which they sank over their ankles. After some hours they rested under a tree on which not a single leaf moved.

They rested a second time. Baba would not allow them to drink any water, although they had full water bottles. They went on again. Two of them had some words. Baba swung round and told them not to be children; and in a clear ringing voice gave them a long lecture on the Path and the men who are the Men of the Path, as he walked firmly on carrying his share of the baggage — still fasting.

Every step now had to be taken with will. Even peasant-bodied Baidul was almost in a state of collapse. The repetition of the Names of God was no longer an exercise: each 'Ram,' 'Ya Allah,' and 'Ahura Mazda' was a real cry for help.

At last they came to the river across which was their immediate destination — Kaira. The sight of the waters was terrible, but Baba kept straight on across the bridge into the city till they came to a tea shop where he ordered one cup of tea each. Baba also had a cup, and they squatted and drank it. Their appearance attracted considerable attention and a small crowd gathered. Baba moved on. At last he stopped under the shade of a tree near the Collector's Bungalow. The shade was wholly inadequate, but it was near a well.

The strongest were suffering the most. And this could not be accounted for by the extra bundles that they

had carried, for as said earlier it was not their weight but their awkwardness which had troubled them, and that had been adjusted. Masaji and Baidul were bent over on their knees gasping like bellows for air. Pendu seemed unbalance, not knowing what he was doing. Ramjoo also seemed distraught. He said afterwards that he had a fire inside him and could hardly keep in one position for more than a minute. Slamson and Gustadji were the least affected and set about cooking a meal for everyone. With it they were allowed only one and a half glasses of water each, and in their state of thirst could hardly swallow the food. Baba told them not to drink again until he told them.

Baba asked Padri whether he thought he could continue the walk, and he declared that any further action from him was hopeless. He asked Ramjoo whether he wanted to return home, and he said it wasn't so much that he wanted to quit but that he could not see how he would be able to pull through the whole journey. Baba asked them all not to lose heart but have confidence in him. After that everyone slept, except Ramjoo who went down to the river and poured its muddy water over his head for a long time, and Pendu who kept appearing before Baba with his tongue protruding in mute appeal.

At three o'clock a police Jamadar came and made inquiries who the party were and seemed satisfied. But he warned them that recently some children had been stolen round abouts and there had been reports of atrocities committed by infuriated mobs; and so the party should be very careful — in fact it would be best if they moved on as soon as possible.

It seemed that already there were rumours that they were the child stealers, and Baba asked Vajifdar and Homusji to go and see the police superintendent, a Parsi, and get his advice and help. But he couldn't be convinced that the Vajifdar before him was the famous cricketer, and Homusji's vague explanations didn't help.

Baba called a council to consider whether it would not be wiser to take the train to Broach and continue the walk from there than expose themselves to violence

on the roads. All agreed that it would be. So they hired four carriages and drove to the railway station and stayed in the dharmasala until the train left at 11 p.m. From Broach Homusji, Masaji and Pendu would return to Bombay.

The party reached Broach just before dawn, and Baba with Slamson and Homusji went off in a tonga to the Parsi rest-house, Jamshed Baug, and arranged accommodation with the manager who was a relation of Homusji. Again Barsoap, Baburao and Ramjoo were admitted as servants. After a meal they went down to the river Nabada and bathed and washed their clothes. They returned to the Baug and rested till four o'clock and then set out on the next stage — to Ankleshwar, the route to which lay across the river. Homusji and Pendu saw them off. They got into a tub-like sort of vessel and the boatman pushed off. There were strong gusts of wind filling the sails and then leaving them to flap causing the overlaiden 'boat' to lurch along. Presently there was a thud as it ran aground on a sand bank. The boatman began yelling and cursing, and everybody — the mandali and some other passengers — offered advice. But eventually they did the obvious thing and got out into the water and pushed. Mostly the water was only knee-deep, but there were holes into which they sank up to their waists — which made the pushers become clingers. Some progress was made, but it reached a point where they were stuck fast. A second boat was hailed from the opposite bank, but it could only get to within some 20-30 yards and the baggage had to be carried across to it. They changed into dry clothes — one wonders why they didn't let summer sun do it — and walked on, reaching Ankleshwar at eight-thirty that night and camped on the railway station.

Baba now allowed them to drink as much water as they liked and to sleep till four in the morning — each pair in turn keeping watch — when, he decided, they would train to Surat. They arrived in Surat at six and found the commodious dharmasala empty. They prepared a meal and bathed and washed their clothes from

the Nabada mud. They were allowed three meals that day. Baba wired Rustom to meet him in Navsari two days hence, July 6th. Save for making some purchases everyone kept indoor all day and all went to bed at nine-thirty.

They were up again and on the road at four o'clock, picking up the railway line which they kept to all day, because that was the way Baba wanted to enter the city. At nine o'clock they cooked a meal and rested for a couple of hours, and arrived in Navsari at five thirty in good spirits having covered the twenty-four miles in ten and a half hours' walking time without undue exertion. They went to the Parsi inn called Sohrab Baug in the heart of the Parsi colony. Here they cooked another meal, in the open, to the derision of some women and children: 'Dal-rice! Hindu mush.' Parsis were good meat eaters,

In the evening a Parsi gentlemen having got wind of Baba's presence came for his darshan. Baba sent word that he was tired and wished to be alone; but he persisted; whereat Baba sent Gustadji to stand in for him: and the man, not having ever seen Baba, went away satisfied.

Early in the morning Rustom came and Baba and the companions heard of fresh rumours against them. After a private talk between him and Baba he went to see a Mr. Desai. A little later a police officer came to make inquiries about the party. The names of them all and the reason they were in the place were given to him, but he pulled up a chair, sat down and crossed his legs and proceed to ask impertinent questions — which Ramjoo with Baba's permission began to answer in the same tone. This enraged the policeman who started to threaten. In the midst of it all Rustom appeared. His well-cut suit and his cut and dried speech confused the officer; and when next, Mr. Desai, a respected citizen, entered and said a few words to him he desisted and left. A little later Baba went with Desai to his house for a short visit.

In the afternoon Baba said they would not walk any further, but take the train to Nasik where they would

stay for three months. After the evening meal they walked to the station and made themselves comfortable till the train left. Mr. Desai brought a number of his friends and acquaintances to meet Baba. The train left at ten o'clock for Dadar, Bombay, on the way to Nasik. Burjorji, Homusji, and one, Naoroji, and their families were waiting for Baba on the platform, and soon the Charni Road people came. Dal-rice specially prepared had been kept ready at Burjorji's place to take on the train. Baba had a cup of coffee. A Parsi man who had been watching Baba took an opportunity to fall at his feet and was reluctant to go after Baba had caressed his face.

At Nasik they were met by Syed Saheb and taken to a temporary bungalow. In the morning Baba with Gustadji, Behramji, and Munshi Saheb (who had come through the night) went out to find a suitable place for their stay. They found one near the river. But by the end of the day Baba did not want to stay in Nasik and said they would go back to Arangaon which they accordingly did.

They arrived at Ahmednagar in the evening of July 9th and leaving the platform immediately without handing in their tickets walked to Arangaon.

That night Baba shared the evening meal with his companions.

23. *The Second Tramp*

THE mandali settled in. They knew it would be only a temporary stay — filling in the time until they went to Persia — but it felt like home.

In the morning Slamson, Masaji and Padri went to ‘Nagar and bought supplies, some swept up the place, Baidul and Nervous resumed the general work they had left only seven weeks ago and others started getting a meal ready. When it (the dal-rice) was ready they all sat down and Baba took a little and ate, and then distributed the remainder to the companions.

Later on Baba chalked out a work, recreation and sleep schedule — the recreation being talks and explanations by him and games. A very satisfactory time sheet indeed, one of them said.

But the next morning after breakfast — the first since they had gone on the Walk — Baba had a new idea. It would be better to go to Bombay where there would be more jobs available and where he could be by himself all through the day. They would stay in the office at Dadar. He would like them all to give some thought to the proposal. The two main things to consider were the cramped living quarters — would they be able to manage all right — and every man must get a job, even if it meant doing coolie work.

No sooner were they out of bed the following morning than Baba asked them to let him have their opinions that day. So they had a conference in one of the dilapidated huts, and after tossing the talk around for awhile, they reported to Baba their decisions to go with him. He said that any of them could go back to their homes for the period if they wished. All stood to their decision and so Baba gave the order to pack.

They arrived at Dadar early on the 13th July and went to the office which they found damp and dirty from a leak in the roof. However, they all went off job hunting. Baidul was the first to get one — within the restaurant where he had worked during the Manzil-e-Meem period. Nervous had been boasting that he would have no trouble in getting work as a cinema operator indeed he would also get jobs for two more as his assistants. By the 17th all except a couple kept at home on domestic duties had got work.

Baba began eating vegetables. He told Ramjoo, Doctor and Khak Saheb that they could resume meat-eating if they wished. But they could not determine whether he really meant it or was playing an opening move in a new game, so they said they didn't particularly want to start eating meat again — at least there was no hurry about it. So Baba told them to continue as vegetarians until April next year according to the Special Order No. 4 operative till that time. A few half-hearted attempts were made to sell some copies of the Marathi edition of Maharaj's biography. The Gujarati edition was ready for the binder.

On 10th August Baba said they would all go to Lonavala for a few days, and Ramjoo and Doctor where sent to make arrangements. But on the sixteenth only five — Gustadji, Behramji, Barsoap, Adi and Rustomji — went. They were met by a certain Mr. Abdul Tyab and taken by car to Mr. Madni's bungalow which was placed entirely at their disposal for as long as Baba would grace it. Baba was very happy with the place and its surroundings and pleased with Madni's devotion. They spent five days in discussions, playing cards, listening to the gramophone and sightseeing. Sadashiv and Vajifdar came up one day from Poona, and Baba told Sadashiv that he would come and stay with him on his way back to Bombay. Baba visited Doctor's and Ramjoo's homes.

Leaving those two to tidy up the bungalow, Baba and the rest left in the evening by car for Poona; but came back in the early hours of the morning because of Sadashiv's indifference to him.

After lengthy deliberation it was decided that the

party go back to Poona and stay with Abdullabhai, but in order to save disappointment to Sadashiv and the Kasba party they should be allowed to look after the food for Baba's party. Ramjoo was sent by the afternoon train to arrange it. Abdullabhai was only too pleased to have Baba in his large house and wanted also to attend to the food, but Ramjoo said they had better leave it as Baba had told him. Ramjoo then saw Sadashiv and told of the new arrangement, and he said he would see to the food. But later Sadashiv sent a note to Ramjoo saying that he was sorry, but he couldn't attend to the food, and Ramjoo should get someone else to look after it.

Baba came in the evening by train and Ramjoo told him what had taken place. That night there was the procession of Tazyas, it being the ninth of Moharram, and Abdullabhai had arranged seats with a good view for the party; but the whole of the next morning was held in the skirts of a storm because of Sadashiv. In the afternoon Baba went by himself — the mandali going later — to Arjun's place, and Sadashiv came to see him, and a 'peace' was restored. Sadashiv provided the evening meal and Baba and the mandali returned to Abdullabhai's place for the night; and it was left that way for the rest of the visit — except for one night when they all were going on a picnic the next day and it was thought better to all leave from the same point. But it was a disturbed night, for the Patil's house was infested with bugs. The following evening, 30th August, the party returned to Bombay, stopping on the way to visit a certain Mr. Mulak in Kirkee, a suburb of Poona, and having the evening meal with him.

Baba now found the office inadequate for living quarters. Also the landlord was complaining about so many occupying it. So they inspected some rooms in a new building and decided to take them. Then Baba found them to be 'not quite convenient,' preferring space in another new building. Into this building they started to move; but Baba said that it was not really suitable for their purpose, and to try again. At last they found a place called Irani Mansions No. 6, and this

seemed to satisfy him.

Work on the Gujarati edition of Maharaj's biography was pushed on with, so that he could be presented with the first copy the following month when Baba intended taking the mandali on foot to Sakori for his darshan. Those who had outside jobs had their meals out and so less time was taken up with cooking. Circle and Co. was formally dissolved. The first batch of books came the day before they left for Sakori.

This leaving was at 3 a.m. 19th October. A bullock-cart had been bought to take the luggage. Baidul drove it for the whole journey. The route lay through Thana, Bhiwandi, Padga, Asangaon, Shahpur, Khardi, Kasara, Igatpuri, Ghoti, Bari, Rajur, Akola, Sangamner, Nimgaon, Jalike, Loni, Bableshtar, Sakori.

Gustadji had not been well when the party left Bombay. By the time they reached Kasara he was quite done in and stumbled into the dharmshala sometime behind the others. Immediately addressing Adi, Baba asked him to ask Gustadji whether he was going to prepare Baba's food; if so, when, for it was getting late. Gustadji told Adi not to meddle in his affairs. Baba started abusing Gustadji and then everyone in general, then pleading with them (for what, God only knew), and then crying over his own miserable condition — until Gustadji could not stand any more and left, walking towards the railway station. Baba sent Behramji after him to bring back; and when he came he quickly pacified him.

They were allowed to sleep for an hour before they had a meal, after which they bathed and washed their clothes in a small stream. Baba told those who had blisters to rub them with oil and warm them before the fire. This remedy proved wholly efficacious. In the evening Rustom was sent ahead, thirteen miles on a train to Igatpuri to arrange for a good breakfast for everyone, and then rejoin the party. They left Kasara at 3.30 in the morning.

Despite frequent 'shoulder to the wheel' over rough patches of the road, the long climb to Igatpuri was too much for the bullock, and they took over its burden

for a few miles. After the thirteen-mile tramp the mandali were looking forward to a good meal, but on arrival at the hotel they found that the hotel-keeper had not prepared anything as he was not sure when to expect the party. Instead of getting angry with the men, Baba ordered a good lunch for them. Then they rested. At four o'clock Baba called them to go sightseeing, or rather viewing a lake opposite the bungalow they were camped in. They struggled to their feet reluctant to leave the shade and go out into the still-hot sunlight. Noting this, Baba inquired, 'who will feel pleasure in going down to the lake with me?' No one spoke. 'Well, who would like to play cards?' he said. No one was interested. 'All right. If none of you want to speak to me I can also be silent. If I need to communicate something I will do so through Behram.' He kept up his silence all the next day, and preferred to walk apart with the 'new favourite,' as the others called Behram.

There was talk of going to see the great Bhandardara Dam. The mandali were keen to go but would not unless Baba gave up this silence which was uncomfortable for everybody. Through Behramji Baba said that the real reason why he had become silent was that they did not like him to talk in his own language and he did not want to hurt them by so speaking. But they said that if it was their feelings he was considering he should certainly end this silence because that hurt them more than his constant 'khut khut' or grumblings.

So a telegram was sent to Mr. Aziz Ahmed, the assistant engineer at the Dam who was a devotee of Baba's (the same Aziz Ahmed who had visited Baba in Manzil-e-Meem): 'Baba and party arriving Bari tomorrow morning so please make conveyance arrangements from Bari to Bhandardar.' Aziz replied that he was honoured and delighted. Ten minutes later Baba received a copy of a telegram to a Mr. Kehtare, one of the officers at the Dam, from Aziz telling him to see that the party had plenty of food and whatever else they needed. Baba told Ramjoo who was on watch duty to thank him but

tell him they had everything they needed. A little later again Aziz sent further word that if Baba preferred it the party could be met at Ghoti station instead of at Bari. Baba had Ramjoo reply lengthily, and added, 'Exhausted — preparing for sleep.'

Mr. Aziz Ahmed had great enthusiasm but knew little of what is required of a host who entertains the Master; and Baba paid only a short visit, returning to the rest house for the rest of the day and the night.

The next day they left Bari for Rajur; and after meals and sleep at that place were on the road to Akola, at 4 a.m., thirteen miles of easy descent from the Ghat in three hours. They arrived at seven o'clock and put up at the P.W.D. bungalow. Special jalebis cooked in ghee were prepared, in the local bazaar, and Baba made rich coffee with all milk. A fine breakfast.

In view of the tramp approaching its destination very soon there was a discussion on the details of the visit to Sakori. It was now Monday, 29th October. It was decided they reach the place on the morning of 1st November and after spending the day there, rejoin Baba at spot in the near vicinity; he would not be going to the ashram. Rustom and Sadashiv looked a bit glum over the short stay, and Baba told them they could stay longer if they wished.

They went on through Akola and arrived at Nimgaon after doing twenty-six miles, and were allowed to sleep in the next morning. After a breakfast-dinner they left at ten o'clock. They stopped at Loni, a village, for a few of the hottest hours and then went on to Bableshwar, which they reached at sunset, where they made tea and an old woman prepared a meal for them. It was only ten miles to the ashram. Baba asked them to fast now until they had had Maharaj's darshan; and then to accept whatever was offered them.

They were up at 4 a.m. happy with the successful conclusion of their tramp and excited over the prospect of meeting Maharaj again. Baba remained in the bungalow with Slamson. Passing a garden, Rustom had the idea of getting a garland and asked the gardener to make one. He agreed to do so for eight annas; but when

it was finished Rustomji was so pleased with it that he wanted to give him something more, but nobody had any money, so he emptied his pockets — a pencil, a piece of soap, a silk handkerchief and a few small coins and gave them to the astonished gardener.

Presently they picked up Vajifdar, Kardoona and Burjorji who had come on Baba's order, and arrived at the ashram on the fourteenth day after leaving Bombay.

There was a great change in the place in the twelve months since the last visit of the mandali. The temple had been completed and many smaller buildings also; and the barren compound was green with small trees and shrubs Maharaj had planted and tended with his own hands.

The mandali waited awhile at the compound gate and then were told they could go and take Maharaj's darshan. But no sooner had three or four of them entered the hut than he began abusing them and told them all to get out. He was still in his cage. They beat a hasty retreat. Maharaj continued to rage.

Although Baba had prepared them for something like this, the actual performance was too unnerving for most of them. That this same man who had in the past treated them so lovingly, spending hours talking with them, looking after their meals, should now after they had walked two hundred miles to see him, treat them in this manner, shocked them.

After a few minutes of this storm Maharaj sent for Gustadji and Sadashiv and Behramji separately and gave each an individual serving of abuse. Then addressing them collectively he said, 'You so and so's have put me in this cage and yourselves go about from place to place. Have you obliged me by walking two hundred miles? Keep on doing what you are doing under instructions by "whoever" is your "somebody." Now go back to where you have to return.'

In spite of Gustadji's hints and pleading, Maharaj would not have the mandali come into his hut. So word was sent to him through Yeshwantrao to let them come near and take his darshan before they left. After one

hour the reply came that they could pay their respects to him from the compound gate and leave immediately. In the meantime Durgamai and Yeshwantrao had served them tea; and now as they were leaving handed them a parcel of bread, besan, sweets and fruits for their breakfast which they ate a little way away. The bullock and cart were handed over Yeshwantrao to dispose of. Baidul thus had his first walk during the whole journey.

They arrived back at the bungalow around sundown, and Baba had kept hot bread and nice vegetables ready for them. The next couple of hours soon went by with the mandali telling Baba about the visit, and he explaining to them what it all meant.

In the morning they were picked up by a motor-lorry and taken to 'Nagar, but because of a breakdown they did not arrive until early afternoon. They put up at Khushru Quarters, and Rustom's family members gave them a good meal. Baburao and Sadashivrao were sent to Poona.

24. *Iran — I*

ON the second morning, when they were about to sit down to breakfast, Rustom showed some lack of attention and Baba got up abruptly and left the place, and, joined in a moment by the mandali, walked to the station dharmsala.

The whole day was spent discussing for the thousandth time the different routes to Iran and the advantages and disadvantages of travel in different seasons — for it was to that place Baba now wished to go. The final outcome of it was first of all who would be going. Baba named Gustadji, Behramji, Adi, Doctor, Vajifdar, Ramjoo, Aga Baidul, Padri, Slamson, Masaji and Nervous.

Each was to sign on a stamped paper that he was undertaking the journey of his own free will and responsibility; he did not expect any kind of external and financial help from Baba for any definite internal benefit during the period of travel; that he would accompany Baba for an indefinite period, leaving all hopes, if required, of ever returning to India. (Doctor and Ramjoo were not included in the last clause as they would be free of all bindings and promises after 28th February 1924.)

They would start from Bombay on the eleventh and go to Bandar Abbas at the entrance to the Persian Gulf via Karachi where they might stay for some time — or, if preferred by all, to Hyderabad, Sind. Vajifdar, however, was to stay in Bombay until December. Ramjoo and Doctor were allowed to go home for a few days; and Padri would go to Bombay to attend to passports and make travel arrangements.

By now all the mandali had fully surrendered to Baba and accepted him as their Guru or Murshid. This was not from any virtue of their own but by the daaman

of his grace which he flung over them.

On the evening of 5th November, Doctor, Ramjoo Vajifdar and Padri left for Poona where they took Babajan's darshan and went on to Lonavala and Bombay.

Doctor and Ramjoo returned to 'Nagar on the eleventh and found Baba and the other companions sitting outside the dharmsala in the early morning sun having enjoyed a six-day holiday. After their namaskar to Baba and exchange of news, Baba served them bread and tea. Then he inspected their clothes and bedding and made a tally of cooking-pots and sundry pieces including a pressure-stove. On the previous trips Behramji had been luggage manager; but now he demurred, saying that the others never fully accepted his instructions. But this was smoothed over, and everything was weighed in by the time the train came. On Baba's express wish only Rustomji came to see them off. He garlanded Baba and gave bouquets to the others; and also a hamper of food which Baba served to them all after the train left and they had settled down.

Someone noticed that Nervous was not with them. Baba asked everyone where he could be; and then said it was no matter, Ramjoo could wait for him at Manmad and bring on to Jalgaon. This was done, and they all breakfasted together at that place. From there they went on through a countryside golden with harvest past Bardoli, the stronghold of Mahatma Gandhi, and reached Surat in the evening.

To fill in time Baba with some of the party strolled through the bazaar. They came across a boy in pitiful state and when he was asked his story he said he had come from his native place to Surat to obtain work but had become ill and was penniless. Baba told one of them to take the boy to a hotel and get him a good meal, and another to buy a ticket to the boy's hometown. When those things were done Baba gave him the ticket and spoke some words of encouragement to him. But then a police sub-inspector intervened, and ignoring the mandali's pleas detained the boy.

They went on to Ahmedabad which they reached early the next morning, and a few hours later went on

to Hyderabad, Sind. The mandali were looking forward to sightseeing in this city, but after a brief look around Baba said it was too dusty a place to stay in, and they continued on to Karachi where Baily had been wired to meet them.

As soon as they had alighted and Baba had accepted Baily's greetings the two inspected several bungalows which Baily had lined up and selected one, and all retired there. All were given brooms and buckets to make the place habitable and in the evening they all gathered around Baba, and during talk Baily proposed that they should give the place a name. Many were suggested, until Baba and he together said 'Halt Ho', which was approved by all.

The bungalow was taken for two months; and the mandali again felt that they were settled in at least for awhile; for ever since their stay at Manzil-e-Meem they had been hoping that Baba would establish another such ashram. But Baba presently presented a new plan: they would not enter Iran at Bandar Abbas but from Basra at the head of the Gulf. And to go immediately.

Vajifdar was wired to send the passports and money, and Baily went into the city to make inquiries about a boat and to inform the landlord that they were not staying. The latter could not be seen that day. Some time later a telegram came from Vajifdar saying that the Irani Consul in Bombay refused to endorse their passports unless presented by each traveller. In a letter which followed, he said that that condition did not apply to Baba who had called at the Consulate only a few days ago and said he would send his man with the passport for endorsement.

By evening the excitement of immediacy had largely ebbed away, and Baba said that in the morning they could all go out and get work. Padri and Baidul got jobs straight away.

Doctor said he was fed-up with everything, especially this settlement, and asked permission to return to Poona. Baba gave permission and also said that he could rejoin him whenever he liked.

A few days later, after taking Baily aside and talking with him, Baba called the mandali together and told them that they were going back to Bombay. There was a boat sailing that evening if they preferred it to the train. All voted for the boat, and by 2.30 in the afternoon they with all their luggage were at the pier where they boarded the S.S. 'Vita' and made themselves comfortable on the upper deck. Baba allowed them to enjoy the sea-view for awhile and then put them on 'picking' rice. They docked in Bombay on the 24th.

25. *The Solitude*

ACCORDING to the plan Baba had told the companions during the sea-stretch they now split up: Slamson, Padri and Nervous were to stay in Bombay, separately; the rest went to Victoria Terminus from where Masa and Adi got tickets to Ahmednagar; Baidul and Behramji to Poona; and Baba, Gustadji, Doctor and Ramjoo to Lonavla: all taking the same train. Every precaution was to be taken to keep Baba's return secret. But the secrecy was almost lost at the very beginning. Ramjoo spotted Doctor's father making for the compartment Baba was in. He quickly went up to him and took his arm and guided him to another compartment. As a further precaution Baba and Gustadji got down at Khandala and Doctor and Ramjoo went to Lonavala to get Abdul Tyab to find a vacant bungalow and then come on with his car and meet Baba. Baba had started walking and was half way when they met him.

The next two or three days were spent in looking for a place where Baba could spend some time in solitude without food or water and not be disturbed.

A wire was sent to Vajifdar to come. He arrived the following morning, and after receiving certain instruction from Baba returned to Bombay.

Baba and Gustadji left that night without telling Doctor and Ramjoo where they were going. They went to Poona, where Behramji joined them. That was 29th November. They stayed there all the next day but avoided seeing anyone; and in the evening left by train for Sholapur.

The third-class carriage was crowded, and Behram was drowsy, so Baba moved over a bit to give him more comfort; but hardly had he drifted away in sleep when Baba nudged him awake, and as he was blinking

his red eyes he heard Baba saying, Don't you feel ashamed to be sleeping while I am awake?'

They reached Sholapur at midnight and got down; Gustadji got into a tangle with a policeman whose inquisitiveness was aroused by the very odd assortment of packages-including a pressure-stove and cooking pots and he called the ticket-collector, who called the station master. Baba got bored and went to the W.C. When he returned, the station-master said that the lavatory was for first- and second-class passengers only. Baba pointed to the sign 'Gentlemen' on the door. The station-master became reasonable.

Behram swept clean an area outside the station and spread their beddings. Before they could go to sleep Baba noticed a Parsi guard going off duty. He asked Gustadji to approach him to arrange a shelter for them for the night. The guard was most amiable and went and saw the station master and asked him to let the party sleep in the first-class waiting room, and he was happy to do so.

It was nearly three o'clock in the morning before they went to sleep, but hardly was it five when Baba was up and roused the other two. Behramji was sent to find a place where they could get some breakfast, and soon reported back that there was a very ordinary hotel about a quarter mile away. They rolled up their beddings and went to the place and Baba ordered bread and butter and tea. The place was filthy with myriads of flies buzzing around. Baba asked Behramji was that his idea of a very ordinary-looking place? When the bread and butter was brought the butter was found to be stinking, and Baba got up and left without even tasting the tea.

They took a tonga and set out for nowhere — that is they told the tonga-wala to just drive about anywhere. There was a big Fair in honour of a local saint going on. There were scores of toy-shops all glittering under electric light in the still-dark morning. After some hours of rambling about they came to a dak bungalow finely situated, and dismissing the tonga engaged

a room, asking the manager to prepare dal-rice for Gustadji and Behram to be ready in one hour. Behram was detailed to get milk for Baba. After tramping about for nearly an hour he came back very red and perspiring (it was now early afternoon) and said that milk was not obtainable at that hour. Baba became very angry with him, and he got redder and hotter and then went off again with Baba telling him that he must bring milk by three o'clock or Baba would fast for thirty six hours. Behramji found a milk vendor, who said he would go into the jungle and milk a buffalo specially for him if he would pay a rupee for a seer (about one and a half pints) of it. Behram agreed to this, and leaving the vessel with him told the man to bring it to the bungalow. It was now well past two o'clock and so Behram thought he had better go back and tell Baba that the matter was in hand, but it might be little more than three o'clock before they got the milk. This caused another round of abuse, especially because of Behram's leaving the vessel with the man. That was worth more than a rupee, and how did Behram know that the man would keep it or not bring the milk at all? However, it was not long before the milkman came. Baba drank a little of the milk while Gustadji and Behram ate the meal made ready for them; and after that they made tea with the remainder of the milk.

They then went back to the station and Behramji bought three tickets to Akolner, which is near Ahmednagar. He tendered a five rupee note and should have received nine annas change, but the booking clerk evidently mistook the note for a ten rupee one and gave him back five rupees nine annas. Behram went back and asked Baba what he should do, and he said to give it back to the clerk. Their funds were now exhausted. They boarded the night train to Dhond and there changed to the Manmad line. No sooner had they settled down than a ticket-collector asked them to

vacate the compartment as it was being reserved for military personnel. Gustadji wanted to thrash it out, but Baba told him to give in: so they changed into another compartment.

At Akolner Baba and Gustadji got down with the luggage and Behramji continued on to Ahmednagar and found Rustom, and told him that Baba was near by, but he was to keep it a close secret. Meanwhile some possible places around Akolner for his solitary stay were inspected by Baba and Gustadji; but none were satisfactory. Milk was obtained through an obliging railway employee named Ismail, and tea was made. Presently Behramji returned with Rustomji who brought food for the two.

A further search was made for a suitable spot. One was at last found that met with Baba's approval, and the owner, a retired Brahmin station-master who held extensive lands round about with many good wells, was approached to allow them to camp for a few days as one of them was sick and would like to stay for a few days for a change. The gentlemen readily agreed, and Rustomji was sent back to 'Nagar to purchase a small tent. The others spent the night on the railway platform. In the morning Rustom brought the tent and also Gustadji's and Behramji's meal. The tent was pitched, but they all, including Baba, slept out in the open in the cold November night. Towards morning it was so cold that they gathered dry leaves and sticks and made a fire to warm their shivering bodies.

In spite of obtaining and pitching the tent, Baba was not quite happy with the place, and said they would go on to Arangaon.

Accordingly, in the evening Baba and Behramji, accompanied by Ismail for some distance, followed the railway line to the camp post office while Gustadji came in a bullock-cart with the luggage. They arrived in the dark unseen by anyone from the village, and spread their bedding on the veranda. There was an electric storm in the night and the rain blew in wetting everything. While it was still dark Behram went to the village for milk. The man knew him and expressed surprise

at seeing him. Behram said that he had come alone to clean the place up for Baba who would coming in a few days, and asked him not to mention the matter to anyone. The man said that he would guard his tongue, and went inside and came out again with a bucket and rope for drawing water from the well. When told of this Baba said the man was blessed to have had the thought of offering the bucket.

Baba wanted the tent pitched inside the building, but there was nowhere in the solid floor and on the smooth walls to tie the ropes. Baba kept on grumbling at the delay. In the end, Gustadji said in Gujarati, 'If you will only stop talking I will get it fixed.' Baba said he would keep silent until it was done. And somehow or other they managed to rig the thing up.

The following day Adi was allowed to come out from 'Nagar. He began bringing Gustadji's and Behramji's daily meal, cooked by his mother, Gulmai, who was allowed sometimes to come.

About the middle of the month Baba with Gustadji and Behramji went to Poona to Sadashiv Patil's place in Kasba Peth and gave darshan to some hundreds. He continued fasting. Then they returned to Arangaon and he went back into strict seclusion with still only Rustom, Adi and Gulmai knowing he was there.

On 29th December Baba wrote to Ramjoo in Lonavla giving no address:

'Dear Ramjoo,

You must by now through Baily have come to know about my visit to Poona and what happened there. And as you have every right to know of my program, read the following and inform Doctor also; but both of you keep the matter a dead secret.

From 1st December till yesterday I continually fasted for thirty-four hours at a stretch. Then yesterday I increased it to: each forty-eight hours, and during the remaining eight hours I will take liquids and fruits but not grain. This will continue by the help of the All-mighty until 31st January, and from 1st February

I will begin eating regularly. But if my health fails (I am growing weaker day by day) I will give up the new routine and keep on liquids throughout January, and begin eating normally on 1st February.

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

Have no anxiety about any matter.

Don't try to reply.

God bless you and Doctor.

Sd/—Merwan.

P.S. Let Doctor read this letter.'

The next day there was a second letter:

'Dear Ramjoo,

I hope you received my yesterday's letter C/- Doctor. Now listen. You should be at Lonavla station on the 31st at 5-30 p.m. We will be going to Bombay by Madras fast passenger. You and Doctor only should be on the platform. You will inform none, not even Tyab Ali or Pepamyan. Bring with you one bottle of cocoa freshly made with pure milk. Doctor knows how to prepare it.

After seeing me you will remain in Lonavla for twenty days more. I have grown very weak. Whilst writing this my hands are shaking.

Sd/ — Merwan.'

Doctor and Ramjoo went to the train with the cocoa at the time given, and Baba allowed them to go with him to the next station.

He looked very delicate and pale, almost a skeleton, yet he was fresh in spirit and a picture of cheerfulness.

26. Iran — 2

ON 20th January 1924 Baba called all the mandali to Bombay. Those who had not seen him for a couple of months were shocked at his condition, but there was an excitement in the air at Bharucha Buildings where he with Gustadji and Behram and Vajifdar were staying. They soon picked up the drift of Baba's talk—that he was going on foot to Iran and that those who went with him must be willing to surrender to him completely and *infinitely*.

After the midday meal was eaten Baba took Ramjoo and Doctor aside and told them that whatever hopes and expectations he had held out to them to happen by 28th February would not fructify. The whole thing was a failure. Consequently, if they felt that the last two years were in vain, he was sorry, and asked to be pardoned; and they could do what they liked with him as a punishment.

He gave the alternatives, either to pull on with him for an indefinite period on unconditional terms, or to remain in their homes conducting their businesses and fulfilling their family and social relationships, but be under his instructions spiritually.

They both said that they could never consider the last two years as wasted; on the contrary it was the most important and instructive time in their lives. However, they could not go with him for a further indefinite period, but were ready to obey him at home.

He told them that if they believed in him, and he was really That which they believed in him, their spiritual awakening, sooner or later in this life, was assured, just as day must follow night — whether they were with him or far away, or even went against him because of their connection with him. He further said

that he would prove that although they had failed, he would not leave them — and then he would become their Master; otherwise till the time of Realization he was their servant.

A couple of days later in the course of general conversation Baba asked Doctor and Ramjoo if, when he called them later on, they would come and stay with him for a month or two, for at that time he would be explaining the *Inner Secrets* which he had promised some time ago to a select few as a forerunner to Realization.

During the next few days Baba explained many spiritual points to his mandali, and played cards to fill in the time before leaving for Iran. He began eating once a day in the evening.

Baba again brought up the matter he had discussed with Ramjoo and Doctor — the conditions of further staying with Baba. Ramjoo said that he still wanted to be with Baba provided he could leave him any time he liked. Baba said appreciated Ramjoo's position as a family man with commitments; and asked him to reconsider the matter and decide finally by 1st February, as after that he would no longer be responsible for his affairs. Consequently, if Ramjoo accompanied him to Iran he should not hold any hopes about worldly things.

Later on, Ramjoo told Doctor that he felt he would be going with Baba to Iran; and Doctor said he felt the same thing regarding himself. Both felt highly pleased with how it had all worked out — that they were getting the best of two worlds: they could be with Baba for indefinite periods, and leave whenever they wished.

It was seen that the last two years divided into two very different periods: the first of one year at Manzil-e-Meem with a strict discipline and fixed routine; the second of freedom from Rules but with physical hardships and constant change of place. Now, to Ramjoo it seemed that there was no limit to time, place or circumstance in which to have Baba's company. Complete surrender, he said, was the order of the day.

Dear soul! he did not realize that the Master had merely baited another trap.

Those who were going with Baba were named: Gustadji, Behram, Adi, Vajifdar, Padri, Masaji, Nervous and Aga Baidul. They went to the Irani Consulate for their passports to be endorsed. Baidul was questioned in Persian and he replied in the same tongue that he didn't know the language. When Baba was told of this he thought it was very funny but not unexpected.

On 31st January he had Ramjoo and Barsoap perform the five Mohammedan prayers. He took them all to Abdurrehman Baba's durgah, or tomb, but they did not perform a certain ceremony as he meant them to, which earned his displeasure.

The mandali several times fasted for twenty-four hours.

Save Nervous who remained with Baba, all went to pay their respects to Narayan Maharaj who had come to Bombay.

Mahatma Gandhi was released from jail. Once of the mandali remembered that some months ago Baba had said that soon Gandhiji would leave jail either through death or remittance of sentence. (It turned out that he had nearly died after an operation.) One of the mandali said, 'Thank heaven that at least one of Baba's prophecies has come true.' And the others concurred.

Baba's thirtieth Birthday was celebrated in the old Manzil-e-Meem, on the 12th February. Many outside people came. Baba was profusely garlanded, and then the singing began; but hardly had two or three songs been sung when Baba stopped the singing because of some trouble among the mandali responsible for the food arrangements. The food was cooked in Irani Mansions and brought to the Manzil in iron cauldrons. The weight of these, and also their being hot, made them very difficult to handle. That was what the trouble was about.

Baba jumped up and went off by himself to the Mansions picking up a tonga as he went, and throwing some of the pots into it drove back, and waving aside all offers of help and entreaties, off-loaded and carried them into the house himself. A lot of the people in the

street who knew him were amazed, and in the manzil there was general confusion.

When this subsided and everyone sat down at the tables it was noticed that Munshi Saheb and his party had slipped away. When Baba heard of this he went after them and brought them back. There was no program after the meal and the guests dispersed.

One afternoon a bhajan session was arranged, but when the party did not come on time, Baba and the mandali retired to Bharucha Buildings and played cards for an hour and came back to the manzil. But Baba's mood was not with it and he soon dismissed the singers. The rest of the evening was spent playing cards. But when a few days later Yassin Qwaal and his party came, Baba bathed in the sun-bursts of their singing and detained them for some hours.

On a lot of days Baba gave discourses and explanations, and outside people were allowed to attend. On one such occasion an Irani gentleman of very intemperate habits was so affected that he gave up his way of living and started taking bread and water only. When Baba came to know about this he sent for the man and explained that nothing would be gained by swinging from one opposite to another — all that was required was to live more temperately.

News was also brought that Babajan was ill, suffering from excessive heat and perspiration. The night before this information was received Baba had been very restless and at midnight had gone out for a walk, profusely perspiring though the night was cool.

They were to leave on the fourteenth, but the day before, that is the day after the Birthday, Baba postponed their departure. Naval managed to cancel their tickets without loss. Discussion on the route to be taken began all over again — that was for the thousandth

and first time, counting the times when they were planning the first trip that reached no destination. Initially they were to enter Iran at Bandar Abbas at the entrance to the Persian Gulf; then from Basra at the head of the Gulf; then via Baghdad; and finally again from Bandar Abbas — ‘as that would cost less.’

Baba’s Birthday was now celebrated on the 19th — its correct date — by the mandali and relatives and a few other close ones. No outsiders were invited. The passages were booked for the 22nd, only as far as Bushire.

On the morning of the 21st Baba visited Naval’s and Burjor’s homes. In the evening Behramji went down with fever.

On 22nd February they got up at 3 a.m. Behram was somewhat better. Baba took the opinion of the companions, should they proceed or not. Most were for abandoning the tour, but Baba said they would go on. The luggage was dispatched to the docks by bullock-cart and the party went by train. Baba embraced and kissed those who were remaining behind, and went on board. Each group waved to the other until they became dim figures across the water. It was nearly mid-morning and Masaji began cooking a meal.

Adi was seasick. At Karachi Peelamai, having had word of the party’s coming, came on board bringing flowers and fresh vegetables. There were a lot of Shiah and Sunni Mohammedans on board — the former who believe that Ali was the first Imam or successor of Mohammed; and the latter who base their faith in the traditions — and there was much oratory and hot discussion often culminating in abuse of those in high places. Two who were going to Baghdad to begin the Pilgrimage together abused one another, each saying he would not have the other with him. One of them during a pause asked Baba what was his religion. Baba replied that all religions were one to him. (This was the first time he had said that.) The man said that if the practice of Pir-o-Mureedi (Guru-disciple relationship) were still alive he would want to become Baba’s mureed. The waters inside the Gulf were smooth; nevertheless as the steamer approached Bushire a very cold wind blew

setting everyone's teeth chattering and chopping up the water. Both Baba and Vajifdar began vomiting.

They went, ashore in a steam launch, and here Baidul's colloquial Persian was of much use, and he, and the others too, were frequently addressed with the respectful 'Aga' or 'Sir.' A certain Mr. Gulamhusain Lodi, who had never heard of Baba, welcomed the strangers and gave them shelter in his house. Masaji began preparing a meal and Nervous got coal and made a fire.

Baba now toyed with the idea of going to Shiraz, and almost engaged a car for four hundred rupees. But the next day Padri also went down with fever. At the same time they learned that a boat from Basra at the head of the Gulf going to Bombay had just come into the port. It did not take Baba long to decide to return in it to Karachi. After some discussion it was worked out that Baidul and Behram should leave the ship at Bandar Abbas and go to their respective places and see their relations.

They found a new boat, S. S. Baroja, to have only limited berths for passengers, being filled with cows, goats, donkeys, horses and fowls besides a lot of burly Arabs, who slaughtered and ate half cooked animals and fowls, and shit where they ate.

Nearing Bandar Abbas Baba again broached the subject of still entering Iran, and reproached the mandali for giving up too soon. When the port was reached they actually started to get their bundles together, but Padri's condition became worse. Baidul and Behram said good-bye to Baba and the others. Then Padri felt better — and they all went ashore. With only fifteen minutes to sailing Padri had another relapse and they rushed back on board.

At the suggestion of some Gurkhas on the boat Baba said it would be nice to go to Nepal after leaving Padri at Peelamai's place for treatment and Nervous to look after him. They arrived in Karachi in the second week of March, and while Vajifdar attended to Padri, Masa looked for a bullock-cart to take the luggage to the railway station, but was not successful. A Victoria carriage-wala offered to do the trip for three rupees and they all piled in. The driver was tipsy and the vehicle with

its mountain of luggage lurched from side to side of the streets. It was ten o'clock at night when they reached the station dharmshala where Vajifdar found them and they went to bed. A watch by turn was kept throughout the night.

In the morning Nervous went and saw them off; and somehow they managed to get all the luggage (which was mostly the unused provisions and gear for the tour just abandoned) and themselves into one compartment without too much delay from the railway staff, and started off *towards* Nepal.

At Lucknow Baba with one of the companions went into the city to buy a pair of slippers but couldn't find any suitable. At the frontier station of Ruxol, they were not allowed to proceed. If they had come some days earlier when there was a big religious fair a little way off inside the border, entry could have been granted, but now all traffic was stopped except for bona fide trade or other substantial reasons. Vajifdar sent several telegrams to the authorities without any effect. So with the surplus food-stuffs Baba fed some fifty poor people and then turned back and went to Sadguru Kabir's tomb where the companions paid their respects to that Master. Actually Kabir has two tombs: one which the Mohammedans know is the true grave, and the other believed by the Hindus to be the actual samadhi. Here some sadhus started a quarrel among themselves, and Baba intervened and gave them a sound lecture on how a real sadhu should live.

From there they went to Kanpur and stayed for a few days. After this Baba told the companions that he wanted them now to leave him: Vajifdar to return to Bombay, Masa to Poona, and Gustadji and Adi to Ahmednagar. He asked Adi to look for a suitable place for him to stay with the mandali, preferably within five or six miles of Sakori. He got down alone at Itarsi.

For some days Baba moved about the surrounding countryside alone. He came across some highly advanced men of the Path.

He then returned to Arangaon and called the mandali to him. This was at the end of March, 1924.

27. *The Yoga of Work*

THE golden days of Kasba Peth, the zhopdi and Manzil-e-Meem had ended — the days when the forty companions, all, with two or three exceptions, young men, lived together under the rule of their erstwhile friend, Merwan, with no duties beyond instant obedience to the discipline of his presence; and where the rewards of service were the sudden perfumes of his moods. One day, they thought, in one of these moods he would let loose the flood of Truth in which would be their drowning.

All this had ended. Most of the forty disciples were sent back to their homes and occupations; for those who remained with Baba there followed the discipline of obedience in the midst of constant change — of journeys planned and abandoned or not even undertaken, and of residences vacated almost, upon occupancy.

And this again was followed by the discipline of obedience with hard labour.

The day began at five o'clock. From six to seven was the recital of prayers by each according to his respective faith. At seven a glass of weak tea without milk was served to each. To anyone who was indisposed or very weak a few almonds were added. Then they had to fetch water from the well and do other daily jobs until eight o'clock, when the day's work began. The first project undertaken was a room made of stone for Baba. A mason was called for this, and the mandali worked as his labourers mixing cement and dragging stones in a hand-cart.

This went on till eleven o'clock, when they had their baths and lunch of dal and rice, after which they rested or washed their clothes or did other small jobs. In the afternoon from three to four-thirty they all came together

and recited or sang a bhajan which Baba had written for them: 'Khuda, Paramatman, Allah, Ahura-mazd, Ram, Yezdan-Hu.'

From four-thirty labour was resumed and went on to six o'clock, when more water had to be carried for the evening washing-up and the next morning.

At six they sat down to the evening meal of wheat bread and potatoes cooked by Masaji. In the evening there was an occasional lecture by Baba: at other times he sang to them. At ten they went to their beds.

The first break in this routine came with the Ram-Naome celebrations on April the eighteenth, when a lot of visitors came from 'Nagar and Poona, including Rustom's and Adi's father Khan Saheb Kaikhushru, and also Biculla and his bhajan party. The mandali fasted from the previous night.

Bhajans went on for some two hours and were followed by a short *katha* (story recital) on Rama. Dal-
rice was served to everyone, and the mandali broke their fast. After this the cooking utensils had to be washed for the hand-out of cooked food to the poor the next day. Baba then gave a grand talk the gist of which was that one should think twice before joining a Fakir (poor one), but once one does one should surrender completely to him. He also said that once he settled down there the atmosphere of the place would be greatly heightened both spiritually and materially. Then he said, 'I have a great mission to perform during my life to the whole world.' This was the first time he had mentioned his mission.

In the evening a local kirtankari, with his two sons to help him with tabla and harmonium, arrived, and after the formal ceremonies began a kirtan on the subject of Sat-Sang, which, he explained in a clear voice and with good dramatic action. This entertainment went on to a late hour.

The next morning Baba appeared shouting, 'Last night I did not have a wink of sleep. Yesterday Kondiram asked me for his train fare home to see his mother who is sick. I gave it to him. But henceforth I will not give a penny to any of you for such a thing; he can

walk — and if he gets money from someone else he will no longer be mine, but will be considered to have given me up. Therefore, if anybody at this moment wishes to free himself from me he may do so and I will also give him his fare.’ But all said they would stick with him.

From eleven o’clock the people began arriving for the feast of dal-rice and potatoes cooked by Chowdry with some of the others helping. The feast went on until late evening, by when, it was reckoned a thousand had been fed.

A discussion by the mandali and guests was invited on a subject brought up by Rustom during the afternoon: should the disciples and devotees of Baba, Maharaj and Babajan wear some distinctive badge or garment. Some were for and some against. Baba sided with the latter saying that they were not a society, and any mark of distinction would take away freedom and put their minds under restriction. Then Baba desired a name for his new room. Scores were suggested, until someone picked up a name which Baba hinted at, ‘The Zhopdi,’ and this was approved by all — probably because of its association with the grass hut in Poona.

Baba wanted to have a horse, a bullock and a dog at the place, each spotlessly white. Rustom’s mother-in-law Daulat Jehangir Irani had such a horse and offered it. Baba accepted it and called it ‘Sufi.’ It was stabled in part of the old mess-quarters. Everyone admired its gracefulness, but it looked a bit too frisky. It was given into Padri’s charge; but he had had no experience with animals, and it soon became unmanageable. Someone else donated a suitable bullock, but it is not remembered who the donor was. It was named ‘Saint.’ A perfectly white dog, which was to have the name ‘Sadhu,’ could not be found.

Late evening the guests all departed and Baba called the mandali together and recited some bhajans to Adi’s sitar accompaniment. Then he said to them:

‘There are two kinds of Mukti or Freedom, Videh Mukta and Janma Mukta. The Videh Mukta has no bodily feeling. King Janak was such a one. He once

put one foot in boiling water and the other in icy-cold water. It is said that Sai Baba often used to stir a pot with his hand.

‘There is a limit to the extent that a Videh Mukta can help others by drawing upon himself their sufferings. Since he has no feelings how could he experience fully the sufferings of others? But Janma Mukta means free from the time of birth. Such was Ram, Krishna and Jesus and others. They were universal in their suffering for others.’

He also mentioned briefly that there are two kinds of Maha-Purushas, one who upon reaching the goal becomes drowned in the Ocean of Divinity, and the other who returns from that Ocean to the world of people to help them.

In the morning the work was resumed. Because of ineptness in handling tools, and the sharp edges of the hard stone, most of the men had blisters on their hands. Padri had a bad cut and had to be taken to the hospital in the town and was given sick leave until the hand healed. But Baba did not tolerate any slackness. Coming upon two of them standing and swapping idle talk he threw a stick at one of them, but he avoided the blow and so lost the blessing. Because Rustom didn’t understand an order to send a cartload of lime, Baba sent Nervous to ‘Nagar to fall at Rustom’s feet and say, ‘I salute you on behalf of Baba. Please send the lime-cart.’ According to Nervous, Rustom was so abashed by this that he asked Nervous to please salute Baba on his behalf twenty times, and say it was not due to negligence that the lime-cart had not been sent but because their cart was elsewhere engaged and Baba had told him not to hire one.

Then Adi lost his head over some trifle and became cheeky, but repented. And then Masaji came under fire. Baba was fed-up with Masaji’s continual sighing, and for wastage in cooking. Baba kept on and on until Masaji burst out that if Baba would let him he would clear out altogether. Baba said, ‘Yes, if my words upset you, you had better leave.’ Masaji replied, ‘I can put up with your taunts, but how am I to know whether

you actually mean that I am wasting food.’ Baba soothed him saying, ‘It’s all right, stay with me.’

The headman of the village of Kedgaon came and requested Baba to be allowed to perform bhajan. He was met with a volley of abuse, but after a while Baba’s mood changed again and he granted the request. The party came just when the mandali were going to bed and went on till midnight. Baba allowed a sleep-in till seven o’clock and an exemption from morning prayers.

Every evening since his return to the place, and when he was not fasting, Gulmai cooked and brought out a meal for Baba. He ate a little and gave the remainder to his companions. She was usually accompanied by Rustom.

Against Baba’s order to him not to hire a cart, Rustom sent out two cartloads of stone slabs. Baba declared that since nobody wanted to do things the way he wanted them done he was going with Nervous to Happy Valley for a change. Ramjoo, who was down with fever, spoke up and said he wasn’t going to stay in the ashram without proper care. Baba offered him the alternative of going into hospital or staying with Rustom. Ramjoo chose the latter, but added that he would prefer to remain at ‘home,’ in the ashram. Baba seemed pleased with this and told someone to get eau-de-Cologne. When it was brought Baba sat down on the bed and bathed the patient’s forehead. He told them, ‘All of you still possess too much selfishness. When this vanishes pure disinterestedness will proceed from you. Give up the “self” idea and always be for others.’ None of the mandali at this stage knew what Baba was saying to them (Ramjoo said that he was being looked after all right) — that it was a matter of attitude rather than of actions. Baba then said they would divide the management into ‘Home’ and ‘Labour.’ Padri accepted the labour and Rustom the home. Subsequently, however, Gustadji took over the home management and so Rustom was freed from that responsibility, and there the matter ended.

Baba at some point remarked that Maya always draws

one to it, hindering one on his way to the Truth. It does this because it knows that when the aspirant reaches Truth it will have to accept slavery to him. Maya rolls at the feet of the Realized One. It conquers the man in ignorance, while the man of knowledge rules over it.

The celebration of Hanuman's birthday came round and the Hindu mandali observed it and Baba exempted all from the usual morning prayers so that they could join in. Rustom and Gulmai arrived late with the ceremonial articles, and Baba asked him why he had bothered to come at all. Rustom said that a flat tyre had detained them. However it was not too late for the sweets, which Baba distributed.

In the evening he asked them to work an extra hour.

After supper all the mandali were summoned to the zhopdi. Baba asked Masaji was any food left over after their meal. Masaji said, yes. Baba then asked Chowdry, who was cooking for the Hindus, the same question, and he replied there was none. He added that sometimes there was a little left over but he and Kondiram always finished it off if no one else wanted it. Upon hearing this, Baba demanded to know why the Parsis wasted food every day, but the Hindus and Muslims had nothing left over.

Masaji defended himself saying he had cooked less today than usual, and still there was a surplus. Baba asked in general how this could be, but none could account for it. Gustadji said darkly with a hint of impudence, "This will add fuel to the "fire of wrath."

Baba said that the following day every non-Hindu was to fall at the feet of the Hindus. Suddenly he turned to Barsoap and asked, "Will you fall at their feet?" Not getting an immediate reply Baba sprang at him and gave him a ringing slap. Somehow Nervous came in line and was slapped and thrown aside. Then Baba rushed at Kahiroo the mason, but only gave him a lecture on hard work. Baba then asked him would he work some further over-time, and he said that he was deadily exhausted, but would. This satisfied Baba who told him to sleep well when he went to bed. All the others had to do an extra hour's digging of two-foot

deep holes around the zhopdi pavement for trees to be planted.

Gustadji did not have to dig holes. He had long since had no work or duties — not since the Kasba Peth days. (His becoming Home Manager mentioned above was merely time-pass.) Now he filled in the hour quarrelling with Baba. He asserted that Baba had not kept his promise not to involve him in any ‘scenes’ with the rest of the mandali. Baba retorted that if he had not kept his word, he would not now be having to endure patiently Gustadji’s harsh and taunting words. If anybody else had been in Gustadji’s place he would have throttled him to death. When they all retired for the night they found that the mason had fled — there was no sign of him or his bedding.

It had been estimated that the paving round the zhopdi would take a week, but it was finished in five days — despite the blazing heat of April. In the cool of the evening they collected cow dung and planted some trees and shrubs.

One morning when they were all hard at work Baba cheered them with the information that Naoroji and his family from Poona were coming, and that would mean a treat of some fruit; but they came without anything. Baba told him that he should not have disappointed the mandali. However, in the evening they were compensated by Gulmai and Rustom bringing a basket of sweets and the news of a son born to him.

Baba’s brother Jal came and stayed for a few days at the ashram. He was given the work of watering the plants morning and evening.

One afternoon a man appeared at the well, and after drinking said he was hungry. He was taken before Baba who said that he was a *mast* or a man well on the Path. He was fed and given some sweets and some clothes. Later the same day an old starving woman with her two sons came begging food. Seeing her pitiable condition Baba ordered Chowdry to prepare fresh dal-rice for them. While this was being done Baba asked the elder boy who had a small musical instrument with him, to sing to him. He sang couplets on the loves of

Shri Gopichand and Jalandarnath Maharaj which Baba enjoyed very much. Then they were served the hot tasty food, and after that they were given clothes and they left.

Gustadji, although exempted from any sort of manual labour, suddenly started working very hard — not even resting when the others did. He also continued with the office of home manager. In this capacity, Barsoap went to him for a prayer carpet, and was refused. In the evening when the mandali were all sitting around Baba, Baba asked him was he still resentful of Gustadji, to which he said, yes. Baba called him near him and said, ‘No matter how badly, even harshly another treats you, you should remain calm. However much you are found fault with, blamed or spoken to with piercing words, you should bear all with patience. That is real bravery. A man can make a whole army yield to him, but he cannot overcome his own wrath.’

‘There are three things Baba continued, ‘which Ramkrishna Paramhansa pointed out that keep one away from God: Kam, Krodh and Kanchan (lust, anger and greed). Lust and greed may be overcome, but control of one’s temper is the hardest of all. If you overcome these three enemies you are a wali (saint) or mahatma. Who is a mahatma? No other than one who controls Kam, Krodh and Kanchan.’

As a drastic measure to help in the overcoming of these enemies Baba laid down two rules:

1. Each one every morning should salute and then touch the feet of each of the others, saying ‘You are my brother.’
2. Anyone who speaks in anger or taunts another, should at once go and tell Baba, and Baba would salute him and fall at his feet.

Barsoap said that the first rule was against the Shariat of his religion. Baba explained that the rule means touching with hands only, not putting one’s head on another’s feet; but Barsoap insisted that even touching the feet of another with one’s hands is against the

Shariat, Baba then exonerated him from the rule and said that he may go to each and shake hands with him. Baba then asked Ramjoo had he any objections to the rule. Ramjoo didn't consider that it infringed Shariat, and accepted it; but he would not obey the second rule and report to Baba and be saluted by him and have him touch his feet: he would rather leave than do that. Padri and Nervous at first would not accept the second rule, but were persuaded to accept it. Later, privately, Baba exempted Ramjoo from the rule.

A fence was put around the trees and shrubs for their protection. Someone said that the zhopdi should have a flag as is usual with such places. Everyone agreed on this, but could not agree on its colour. The Hindus said it should be red, but Ramjoo naively said that that would be 'too Hindu-like'; it should be green. But the Hindus objected that green was a Mohammedan colour. The Zoroastrians did not like either. Baba then said, 'It should be of all the seven colours,' and everybody thought that was a good idea. The making of the flag was given to Mrs. Naoroji. From then on it was hoisted in the evening when the mandali sat with Baba.

One night Ramjoo asked what were the stars. Baba replied, 'They are circles of light — as is our planet Earth. Many of them are inhabited by people who resemble us in culture, science and material well-being, but spiritually our circle, Earth, is the most advanced. 'After Self-realization man beholds all of them (millions upon millions) as small bubbles issuing from himself: he is the Source of them all.'

The two Rules came into force at dinner with Baba saluting Padri because the latter had overlooked some instructions. Then by way of teasing Nervous Baba saluted him too. Nervous started weeping and got up and put on his coat to leave.

Baba explained to him that he had saluted him of his own accord, not for any fault of his, and he should not interfere in Baba's action. But Nervous was not to be pacified. Crying all the while he said he was

willing to obey all Baba's orders except, the one of staying with him.

Finally Baba allowed him to go and offered him his train fare, but Nervous refused it. Baba asked how he could go without money, Nervous pointed to the gold buttons on his shirt, and Baba snatched them away. Baba told him to go, but he must not beg, borrow or steal. Nervous said he would obey this order. Whereupon Baba said he would follow him wherever he went. At last Nervous left, and Baba went after him. After some time they both returned.

One night after supper Ramjoo was reading to Baba an Urdu book. Suddenly Baba said, 'I will live in this world fifty-four years more, after which I will have a tragic death. The Parsis will bring it about.'

Then he said: 'A true lover of God is like a thirsty man in a desert who desires water more than all the treasures of the earth. The true lover desires no name, fame or wealth. He who is not such a lover is full of self-interest.'

Then he asked each in turn to sing a song. When it was the turn of a certain Mr. Bharucha (briefly mentioned earlier as a visitor to Manzil-e-Meem, and now visiting Meherabad) he said that as he had never been to a theatre he didn't know how to sing. Baba told him that he seemed to have a very low opinion of the mandali, comparing them with dramatic performers. The program went on till about nine o'clock when Baba took some water-melon, milk and rose-syrup that Nervous had brought in the afternoon and which Gustadji prepared.

During a recess the subject of vegetarianism and meat-eating came up and Baba explained that there were many disadvantages from eating flesh — the chief being that it increases passion. 'There is,' he said, Very little chaitanya or intelligence in stone — so little as to be nil. The manifestation of chaitanya begins with vegetable life. It increases in animals and reaches its complete expression in human form. Now passion increases with chaitanya; the more chaitanya the more passion, the less chaitanya the less passion. Therefore if

we take animal food the element of passion increases in us.’

One morning when they were about to begin prayers, Masaji raised the cry that Sufi had bolted. Baba told them all to go after the horse, and everyone rushed out. The chase led across the fields and dry creek-beds for more than an hour; but at last he was captured. Commenting about it later, Ramjoo said that although the chase had made them gasp for breath and many ‘to measure their length on the ground’ it had been a great change from the monotonous prayers.

There was a family of the Zoroastrian community named Saththa who lived in ‘Nagar. They owned a cotton-ginning mill and were prosperous and numerous. There were five sons: Meherji, Homi, Jemi, Naosherwan and Pillu, and four daughters: Shirin, Gulmai, Gaimai and Banumasi.

They first saw Baba at Kaikhushru’s house in 1921 when he was still a disciple of Maharaj’s.

Naosherwan was deeply involved in the Swaraj (self-rule) Movement; and for a time Baba was after him to renounce politics and take up the idea of Self-realization which was the real Swaraj. But Naosherwan felt that he was not ready yet for that. Gradually the whole family became devoted to Baba, and he often called on them when he went to ‘Nagar. But Gaimai especially loved him. Later on she married a man named Jessawala who was the first Indian to obtain a boiler-maker’s ticket (a very stiff examination in those days).

Rustom brought out a horse-trainer ‘to teach Sufi manners’. The trainer mounted the horse as it was with halter (a saddle and bridle had not been included in the gift) and took it for a canter. When Baba heard of this he was angry and said that no one should have ridden it without his permission: and Rustom could take it away. However, he relented when he saw how grieved Rustom was for his mistake, and said the animal could stay.

One day there were some visitors, a Mr. Ardeshir and friends from Karachi. Baba asked him did he know

anything about fruit-growing and he said he had had some experience. Baba then said that he was thinking of establishing an orchard as an occupation for the mandali and asked would he be interested in directing the project. He said he would. Baba said, 'Sealed and settled.' And so a new office came into being: Director of Agriculture.

Now children from the village began coming for Baba's darshan. They were led by a crippled boy. Arjun was given the duty of teaching them bhajan every day for a couple of hours; and nearly every day fruit or sweets 'would come' for Baba to distribute as prasad and so encourage them to be regular in attendance.

Munshi Saheb from Bombay came, bringing two huge baskets of fruit. After some private talk with him Baba called the mandali together and distributed the fruit and then asked him what was his opinion of Barsoap's refusal on religious grounds to accept the new rule of each bowing down to all every morning. Munshiji said that he could see no fault in the order. Barsoap was abashed at this answer. Later on in the day, accompanied by Munshiji, Syed Saheb, Rustom and Adi, Baba went for a drive to Happy Valley. He was in a very serene mood. After a while he 'came back' to the companions and said, 'If you realised but a particle of that Knowledge which I know, you would experience inexpressible bliss; every object would impart happiness to you; every object would tell you it's part in the story of knowledge — and all the misery that's in the world would shine forth as heaven.' They returned about eight o'clock, had supper and then Munshiji left for Bombay, and Syed Saheb went with him on his way home to Nasik. Ramjoo was given permission to go home to Lonavla for the days of the Id Festival and went with them to 'Nagar station.

At the end of the first week of May (just one year after his first going to Arangaon) Baba shut himself up in the zhopdi and fasted for a week.

The work now centred mostly at the well. Ardeshir, Director of Agriculture, had worked out a plan of irrigation for the orchard. This required a raised stone platform

with lipped edges for the water, drawn by bullocks, or pumped by engine, to pour into, and a stone channel to conduct it to the area to be watered. This needed stone had to be collected in the hand-cart and dragged even from distances across the fields, into the soft surface in which the wheels sank. One took the shafts and the others pulled on ropes. At the delivery of a load a fresh four or five took over. But for some it had its humorous side also — especially with Barsoap's big body between the shafts fighting to prevent them from flying up over his head and, at the same time, trying to take a step forward. Someone said that it showed one how much beasts of burden must suffer.

Baba completed the seclusion and then called the mandali. He looked cheerful and said that he had been very comfortable for the seven days. But he severely reprimanded some of the companions for their feelings towards each other, especially Masa and Adi — one of the oldest and the youngest. He called them all his 'Father' and then said, 'By the oath of my Master I tell you that if he had so saluted and addressed me I would not have stayed on with him another moment, considering myself unfit to remain in his company.'

After the midday meal Chowdry declared his intention of leaving the place — the morning 'lecture' had been too much for him. The others tried to dissuade him, but with no success. Word was sent to Baba through Gustadji, and all were summoned again into his presence. Baba asked Chowdry kindly why he had agreed in the first place to join the ashram under the condition that Baba could treat him in whatever manner he wished, and now for a few harsh words wanted to leave. Chowdry did not look up or answer; and Baba told him to go.

Baba asked, 'Who else wants to give me up?' But no one came forward. Baba then said, 'Stick to me whatever happens if you want to be benefited spiritually.'

After this it became a rule that anyone who began any ill-talk was punished by being suspended from work for a period.

Baba began talking of going to Iran again. If he did

he would take Gustadji and Adi and two others, but he might take more if they wanted to go. Nearly all said they were ready for a change. Presently Rustom brought Gulmai with Baba's meal, and Baba told him of the projected trip and suggested they might go in his car. But Rustom made excuses. Then Baba asked the general question: was it becoming for them anyway to continue to occupy Rustom's land when he would not lend his car to Baba? Some said, yes, and some no. And the matter ended there.

The bullock, Saint, which Baba wanted along with the horse and a dog, arrived. It was snow-white like the horse and it was given too Nervous to look after, keep it amply supplied with fodder and wash it all over every day. It was to be kept tied just outside the stable. Like Sufi, it too broke loose and took the mandali on a run-around over the Fields. 'And so,' as one of them said, 'Saint demonstrated his equality with Sufi not only in beauty, but in action.'

Yashwantrao came from Sakori with some friends for Baba's darshan; and Baba expressed much pleasure in seeing the old friend of his 'Realization days.'

One afternoon just after dinner Nervous suddenly exclaimed that that day was 'Zoroast-no-diso' or the day that the Prophet had dropped his body. Baba told him he should have mentioned it earlier — it was too late now to prepare for celebrating it. Adi put in that if it had been a Hindu holiday Baba would have shown keen interest. To which Baba replied, 'It is because the Hindus take great interest in their religious celebrations that I encourage them — there is more devotion among them than in other communities.'

However, Baba sent Nervous on a bicycle to the town to bring flowers and sweets, while the others had their baths and changed into fresh clothes. On his return he also bathed and changed and then Baba gave them the sweets. In the evening sitting in front of the dancing-flames of the fire, Baba sang and at times briefly explained the meaning of the songs. And all forgot their moods and differences.

Arrangements on a grand scale were made for

Maharaj's Birthday on the fifteenth. Ongoing to 'Nagar for certain things one of the mandali was treated rather coldly by Khan Saheb. Upon hearing this, Baba sent for Adi and told him that he was very disappointed with his family, and that an ill-treatment, of one of his mandali was an insult to himself; but he was to go to 'Nagar and ask his father what had actually occurred.

Adi had hardly left when he returned, having met Rustom coming out with fruit he had brought from Poona. Baba cancelled Adi's going and saw Rustom and told him that if he could not keep his father in place and he himself not be influenced by his father, there was no point in his coming to the ashram. Rustom said he would follow Baba's instructions word for word irrespective of his father's attitude. Rustom had also brought a dog, but it was not completely white and Baba did not want it. The place of 'Sadhu' remained vacant.

Rustom's mother-in-law Daulatmai and her two daughters, Freni, who had married Rustom, and Mehera, and Baba's aunt Daulat Masi came the day before and were lodged in two small rooms. The place presented a gay scene. The zhopdi and its fenced area was decorated with bunting, plantain leaves and flowers, and there was a great coming and going of tongas delivering one party and returning to the town and railway station for another.

Baba stayed in the zhopdi but had the door left open and gave separate interviews to the guests which included his brothers Jamshed and Behram.

After lunch bhajans began and went on for some time, with a great clashing of tals. After this there was kirtan by Kirtankari Bua accompanied by harmonium and tabla and delivered with great style in eloquent flowing language. At sunset the Birth ceremony was performed by swinging a photo of Maharaj in a cradle. The photo was then placed in a decorated palanquin and taken in procession. But suddenly a great wind blew up and the sky darkened and the Kirtankari's words were lost. There were some flashes of lightning and a shower of rain fell. But it stopped as quickly as it had started.

Prasad was distributed by Baba and everyone left. After supper the mandali and a few of the guests who had remained were summoned to the zhopdi for bhajan by a party which had been called from 'Nagar. They used their tals in a refined way and their recital went on to midnight.

Baba seemed to be greatly disturbed by Khan Saheb's recent attitude. Whether to stay or leave seemed to be occupying his mind to the exclusion of all else. When Rustom brought Gulmai with Baba's food one evening, he reopened the subject with him. Rustom, who had been deluged all day with 'messages' from Baba, lost his temper and spoke rudely to him. Baba was greatly pained and started towards Abdul Tyab's car. Seeing Baba actually getting into the car and Abdul starting up the engine was too much for Gulmai; she of so many sufferings broke down and wept. And many, seeing the departure and her tears also started weeping and some remonstrated with Baba against his leaving. Baba came down from the car. He said, 'It is only for Mother that I come back.'

However, the next day brought no improvement in the situation, for before retiring the night before, among other things he had stipulated that he would stay only if the land on which the ashram stood was transferred to Adi or Gustadji. When Khan Saheb received this information he was deeply hurt that Baba should think him to be so very faithless that he could not be trusted — but he did not say definitely whether he would or would not transfer the land.

Baba said they would have to find land somewhere else suitable for fruit-growing. At this Adi flared up and accused Baba of trying to find an excuse to leave the place. 'If it is not suitable for your purposes,' he said, 'why did you select it in the first place for your permanent Camp?' Gustadji told him not to talk like that, and Adi turned on him. Baba intervened and ordered Adi to keep quiet, but Adi in his temper ignored the order and Baba fetched him a ringing slap, and he stopped talking altogether. Baba consoled him lovingly, and he burst into tears.

Baba sent Rustom to talk to his father again, and asked Ramjoo to go with him. They returned in due course with a written note from Khan Saheb saying that he was sorry about his indefiniteness and was most willing to act just as Baba wished. Baba said he would make the place his permanent headquarters. And there, for the time being, the matter rested.

An excursion to Aurangabad-Daulatabad with Baba and twelve or thirteen mandali in two cars (Abdul Tyab's and Sarosh's father's) was arranged for the next day. They started at five o'clock in the morning in holiday spirit, but half way Baba lost interest in the drive and was very restless and suffered the rest of it only because of the enthusiasm of the companions. On the return journey one of the cars developed engine trouble and had to be pushed for some distance, and both had a series of blow-outs. To cap it all Adi, while reversing without looking back, crashed into a tree and shattered the hood despite Baba's shouts of warning. Baba told him never to drive a car again. (This order was effective for some time, but gradually Adi ignored it, and he drove a lot on the long journeys, especially in the 1940's.)

The atmosphere at the ashram continued to remain tense. Baba talked of Kashmir as a suitable place for their fruit-growing. Every now and then the opinions of the mandali were sought. Swayed by the traditional descriptions of travellers in that high valley — Baba even had passages read out from Swami Vivekananda's tour through it — some wanted to go, while some preferred to stay where they were.

The talk then shifted to Quetta, and that was preferred by all because they had already been there and knew the place.

A wire was sent to Rusi to acquire a suitable bungalow with an orchard, and immediate arrangements were begun for Baba with Ardeshir, Padri, Nervous, Doctor, Rustom and Sarosh to go by car and the rest to follow by train. Rustom was instructed to equip the car with all the necessary accessories for that long trip. But only a few hours had elapsed when Sarosh came rushing out

to tell Baba that he had had an awful row with his father on account of his having taken the car to Aurangabad without his permission. He certainly would not give him permission to take it to Quetta of all places. He strongly objected to his son having any association at all with Baba. And so Sarosh was dropped from the party.

However, the intention to leave the place had unanimous approval, and it was decided that Baba and the other five would go by train, and after arrival at Quetta would wire the others to follow. Gustadji and Rustom would head the second party, and they were given detailed instructions whom to bring, and how to dispose of things they would not need. Again, the Arangaon affair was over.

Baba asked Padri, 'What about Sufi and Saint?' Padri said, 'What about them, Baba?' Baba said, 'What to do with them?' Padri replied, 'As you say, as you say.' Well, you and Nervous take them to Sakori and give them to Maharaj as a present from me.'

The following is Padri's account of it.

'We took them to 'Nagar railway station leading them by their halters. There we found an empty horse-box into which, with much tugging and pushing, we loaded them. The journey upset the horse, and when we unloaded them at Chipili, the nearest station to Sakori, it reared up whinnying with alarm, and the bullock tossed its head menacingly.

'After a while the beasts quietened down and led all right, and we covered the nine miles to the ashram by sunset.'

'There we were met by Yeshwantrao who laughed and asked what we were doing with the animals. I told him they were a present from Baba to Maharaj. He laughed again and said, "Maharaj has retired now, so I will tell him about it in the morning." "In the morning!" I said. "We have to join Baba in Bombay in the morning. Please go and see Maharaj and get his permission to leave Merwan's present to him."

'Yeshwantrao went off. Presently a roar came from across the compound. "Chase them away. Call the police. They might have stolen the animals and want to keep

them here until the search for them blows over.”

‘That’s the reception we got: Chase them away. Call the police! Yeshwantrao came back. “You see how it is,” he said. We pleaded with him to go and see Maharaj again.

‘We can’t take the animals back,’ we told him. ‘Baba told us to deliver them to Maharaj, and by now he will have left for Bombay.’ Yeshwantrao said, “You know what he’s like as much as I do. If I go back to him now he will only become more furious. You heard what he said.” “Yes,” I answered, “and you heard what Baba’s order to us was.”

“All right,” he said. “Stay the night and we will see about it in the morning.” He went, and brought us some food and left.

‘What to do? Baba had given us two animals to deliver to Maharaj, and he refused to accept them. Nervous suggested just tying them up and ourselves departing. But I pointed out that Baba had told us to *deliver* them to *Maharaj* not just, leave them and sneak away.

‘So we bedded down for the night, and in the morning Yeshwantrao approached Maharaj again and he shouted, “Are those people still there? Tell them to take their animals back to where they came from.”

‘We walked back the nine miles to the station. Arrived there, we saw the station-master and asked him to book the animals to Ahmednagar — we had no money on us but we would arrange payment of freight there. He was an honest soul and believed us. But it was true that we had no money. Baba had given us only three to four rupees for fodder for the beasts one way and our fares to Bombay. We wired Rustom that we were returning to ‘Nagar and he should meet us prepared to take over the animals.

‘When we eventually joined Baba and the others in Bombay, he asked had we delivered the animals. “No, Baba,” I replied. “Why, what happened?” he asked. I gave him the whole story. “All right,” he said, “you both did your best. Now forget it. We go to Quetta.”

‘Doctor was sent back to Lonavla to wait until the main body of the mandali was called.’

28. *Fruit-growing at Sukkur*

BABA, with Padri, Nervous, Adi, Ardeshir and Ramjoo, left Bombay on 6th June 1924 and arrived in Quetta on the ninth where Rusi met them and took them to his house and placed before them food that had been cooked with love; and Baba graciously permitted his companions to fully satisfy themselves; while he continued fasting.

After much talk it was decided that Quetta itself, although a delightful place in the summer, was not suitable for permanent residence because in the winter it was covered with ice, and that Sukkur, through which they had come some one hundred and fifty miles south, would be a much better place for their purpose. So Ramjoo and Ardeshir were sent there the next day to scout round and find a property suitable for the fruit-growing venture. After looking at many orchards, some of which were approved by Ardeshir from a business point of view, Ramjoo wrote a report to Baba advising against the place on account of its great heat — which some of the local people said was mild in comparison with temperatures they usually had at that time of the year. He asked Baba to telegraph instructions whether to stay or return.

They continued looking around while they waited for the telegram, and after two days returned to Quetta only to find that Baba had gone to Sukkur. They thought of returning there, but on second thoughts decided to wait for him or for his call. Baba came back on the fifteenth and severely took them to task for their slackness of duty. He had sent a telegram. Later, it was discovered that it had been mislaid at the railway station to where it had been addressed.

In Sukkur Baba inspected several orchards, and

then purchased some vacant land.

In the evening they all went for a motor-spin and felt refreshed. Plans were further discussed and it was decided that Ramjoo should go back to Sukkur and rent a bungalow, preferably near the purchased land, for them and the rest of the mandali when they came, to live in while a place for their permanent stay was being built. Baba wished Ramjoo also to visit the tomb of Bachalshah, a well-known saint, which was quite close to the land, and to find a certain mast and give him five rupees. Also he was to visit Sat-Rela, an important place of worship and reverence by Hindus. Here Ramjoo found an imposing personage seated on a swing being fanned by attendants with silver-mounted fans. There was an atmosphere of great dignity and sanctity. Ramjoo approached and paid his respects and offered a present which Baba had given him to give to the saint. He talked with Ramjoo for some time, then gave him a return present for Baba, and told an attendant to give him some refreshments. Ramjoo found a suitable bungalow which he took on a six months' lease, and then returned to Quetta the same night.

A week went by with further discussions. It was decided that later on the land would be turned over to a Trust for the occupation and maintenance of mandali members with families according to the shares taken by each. Baba was in an easy-going mood for the week and let his companions have a real holiday, taking walks, reading, playing gramophone records, and having as much fruit and pastry and various vegetable dishes prepared by Rusi as they wanted.

By the end of the week however it was decided to abandon the Sukkur plan as the place was unsuitable climatically — or more simply, because of the 'hell of its heat.' So Ramjoo and Ardeshir were sent to Karachi to find a place there for their fruit-growing project. Everyone knew that that place 'had a normal climate in all seasons.'

In the meantime the rest of the mandali at Arangaon had been wired to come to Quetta, leaving their luggage in store at Sukkur on the way through (pending settle-

ment at Karachi). There were six bullock cartfuls of it (all, of course, in conformity with Baba's instructions to Gustadji and Rustom). People wondered whether they were a circus or theatrical company. They arrived at Quetta on the thirtieth, and all were glad to be together again.

Now Nervous went down with fever. The British Civil Surgeon was called in and diagnosed typhoid, and Nervous was removed on a stretcher to a vacant house where he was given round-the-clock attention with Baba himself calling every morning and evening to see him, and at other odd times. The pleasure of the reunion was damped, and a gloom settled down on the mandali. Baba started dropping hints that the case was hopeless.

On the 16th June Baba went to the cemetery — there was no Tower of Silence in Quetta and arranged for Nervous' burial should he die. He gave the trustees of the place Rs. 2500 — 500 for funeral costs and the rest for a memorial to his beloved disciple. He told the mandali to continue with all efforts to save Nervous. Then with two or three of the mandali, he left for Karachi telling the rest to follow as soon as Nervous recovered sufficiently to travel, or died and was buried.

In the afternoon at the railway town of Mach, Baba received a telegram telling of Nervous' passing. He was the first of the mandali to keep his promise of a lifetime's surrender to the Master. (It was to be noted as time went on that whenever one of Baba's close mandali was about to die Baba would leave the place where he was and with a few of the mandali go somewhere else. But he never told the mandali why. An exception was Vishnu's passing away at Guruprasad in Poona during Baba's summer residence there in 1962.)

Baba reached Karachi the next day and soon found a commodious bungalow. He also inspected some land.

On the twentieth all came from Quetta after, on Baba's order, cancelling the land and bungalow agreements to the satisfaction of the other parties concerned, and collecting the luggage they had left at Sukkur.

Discussions began all over again with Baba unfolding an entirely new aspect of their project: once the fruit-growing was established, the mandali as well as labouring in the orchard, would have to form themselves into search parties and go down into the slums of the city and take food and clothing to the disabled and the poorest and at the same time, in the midst of all activities, silently repeat the Name of God.

This new program coming on top of Nervous' death caused a great depression and dejection among the mandali and no one showed any interest in it.

Seeing them thus Baba abruptly cancelled the whole project and told those who had family ties and business tangles that they were free to return to their homes and resume their occupations.

That evening, sitting on the edge of the fountain basin in the garden, Baba bathed each of the mandali. In the morning with a few he left for Bombay telling the others to follow. They all came together again in Irani Mansions on the twenty-fifth June and then dispersed — Baba keeping with him only Gustadji, Behramji, Padri and Baily.

Baba disbursed a large amount of money which Daulatmai Jehangir had given him for his work. Then he went to Poona, from where with the four companions he set out on a long tour of India to bow down to five thousand sadhus and saints and touch their feet with his head. They left for Madras via Raichur on 2nd August and were seen off by the Poona mandali.

29. *That Baba's Divine Pride Might Suffer a Fall*

THIS new direction of Baba's work for humanity began almost immediately with two sadhus on the train. Baba fed them, gave them some small coins and touched their feet with his head.

Padri had been made manager of the tour — which meant that he was supposed to be an instant ready-reckoner and general directory.

At Madras they changed trains for Booty in the evening, and after travelling all night found they were on the wrong train and had to return to a certain junction; and Padri smarted for his inattention.

They changed again at the foot of the hills into a tiny mountain train with two classes — the first a normal carriage, but the second class had only side curtains through which a strong wind blew, and although they arrived at Ooty by four in the afternoon they were shivering with the cold.

Padri and Behram went to the bazaar to get some dal or other vegetable soup to have with the bread they had brought with them, but came back empty-handed and they had to be content with bread and gram which they had also brought.

They started back at 6.20 to Coonoor and arrived there at 7.45. It was pitch black, and only a solitary lamp flickered on the platform. However, they obtained permission from the station-master to sleep the night in a first-class carriage at a siding, and with the help of a Bombay tea merchant they found a Hindu hotel that served them a good meal — which they took back to their carriage to eat because of the filthy condition of the place. They all slept well except Baba who had fever.

When the sun was well up they set off on foot to Metropalagam

about twenty miles away and after a few miles rested, and the mandali had a breakfast of bread and cheese and coffee, but Baba had nothing. He wanted tea, but in that place which is hung with tea gardens, none was procurable.

In the villages they passed through, Baba distributed gram to the children.

After sixteen miles Baba said they had tramped enough and took the train for the last five miles to Metropologam — which he nicknamed Petroleum — and back to Madras.

Baily now declared that he was tired of all this racing around the country and could not accompany Baba any further. Baba talked to him, remonstrated with him, but in the end allowed him to go. As he had decided to go back to Poona Baba asked him to take their heavy overcoats and some other excess luggage with him.

Baba said: ‘None feels for me, and none can keep me company.’

He outlined the next part of their plan. They would go by train to Calcutta and on to Hardwar in the north where they would be joined by Vajifdar, and they would tramp to Sakori — a distance of twelve hundred miles.

He now told them the purpose of this journey. He wanted, he said, to bow down to sadhus and saints and touch their feet with his head so that someone among them might abuse and kick him, and his Divine Pride suffer a fall.

Later on in the day he mentioned it again, and added, ‘What have you gained during these years you have been with me? It is because of this that I long from the very depths of my heart to meet some saint or sadhu who, when I touch his feet with my head, will kick my head.’ Then he said that he, himself, would bring about the circumstance — but at the same time prayed that it would be so.

They left Madras on the ninth and arrived in Calcutta two days later. There they crossed the river to the temple of Dakshineswar founded by Ramkrishna Paramhansa’s patroness and made holy by his sadhanas and ultimate mastery.

Sitting on the river bank was a neglected blind beggar. Telling Padri to borrow a broom from a sweeper, Baba swept the area around, and with his own hands fed the man. Further on they came upon another man who was sitting under a crude shelter gazing with love on a picture of the Master and praising his greatness. Baba went to him and gave him some instructions in devotional exercises.

They arrived at Hardwar on Thursday 14th and after depositing their things in a dharmsala went down to bathe in the Mother of rivers. Finding huge crowds and the bathing steps in a filthy condition they returned to the dharmsala. There they engaged an old car to take them to Rishikesh. It was so old that the upholstery 'looked like the inside of a worn-out coat' as Padri said, Before they could even start, one tyre went flat, and when that was pumped up, the engine refused to start. So Padri called off the deal with the owner and found a vehicle of a later model which took them the fourteen miles of rough zigzag road to Rishikesh. There Baba bowed down and touched the feet of many sadhus and lepers. He had some talk with a sadhu called Nepali Bawa, and returned to Hardwar. He sent a telegram to Vajifdar to meet him in Luksar, the junction town they had passed through on the way up. In the evening the mandali who had been fasting all day, had supper of dal-rice.

They got up the next morning and went over to the railway station where they washed and had tea and cake — a first time luxury since they had been with Baba.

The day soon became hot, and although they had given their overcoats to Baily to take back, they still had a lot of things to carry. (Before they had left Poona Baba had told them to purchase all that they might need on a long trip because they would not be allowed to buy anything along the way. So they had brought a lot of 'spares' including shoes.) Baba began passing frequent stools. After a mile or two they had some dal and chapatis. Slowly they covered the ten miles to Pathri and halted there for the rest of the day. In the

evening some sadhus came in and Baba gave them money and bowed down to them.

It was intended to make an early start in the morning, but as soon as they were up Baba began complaining again of the lack of consideration his companions showed him. There was none to look after him or even stay awake and keep him company.

Pendu lost his temper but became quiet again, and with much hurry and bustle they were under way at five-thirty.

After a while a man approached and saluted Baba. They shook hands and he passed on.

The party now left the road and took to the railway line. There was a shower of rain as they were nearing a watchman's cabin in which they took shelter, and the companions had some breakfast.

Presently they came to a small crystal stream and they dipped their hands in it and drank and felt wonderfully refreshed. Baba also drank, and then said he felt hungry. So one of them, seeing a shepherd boy a little way off, went over to him and asked was there a house near where they could, get some food. The boy traded his lunch of two chapatis and some chutney for one anna.

They reached Luksar early afternoon all rather exhausted and after baths they had a meal at a Hindu restaurant and rested in the railway waiting room.

In the evening they thought they would move to a dharmshala and Padri approached the manager of one. He asked what religion they professed. Padri said, 'Parsi.' The man said, 'What's Parsi?' and demanded a straight answer: were they Mohammedans or Hindus? Padri repeated that they were Parsis, followers of Zoroaster, and to impress upon him that they were not Hindus or Mohammedans, showed him the kusti (sacred thread) tied round his waist.

The restaurant-keeper turned to some cronies and a lot of talk went on between them. At last they seemed to agree that the thread might be another form of the Hindu sacred thread, and a 'Parsi' could be a Hindu sect they had not heard of before — at least the party

would not be Mohammedan. So they were admitted, but only given space at one end of the veranda.

Next came the signing of the visitor's book. Padri gave his full name, Ferdoonji Naosherwan. Then Behramji gave his, Behramji Ferdoonji. The man looked up quickly to Padri and said, 'Are you his son?' (Padri was in his early twenties and Behram could be taken for thirty-five). Padri explained to the great amusement of the companions that there was no connection, only the names of both their fathers happened to be the same. They dumped their luggage in the space allotted them only to find a vile stench arising from an open drain, so they got up and went to the station and Padri secured the station-master's permission to stay in the waiting room for two or three days. They spread themselves out to sleep, keeping watch in turn through the night.

The following day, Sunday 18th August, was spent waiting for Vajifdar's arrival. A telegram was sent to Patil in Poona to join the party at Kashi (Benares). Luksar being an important junction for pilgrim traffic a lot of sadhus are always passing through, and Baba bowed down to many of them. Vajifdar got off the train at four o'clock in the morning, and Baba had a long talk with him, after which there was a general news swapping and discussion of the walk until eight. Baba sought the opinion of each whether to continue on foot as planned or go by train to places of pilgrimage and bow down to sadhus found in them; and so make their way back to Arangaon and settle down there with the rest of the mandali. All were only too eager to finish up these troublesome journeys.

This decided, they took the train the same afternoon to Moradabad in a general southerly direction and arrived there the same evening.

The party immediately set out to find sadhus. A man who, it was said, had been sitting under a tree for four years, beckoned them. They went over to him and he applied ash to their foreheads, including Baba's. Baba asked him did he want anything to eat, and he said, Yes, he would like ice-cream. Baba had a large bowl

of it brought and with his own hands fed him as much as he could eat. Baba told the man, 'Become drowned,' and directed Padri to give the shopkeeper from whom they had bought the ice-cream five rupees to pay for more should the devotee ask later on again for more.

They went on to Lucknow. From there Padri was sent to Benares to meet Sadashiv Patil and take him to Baroda and link up with them there. Meanwhile the party proceeded to Jhansi and hence to Bhopal which was reached in the afternoon of the twentieth. Here Behramji was sent ahead to Baroda to arrange for a restful stay for by now Baba was a physical wreck. On the 22nd and they came to Ratlam. At all these places Baba bowed down to sadhus.

They went on to Baroda and were met by Behram and taken to the Gujarati Hindu Lodge. There, to the great relief of all, Baba said they would end the tour at Mount Abu and return to Arangaon and settle down. Then they all went out sightseeing instead of looking for sadhus.

But instead of resting to recoup his shattered health, Baba after one night went on to Ujjain and, after a meal, resumed sadhu seeking. They soon came upon many along the banks of the river there and Baba gave each two copper coins and bowed down to him. On Baba's wish, Patil bathed in the river and performed his religious ceremonies.

Near by were two men living in a small shed. One was a leper whose eyes were two sunken crimson orbs. Baba approached him, but as soon as his intention to bow down and touch his feet was clear, the leper snatched away his feet and prevented the Lord's obeisance. Baba told the mandali that the man was in a fair state of spiritual advancement. As the party was leaving, the leper began to sing. And he had a sweet voice.

They went on to Mortakka and thence to Ankleshwar near the mouth of the Nabada River. Baba talked in English with a certain Nirmalanand Swami while Patil under Baba's instructions again performed his ablutions. Many more sadhus were encountered. Then they returned to Baroda and Patil was sent home to Poona.

In the afternoon of the twenty-eighth they left Baroda by train for the Pavagadh Hills, which after discussion, all had preferred to Mount Abu. They arrived at the foot of the hills in the dark, but Gustadji said they need not light one of their lanterns, they could use the light from a lantern a fellow passenger was carrying. But the man suddenly walked away off the platform leaving the party fumbling in the dark. Padri had a nasty fall. However, a police officer came to their rescue and took them to a dharmshala advising them to remain indoors through the night as beasts of prey frequented the area. They started the climb at six o'clock the next morning. They went slowly with many brief halts because Baba was suffering from dysentery. Twice on the way there were tea-stalls at which they refreshed themselves. After a three-mile climb they reached the summit at ten o'clock where there is a temple dedicated to Kali Mata which attracts thousands of pilgrims at Fair times, and even a regular thirty-forty on ordinary days. There is also the tomb of a Mohammedan saint, Sajjanshah, just above the mandir. At both places the mandali paid their respects and then sat for awhile and enjoyed the scenery. They arrived back at the foot around noon, and after having a meal returned to Baroda.

Baba took up again a theme he had been harping upon lately: that he was not the 'Baba' he said he was. He said, 'As I have no stuff in me the same is true of my Gurus Babajan and Maharaj. Maharaj is not even a saint let alone a Sadguru.' When asked why he spoke this way about his Gurus he said, 'The Law made me speak so; and the same applies to you all, too — whatever you do, it is the Law which makes you do that.'

The next day, 30th August, the party went to Bombay, and made a long halt at Vajifdar's house.

In all this journeying there had not been found one to abuse God's lovely head.

The prospect of a final Stay was still not in sight. There was a quick trip to Panjim, Goa, with Gustadji, Masa, Behram and Vajifdar. Baba had intended taking

Padri but he pleaded to be left out — he had had all he could stand of the ‘merry-go-round.’ He was replaced by Vajifdar. Before they had gone far Vajifdar suddenly went down with fever, and Baba abused him roundly for spoiling the trip. But at the next junction-station he fed Vajifdar with his own hands, and the fever just as suddenly vanished. In Panjim Baba inspected every inch of the church which contains Saint Francis Xavier’s body, even climbing the dark spiral stairs of the bell tower. There was also a flying visit to Belgaum with Masaji.

During the next three months Baba was constantly on the move between Bombay and Arangaon. From the eighteenth of November he observed silence for one week. He ate seldom; but when he called for food Vajifdar was not to look at his face while bringing it.

Behram was sent again to Iran, leaving only Padri, Gustadji and Masaji with Baba.

In December they took a room in Bharucha Buildings at Dadar. Gustadji was required to fast on water for a week.

From now until about the third week in January, Baba seemed to be resting from his work, and Gustadji, Padri, Masaji and Vajifdar rested at his feet. They attended the Quadrangular cricket matches between Parsis, Christians, Hindus and Mohammedans. Vajifdar played in these. In the evening sometimes they went to the Madeline Cinema.

30. *Chanji*

THE Madeline Cinema was part-owned by a man named Faramroz Hormusji Dadachanji. For some time in spite of good houses the business had been showing an increasing loss; and it was thought that his partner was swindling him. He had also recently divorced his wife whom he loved dearly but who had gone off with another man. In those days divorce was a terrible disgrace in the Community, and it was in great depression that he went to see his friend Naoroji Talati and poured out his troubles to him.

This friend had met Baba towards the end of the Manzil-e-Meem period and had accepted him as the same as Zoroaster, but he had not had the chance, or thought it was not yet the time, to tell his friend about him. But now the perfect occasion had been created and he told Faramroz about Baba, saying that he was the only one who could heal all troubles.

Faramroz asked how he could meet this 'Baba.' His friend replied that Baba was mostly at his ashram near Ahmednagar, but sometimes came to Bombay, and at times even stayed at his house, In due course Baba came, and Talati introduced his friend to him. Baba listened to his whole story and then told him to wind up all his affairs and come to him at his ashram.

Faramroz Hormusji Dadachanji has been described by his niece Arnavaz as 'very loving, simple, honest, full of humour, wit and fun, and had great understanding of others.' (An excellent entertainer for this Avatar who prized such qualities above all others.) He was also fluent in the five languages which Baba used, and had a great work capacity. It was not long before he became the Master's 'private secretary,' and he and his typewriter became an inseparable fact, and often long

after the others had retired for the night he was still working writing letters and typing up the notes for the day.

His family could not, of course, understand this new turn in his life, and his mother Khorshedbai pestered him to marry again, but he said that his life henceforth was with Baba, and to please not mention the matter again. She took his horoscope to an astrologer who said it was the horoscope of a dead man. The meaning of this came out when, later on, Chanji was talking to the family about Baba and told them that but for him he would not be alive. He had gone for a swim and had got out of his depth and was drowning when he cried Baba's name with a great cry, and a Hand lifted him up and bore him to the shore. His mother was astonished. She was a practical woman — not at all religious-minded. She looked at Chanji and said, 'Yes, two and two equals four; you belong to Baba.' And she worried no more about him.

Chanji's work often brought him to Bombay and on these visits he would tell the family about Baba, and the ashram doings. Chanji's father Hormusji never actually bowed down to Baba, but treated him with the greatest respect. He developed cancer of the throat and could not eat or drink, everything he took he vomited. Baba went to see him and told him to eat fish for four days. He tried for two days and vomited each time and gave it up. Khorshedbai urged him to start another four days, she would cook the fish herself and it wouldn't matter if he could not retain it. 'Eat and vomit, but eat,' she said. He completed the four days successfully and drank a glass of cool water, and then said, 'Yes, Baba is a great man, a very great man.'

Chanji's brother Naoroji was a building contractor. He obtained a contract for the Engineering College Hostel in Poona and moved there with his wife, Bachamai. Chanji used to stay with them when he went to Poona. On one of these visits when he was about to return to the ashram he said, 'You have come half way (meaning from Bombay to 'Nagar); why not make a picnic of it and come and see Baba?' The family went,

and came away convinced who Baba was; and in due course all his children: four sons, Tehmtan, Homa, Dara, Nozer, and three daughters, Arnavaz, Nargis and Roda were brought up in his love and became his lovers — although only Arnavaz lived in the ashram for any considerable time. Naoroji's conversion was in 1927, three years after Chanji had begun to tell his family about Baba.

Chanji had another brother, Meherwanji. He had four sons: Nariman, Behram, Rustom and Hoshang and Chanji won them all over to Baba. But Nariman's marriage later on with Arnavaz had much to do with it. The Dadachanjis were the first group family to come to Baba; and they, too, remained householder disciples over the years to the very end. Baba often stayed in their house on his visits to Bombay.

PART 5

31. Meherabad — I

ON 5th January 1925 Baba returned to Meherabad and was in residence there for the next two years. The mandali who had been sent to their homes began to come back and the number of visitors for his darshan increased every day. Bhajans were conducted regularly for the village children. A Meher Charitable Dispensary and Hospital was opened in the old Mess Quarters which, it will be remembered, was repaired and made habitable during the first stay in 1923. It was formally opened by Rustom with a decorated key and he declared it to be at the service of suffering humanity and free of cost. Besides medical advice and medicine to all regardless of caste, creed or other distinctions, he said there was a small number of beds for more serious cases. Sweets were then distributed, and Baba said, 'Don't fall ill if you can help it, but if you do then do not fail to come here for treatment.'

Shortly after this, work was begun on a school for boys, the Hazrat Babajan School. Bamboo-framed and matting-sheeted huts were erected, while awaiting more substantial materials. Tuition and also board and lodging were to be free.

Arjun and Vishnu came to see Baba for a few days and were pressed into service as teachers of the untouchable boys; but Arjun said he would stay only four months. Besides teaching duties, they were enjoined to look after the boys' food and health with great care. A certain Joshi and Bapu were given the Maratha and higher classes.

A small temple, also of bamboo and matting for untouchables, was built, in which, besides the photos of the usual Hindu deities, there were photos of Baba, Maharaj, Sai Baba and Babajan, and regular worship (puja) was conducted in it. A second temple of the

same kind was erected for other castes with regular puja performed morning and evening.

The celebration of Rama's birthday was heralded by continuous bell-ringing for nine days. The actual day provided a scene of great animation. Kirtan was begun at nine o'clock in the morning and went on till noon. In the afternoon Abdurrehman from Lonavla (not the soap-eater) sang excellent qawwali. People came from distant villages to the feast that was served in Rama's name. Five thousand were fed. After this there was wrestling, and the champions of different sections were presented with turbans. At night there was a film on the life of Tukaram who is much loved by the people in this area.

Baba had intended going to Bombay the next morning, but that night a man came to the place from Walki, a village five miles away, saying that he had been bitten by a mad dog. Baba himself took him to the hospital and after first aid had him taken to the hospital in 'Nagar. Baba cancelled his trip to Bombay. In the morning he sent Rustomji to the village to inquire whether anyone else had been bitten, but no one had.

Kirtan on Sundays was now a regular thing. There were some excellent kirtankari buas who spoke fluently and with love, but most of the villagers, wrapped in indolence and apathy, did not attend, and Baba ordered the little 'untouchable' temple (before which the kirtans were given) to be pulled down, except the platform on which the worship was done; and the pujari was told to continue his duties there. He also forbade any of the villagers (except, of course, the children) to approach him for darshan. But later on he permitted the little temple to be rebuilt.

A seeker came to Baba and declared he was tired of the world and wanted God. Baba told him to remain there and obey his instructions to the letter. This he did, and Baba was pleased with him. Another seeker was told to sit under a tree and await instructions. Finding him obeying the order, Baba had him called and gave him advice and sent him on his way.

Towards the end of April Baba bathed thirty 'un—

touchable' boys. While he was doing this, two gentlemen came for his darshan. He said, 'I am bathing untouchable boys — why do you want to bow down to me?' This was the first time Baba had done this, and it became a regular practice.

A tailor named Waman was taken on the staff to make clothes for the boys. Football and cricket were played, with Baba joining in.

Baba called the parents and guardians of the boys before him and spoke to them — especially to the 'untouchables' and asked them whether they wanted their boys to be educated or not. If they did, then they should whole-heartedly leave that education to Baba and not interfere with it in any way or keep the boys from regular attendance. It was, he said, because of his concern about them that he had established this ashram near their village, and they would receive a great uplift from it.

Among the people who came for darshan a certain D.M. Angal Vakil (pleader or lawyer) asked permission to give a discourse to the boys. Baba was so pleased with him that he asked him to speak again on the following Sunday. He became one of the mandali and was always known as Pleader.

The tailor Waman was put on a seven-day fast. Seeing the way he stuck to it despite weakness, Baba cancelled it and appointed him a teacher in the school and changed his name to Kishan, and made him one of the mandali.

Now word came to Baba that in Bombay Munshiji had gone on a fast because Baba had not seen him the last time he had gone to Bombay. Baba took the train the same evening to comfort him, and before leaving asked the mandali could he bring back anything for any of them. On his return the next morning the train stopped at the ashram although there was no station or stop there. (Normally one alights at 'Nagar and takes a road vehicle for the six miles to the ashram.) The first thing he did was to thoroughly inspect the school and hospital.

The Arangaon patil or headman came to Baba and asked him to allow the village people to have his

darshan again. Baba granted his request, but when only a small number came he sent them away, telling them that unless there was better attendance to the bhajans, kirtans and Puranic readings he would not give them darshan.

Dr. Ghani, previously mostly called Doctor, and his brother Abdurrehman came, but there was no talk of Ghani rejoining the resident mandali.

Again Baba bathed a lot of the boys. This bathing was very thorough with plenty of soap and water. It took three or four hours. Gustadji played barber and cut the boys' hair.

A man Baba had seen at Sakori when he was with Maharaj, and who was now a headmaster of a school, came for darshan. Baba received him cordially and sat alone with him for awhile.

Baba heard a dispute between the local talati Shankar Rao and an old woman. He had seized part of her small piece of land against thirty rupees she owed him. Baba paid him the amount and had her land restored to her.

Baba personally examined the boys in the school and was well-satisfied with their progress.

Enormous crowds were now coming every Thursday.

Some boys were sent away from school because of fighting, but were taken back again.

An old Hindu and his wife came soliciting financial help on their pilgrimage to Kashi (Benares). Baba told them that Kashi was where he was and advised them to stay fifteen days; but that was too much for them to swallow, so they were given eight annas and they left.

The villagers were still lacking in response to the calls to bhajan and kirtan, so Baba took a strong line. He expelled all the 'untouchables' from the school. This caused complete chaos and amazement among the boys. However, when they overcame the shock they began to file out. In the meantime the parents were called and Baba told them that since they, the parents, could not find time to come to the bhajans and kirtans — which were in their real interest — they could take their children away. This created a greater chaos than it had with the boys, and there was a deep feeling of repentance

in many and they promised to attend the program regularly.

For the first time since Baba had been at Meherabad his elder brother Jamshed came on a visit. They talked for a little while and then Baba suddenly picked up a cane and struck him a severe blow.

Some of the mandali were now allowed to help in bathing the boys.

Maharaj's Birthday, 15th May, came round again, and preparations for it began some days before. People began pouring in from eight o'clock in the morning. Baba received them in the main school building which had just been completed, and which was hung with flags and bunting. From there they went on to a huge mandap (awning) where a meal of dal-rice and vegetables was served. The simple feast went on till five in the afternoon. Bhajan was begun in front of the zhopdi by two ascetics, Balaram Bua and Lotangan Bua. The former lives in 'Nagar and begs for himself and his family although he superintends the feeding of the poor at the temple where he puts up; the latter bua is said to have rolled on the ground from 'Nagar to Pandharpur: hence his name. The thirty to forty tal-ringers created a great and pleasing din. When Baba came over from the school and sat in front of the hut facing the singers, the tals bit deeper and deeper into the heart mystery of rhythm and sound, and Balaram started dancing. When the glorious praise came to an end Baba garlanded them both and had them taken home in a tonga.

Baba was the divine host, moving about among the people, greeting them, talking with them, visiting the dining pandal and asking various ones was the food tasty.

In the afternoon Haridas Bua began a dramatic kirtan narrating the lives of Maharaj and Shri Krishna, after which Pleader discoursed learnedly on the Puranas; and towards evening Abdurrehman entertained Baba with some choice Urdu ghazals.

The formal Birth ceremony was performed at sunset. And then came the choicest item of all: a dola or palanquin

which some of the Harijan boys had spent days decorating, in which Baba's photo was taken in procession all around the place.

But if this was the most beautiful of things, the last item, the showing of a film which Chanji had brought from Bombay was the most astonishing. About halfway through the film there was a great rush of people from outside to see the 'magic screen' which they had never seen before, and it was feared that it might turn into a stampede, so the rest of the film was cancelled.

It was nearly midnight before the last of the visitors left and Baba and the mandali retired.

32. *Mehera*

ABOUT this time the first women disciples came to Meherabad to live. Accommodation was built for them across the railway line separate from the main buildings, with its own kitchen and dining room and its own housekeeping. There was no furniture except a table and some chairs. The women slept on mats on the dirt floor which were rolled up during the day. They were not allowed to leave the compound; and the men, even though many of them were close relatives were forbidden to go near it — excepting one who did the marketing and another who kept watch at night. Daulatmasi was made chief cook for the colony with, some of the women to help her.

The heart of the place was a shy seventeen-year-old girl, Mehera Jehangir Irani. Her mother had been a devotee of Babajan before she came to Baba and never let pass an opportunity of taking Mehera and her other daughter Freni to have his darshan.

Mehera first saw Baba when her mother took her and her sister to Sakori to have Maharaj's darshan. A niece of Maharaj took charge of the girls and showed them around the ashram. A young man came down the temple steps and passed on, and the girl told them that that was Merwanji, Maharaj's chief disciple.

Later on in the day Mehera saw him again. Maharaj was giving public darshan. She and her mother and sister bowed down to him and took their seats on the floor. Meherwan approached and walked round Maharaj with folded hands. Maharaj said something to Merwan and he went on out. Mehera was deeply impressed by the beauty which shone through his emaciated body and by his great reverence to his Master.

Mehera was at Sakori at the time of her sister's mar-

riage to Rustom Kaikhushru. Daulatmai went there to fetch her. When Daulatmai arrived at the ashram, she found that one of Mehera's knees had become swollen and she limped. She said that she had not knocked it or fallen. Upasni was disinclined to let her go and told Daulatmai to leave the girl with him. He said that Mehera was happy at the ashram and it would not look nice for her to be limping about at the wedding.

Daulatmai returned to 'Nagar. At some point Baba asked her didn't she have two daughters. She said, yes, and explained about Maharaj's keeping the other one, Mehera, at Sakori. Baba told her to go back to Maharaj, and if he was still unwilling to let Mehera come, say to him that she had come to fetch her daughter. This was a test for Daulatmai — whether she put Maharaj or Baba first. She was very nervous as she approached the ashram, but found Maharaj happy to let Mehera go.

With one daughter settled Daulatmai and the women relatives were discussing Mehera's marriage. The matter was brought to Baba who said that it was for her to decide. She said she did not wish to marry. Baba said to them, 'There, you have your answer; now let it not be mentioned again.'

Daulatmai accepted Baba's word, and she and Mehera were among the first to go and live at the ashram. Mehera was instructed to meditate on God for half an hour every day and to write the name Yezdan for one hour. Daulatmai made shirts for the boys.

Some months passed, and the number of women had increased. Now it happened that after some time Daulatmasi had to go to Poona because Jamshed, Baba's brother (whom she had adopted) was ill.

Baba called the women together and asked would one of them be capable of taking over Daulatmasi's job. 'If you serve and obey orders,' he said, 'only then will I allow you to stay on here, only then will there be some sense and beauty in your staying. Otherwise you cannot stay. I don't want to keep women here, but because I know that you all love to be near me I am giving you the opportunity to serve me by cooking for us all.' Naja later recalled the incident. 'We were taken

completely by surprise, doubting whether we would be able to do it without Daulatmasi to direct us. Mehera prodded me and urged, “Why don’t you say Yes? We will all help you.” It all seemed to hinge on my Yes. I had had absolutely no experience in cooking for large numbers — and then there would be Baba’s sudden moods to cope with when anything went wrong. In those days, such were Baba’s moods that anything within reach he would throw out. Also, I was the youngest, being only fifteen years. But the important thing was to obey Mehera’s wish — so I stepped forward and said something like “I will do my best, Baba.” Baba seemed to be very pleased with this and patted me and said he would help me. And cooking was my lot till the very end.’

At fifteen years Naja had grown into a rose of a woman protected by the thorns of a multilingual wit. It has been said that only Baba’s sister Mani, when she grew up, could equal her in invective. This boldness of Naja’s in offering to take up the task gave her it would seem a particular privilege of approach to Baba, and on an occasion when the turbulence of his mood drove all the others behind shut doors and he strode away from the place, she ran after him and pleaded with him to come back.

But Mehera was kept aloof. At one time even the other women were given orders not to touch her. She was to Baba what Sita was to Rama, Radha to Krishna and Mary to Jesus — the most beloved of the eternal Beloved. In her simple and gentle urging of Naja and in Naja’s response, Mehera’s regality was established and the other women knew she was their queen.

33. Meherabad — I (contd.)

DURING a talk on the unseen and unfelt spiritual working of the Master, Baba explained: The food we eat is reduced to juices and then turned into blood. We know this, but we do not see or feel this process. Likewise when one becomes connected to the Guru, spiritual advancement goes on all the time, but one does not experience it, one is quite unconscious of advancement. Even if one is not connected with the Guru it can be spiritually beneficial to be in his company.

A young woman was brought to the hospital muttering and shouting, and was admitted. Baba went and sat and talked with her and her trouble left her. But Baba warned her father, who accompanied her, that if he pained her in any way, he would be painning him.

A blind man came for Baba's darshan and entertained his Lord with some choice bhajans.

On one of his inspections of the kitchens Baba found that the rice was not properly cooked and he slapped the cook, and then immediately slapped himself.

An old man on his way to Pandharpur came to the place. He had done the pilgrimage every year for forty-seven years. Baba told him to stay a few days with the mandali; then he blessed him and dismissed him.

The 'untouchables' and the Maratha (high caste) boys began singing bhajans together.

A kirtan was arranged for the villagers, but only a few came and Baba became angry, and had the small 'untouchable' temple which had been demolished and then re-erected, burnt to the ground. Baba told them that since they had no feelings of devotion there was no point in their coming any more for his darshan, or for the boys' attending school.

Arjun asked permission to go home. Baba reminded

him that he had said that he would stay four months. After some talk it was decided that Arjun should go home for a few days then rejoin Baba for four months — and during that period the subject of his going home should not be mentioned. Vishnu also wanted to go home, but Baba warned him that if he insisted on going there would be a disaster.

The parents of the boys came to Baba again, and begged that the boys be taken back. Baba told them that it was not the boys' fault that they had been sent away, but the parents,' because of their non-attendance at the bhajan-kirtan gatherings. They solemnly promised to be regular in attendance, and the boys were taken back.

One afternoon Baba sent word to Behram to enlist the help of some of the boys and level the ground around by the school. Behram sent back word that, he was shaving and as soon as he had finished he would do the work immediately. Baba gave him (and anyone else around) a lecture on obedience to the Guru. They should carry out any order of his immediately no matter what the circumstances, so that his word never went in vain. In the evening with a few of the mandali Baba went for a stroll in the village and came to Baburao Talati's house and they were brought in and given tea.

Ajoba (G. I. Pawar) for some time had the duty of reading to Baba from the New Testament. Once Baba said: Whatever Christ said was true. The time for his reappearance is near at hand, and you will know who I am.

Towards the end of May, Baba with the teachers and most of the mandali took the boys on an all-day picnic, walking to 'Nagar and taking the train to Visapur.

On account of his being so well known now Baba dressed in English clothes for he did not want the holiday spoilt by people approaching him for his darshan. (This was the first time he went out incognito.) He looked an entirely different person; but even so, some recognized him because of the all-loving attention he

gave the boys.

Leaving the train they walked to the lake and after a hearty meal they got taken over the hydro works.

Here there is a jail, and Baba took the occasion to tell the boys about law and Universal Law. 'The prisoners there,' he said, 'suffer because they have broken the law of the land and society. Imagine then what are the sufferings of those who transgress the law of God and Nature. The best way of avoiding that punishment is to surrender oneself wholly to the Sadguru and follow his instructions to the letter.'

One evening Arjun came late to dinner. Baba said, 'I entreat you with folded hands to come to meals on time. I don't mind less work done but punctuality must be strictly observed.'

Some of the mandali were found idle and Baba was angry with them, but they said there was nothing particular to do, or if there was they didn't know about it. They suggested that Baba list the jobs to be done every day. He agreed, and getting paper and pencil had the points noted:

1. Keeping the area around the school swept and clean. Filling up any pot-holes.
2. Spreading cow dung over the earth floor under the mandap.
3. Bathing the hospital patients with hot water.
4. Washing the whole of the hospital and dispensary floors.

After this, Baba and the mandali played football.

In the evening Baba took the lead in the bhajans, and everyone noted how serene was the atmosphere he created.

Thursday being Guru-day there were great crowds from 'Nagar and surrounding villages, but Baba as well as doing his regular rounds of inspection greeted and spoke to many.

Baba examined the infant classes. Those who were progressing were put into a higher class. The teachers were asked to attend their charges more zealously. Baba

also, with Mohan and Chanji's assistance, examined the higher classes. As part of the education of the older boys a Court of Justice was held. Cases of bad conduct, negligence and quarrelling were brought before it, charged, examined and defended, and the guilty reprimanded.

For four months now, except for an occasional feast, the mandali had been having dal-rice twice a day, and they were finding it too monotonous so they were now given dinner of bread and vegetables; and this continued for some time.

Abdurrehman was coming so frequently and entertaining Baba and the mandali with his fine ghazal-singing that it seemed he was spending almost, as much time at the ashram as in Lonavla.

There was a tea-party at Jagirdar Master's place and Baba addressed the people. He said, 'On the tearing asunder of the mental curtain of one belonging to any religion, the same One God is seen. The differences and varieties of experience leading up to that are only to do with the means adopted or the religion embraced.' Commenting on the Guru-disciple relationship he said, 'If the Guru asks one to do something, and then in the middle of his doing reprimands him for doing it, the disciple, instead of answering back, "You told me to do it," should say, "I was in error, I did not understand properly. Please forgive me."'

Baba told the mandali that from 15th June he would be observing silence.

One evening after bhajans Baba asked the dozen stoutest of the mandali to press his body and limbs with all their weight. This went on for fifteen to twenty minutes and the men were bathed in sweat, but he was in no way affected. A similar thing, it may be remembered, had occurred in the Manzil-e-Meem, but that was more, it seemed, in the nature of a game — he pitting himself against all the companions in a trial of strength. Now it seemed to be due rather to spiritual or inner processes.

To another tea-party, the invitation came from the

host's six-year-old daughter. Baba found her grave, halting words of welcome irresistible and caressed her.

Baba again mentioned silence. He said he would not speak for one year, and all who stuck to him through that period would be greatly benefited. He gave them many examples of devotees who had held on to their Gurus with the tenacity of living faith. Then he told them a little story.

A sadhu once began teaching a man spiritual lore, but after some years found no response to his efforts. So he thought he would work with an animal; but he found it was even more hopeless — as he should have expected. So he thought he'd try the vegetable kingdom, and selected a fine tree, tall-growing, strong with aspiration — but, of course it was more hopeless than the animal. As a last resort he started teaching a stone. But after all a stone is a stone whether it be a mountain or a diamond or a pebble, and cannot retain anything. In desperation he seized the stone and struck his head with it as hard as he could, and the blow killed him. But the stone got KNOWLEDGE at the same time.

The mandali could not make head or tail of the story. Then Baba added, 'If you want Realization stick to the Guru, become a stone and *remain where you are.*'

One afternoon after classes Kishan Master was not to be found. Baba told someone to search for him. He did, but with no result. His bedding and clothes were in place, so it could not be that he had gone away somewhere. And anyway, only a few days ago Baba had asked him whether he would like to go home for a few days to see his father, but he had declined the offer. Baba ordered everyone to search. Two or three went to the village, others combed the dry nullas or creek-beds. Behramji got a bicycle and went to the 'Nagar railway station. Some looked in all the surrounding wells. The search was abandoned; sooner or later he would turn up. At nine thirty that night Kishan suddenly appeared before Baba, quite unknowing of the turmoil he had created. Baba asked him where he had been all day. He said, 'Asleep.' Baba said, 'But your bed was not slept

in.' He said, 'No, I slept in the unused tank. Baba asked him to explain. Kishan said, 'For the last five or six nights I have not slept well because of ear-ache. So after I had dismissed my class this afternoon, and feeling very drowsy I retired to the disused tank where it was nice and quiet, and had a good sleep.'

Among the Sunday visitors one day were some members of the Sattha family, local Parsis. One of the boys was noticeable in white khadi or home-spun Gandhi cap. Later he joined the Congress Party and went into politics.

Mohan was allowed to return to college to continue his Senior B.A. course. Behram, who had been unwell for some time, was sent to Bombay for advice and treatment. Bal, who cooked for the Hindu mandali, went home for a few days to be with his mother who was ill.

In distributing caps that Behram had brought from Bombay for the boys, Baba again mentioned the Silence he intended to keep and asked all the boys to stick to him. Then he led them for awhile in their bhajans which had greatly improved under Arjun's direction.

Baba and some of the mandali went to tea to a Mr. Shahane's place. After general talk Baba said, 'One should think twice before inviting a fakir to one's house. Of course, if he was a perfect fakir no harm could come of it, but if he was someone on the planes, then one could never tell what might come of it.' Baba then told a little story to illustrate this. 'A man once invited a fakir to a grand banquet. Hundreds of places were set in the high-ceilinged and well-decorated hall. The fakir arrived just before the first of the guests and asked for the meal to be served straight away. Now the host was a man of experience and knew that it could be dangerous to thwart such a man, and so he ordered some dishes to be brought. But the fakir finished them off in no time and asked for more. More was brought — more and more. Vessel after vessel was brought and taken back empty — until there was not enough left over to feed the cats.'

On 20th June the first Westerner, Louis Charles Nelhams, came to Baba. He had been to the Himalayas

where he was made welcome by the monks of the Ramakrishna Math, who however offered only the traditional Hindu spiritual framework so he was drawn to wander on, and eventually arrived at Meherabad. He had Baba's darshan and wished to stay and serve, and was admitted into the mandali.

Baba reproached Vishwanath for not being punctual in his puja duties. 'Everything in its time and place,' he said; 'and punctuality has its importance. The dirty-hole in the bottom is because of the mouth in the beautiful face. They are both parts of the one body. I have to look after both good and bad.'

Baba and all the mandali not on duty were invited to dinner by the Arangaon police patil Maroti. A number of places were set in the outer courtyard for untouchables. Seeing this, Baba came down from the seat of honour prepared for him, and ate with them. After the meal he accompanied them to their section of the village and visited many of their huts. He also promised to give them some money towards a dharmshala they were building. He then went on to the house where the Christian teachers at the ashram were staying. On the wall was a picture of Christ and the Twelve with the inscription, 'I have selected and appointed you.' Baba bade them remember what he, from time to time, had told them about himself and his Circle. They returned to the ashram and in the evening Abdurrehman sang a few ghazals before they all retired.

Through the night there was heavy rain.

Baba told Arjun to look after his health because the success of the school depended upon him.

A boy from another place came to the ashram seeking employment. As there was no work for him Baba gave him five rupees for his immediate needs.

Another boy who had become stranded was given his fare home which was half way to Poona.

Baba made out a list of some twenty of the older boys in the ashram and gave it to Arjun with instructions to ask their parents to find brides for them, with the stipulation that the marriage ceremonies must be performed in Arangaon.

Two boys were reported for fighting. After listening to the stories of each boy and calling witnesses, it was established who had struck the first blow, and the boy admitted it. Baba asked Arjun and the others of the mandali what the punishment should be. One said the boy should be beaten, another that he should be made to stand outside in disgrace for half an hour, another said he should be pardoned. Finally Baba said that he should bow down to every boy in the school and warned the boy that if he offended again he would be expelled from the school.

Despite the doctor's treatment and Pendu's careful nursing, a Hindu patient died. Baba told the Hindu mandali to have him cremated according to their rites; and he himself attended the funeral.

A blind Hindu accompanied by a small Mohammedan boy came to the ashram and entertained Baba with his bhajans and ghazals.

There was an all-day sports program. There were foot races, high jumps, slow bicycle races (the winner being the last over the finishing line), gunny-sack races, tug of war and donkey races — the last being won by Baba himself. There was a couple of hours' lunch break and the program was resumed and went on till six o'clock. The day being Thursday (Guru-day) the usual crowds for darshan greatly swelled the spectators. Baba had had a large notice-board put up announcing his Silence for one year, beginning from 10th July, when he would not talk to anyone under any circumstances. From the 1st to the 9th he would stop seeing the general public and would devote himself entirely to instructions to the mandali and the colony. Some of the mandali thought that Baba would not be able to prevent some sound escaping his lips, especially when he felt like rebuking one of them; and told him he should perhaps keep a handkerchief tied over his mouth to remind him not to make a sound. But he told them he would look after that.

Examinations of both sections of the school were held under Baba's supervision, and the results were satisfactory.

Seven hundred and fifty boys and teachers from the Rashtriya School in 'Nagar came for Baba's darshan and to sing to him.

Baba asked Rustomji to purchase some hand mills for himself and some of the mandali to grind their flour.

The school room was gaily decorated with flowers and bunting for the distribution of the school and sports prizes. For his winning of the donkey race Baba was garlanded. Then he gave out the other prizes.

During the bhajans one evening information was brought that someone had been beaten and robbed between the colony and the city. Baba told the mandali to get sticks and go with him. After some two miles they came upon some scattered vegetables and other marks of violence, but the robbers had vanished and the victim was nowhere to be seen. The searchers returned to the ashram. Then it was noticed that Anna had not come home from marketing. Presently the police patil from Arangaon came after having examined the spot, and showed Baba a diary which he had found near the vegetables, and Baba said it was Anna's. Baba set off again with two or three mandali and walked to the railway station and there took a tonga to Anna's house where they found him with head and face bandaged. Someone with a car had picked him up and taken him to the hospital. Baba reassured his family and then took him back to the ashram, arriving there about three o'clock in the morning.

It was brought to Baba's notice that some of the Harijan families were in great need of help, and he promised them a monthly ration of grain and other food-stuffs.

The Mahars in the village invited Baba and mandali to tea, and went and brought them in procession accompanied by music.

Great crowds came out to the ashram on 30th June — the eve, as far as the public was concerned, of his Silence.

Rustomji, Behramji, Nelhams, Mohan, Arjun, Vishnu, Maroti Patil, Babu Ghaiti and Babu Brahmin were given set periods of flour-grinding every day. Baba

also ground for one hour every day.

Anna recovered from his injuries and was told to sleep in the ashram.

Baba held a meeting of all the mandali and explained to each his duties for the next year.

Burjorji, Kondiram, Naval, Chanji, and Barsoap came on the eighth.

Besides the instructions and advice given individually, general orders were posted up on the school wall for common guidance. Behramji and Rustomji were appointed superintendent and vice-superintendent in charge of all the activities in the colony. Arjun was given the management of the school and of the conduct and condition of the boys. Gustadji was put in charge of all supplies and stores, and Padri was made responsible for the hospital and dispensary. All five were given certain hours when they could see Baba and present any problems to him. All others were forbidden to speak to him unless he indicated by signs or writing that they should. Baba increased his grinding time to two hours. The parents and guardians of the boys were called, and he repeated to them his decision to go into silence for a year. He impressed upon them the importance of letting their boys remain at school for at least the next twelve months, and they should create no obstacles to regular attendance. Baba spoke at length, and at the end they willingly consented not to allow any circumstances to keep their boys away from school for one year. Before retiring Baba spoke once more to the mandali and they, understanding that this would be the last time he spoke to them, listened with the greatest attention to his golden words. He said, 'Think of others more than of yourselves; use up your bodies in service. This is absolutely necessary if you want to realize God.'

Then he hinted that one of the reasons for his going into silence was the near passing of Babajan when he would have to assume a great spiritual burden. (Since Babajan did not drop her body for another six years, he was obviously not speaking of her physical death but of her withdrawal from the Avataric Scene.) He said that soon there would be widespread communal fighting

especially in India, world war and natural disasters which would take tens of millions of lives. But then there would be a long season of peace and tranquillity.

As he was leaving he said, 'Always carry a lantern when you go out or about at night.' Soon after, as if to confirm his advice, a large snake was found in the compound,

The next morning, 10th July, 1925, Baba came out of the zhopdi at his usual time of five o'clock, and after his bath went towards the mandali with a slate and pencil in his hand, and with writing and by signs greeted them and inquired after their health and had they slept well.

IT WAS WITH SLATE AND PENCIL AND BY EXPRESSIVE GESTURES THAT BABA NOW COMMUNICATED. (LATER ON HE HAD THE ENGLISH ALPHABET AND THE NUMERALS ONE TO TEN PAINTED ON A SMALL PIECE OF BOARD, AND, FORMED WORDS AND SENTENCES BY POINTING TO THEM.)

The work went on as before. The mandali became proficient in reading Baba's abbreviated writing and signs. Baba continued his daily detailed inspections, gave interviews, continued his book-writing, and ground flour for two hours every day.

Football was now played in the evenings by the mandali with Baba sometimes joining in and, on one occasion when there had been heavy rain, in the general mud bath. In one game he sprained his ankle and had to be helped off the field. For another period they played cricket in the mornings before the school opened.

Baba spent much time with the boys, playing with them, scolding, patting and praising.

It was brought to Baba's notice that some of the mandali had engaged in underhand dealings, and Baba severely took them to task, and then gave a short lecture on 'Truth and Fair Dealings' saying that death was better than telling a lie for one's own gain or benefit.

After bhajans one evening Baba and the mandali had just settled down to hear some ghazal singing on records when word was brought that one of the patients in the

hospital had slipped away. Baba ordered all out to search, and then said, 'God is my enemy — He cannot bear to see me enjoying myself sometimes even for a little while.'

Arjun reported serious inattention to lessons among a section of the boys and general bad behaviour. Baba ordered the classes concerned to be closed down, but some provision would be made for the good pupils. The worst of the boys somehow or other came together and went to Baba and offered to forgo their recreation periods and sports programs and give their full attention to study if Baba would reconsider his order to close their class down.

Baba's slate and pencil bearer, Bal, slept in one morning and so was not on hand, and Baba gave his office to another, but later on reinstated Bal.

The Thursday tea-parties at Shahane's house and Baba's discourses continued.

The diet of the mandali was now dal and rice for dinner and vegetables and bread for supper.

'Work yourselves to death for the next year or two,' Baba told them, 'and a good fruit will await you.'

Some swings were put up in the school ground and Baba swung the small children.

Pleader continued his Sunday afternoon recitals of the Puranas. His simple clear way of bringing home the divine Truths through stories appealed to the boys. At the close, Baba in order to test them, asked different ones to repeat what they had heard, and what they said showed that they had been listening attentively — at which all the rest clapped.

A few girls came to the school. They were put into the Maratha boy's section. Marathi was the only subject taught them. After awhile, in one of his daily inspections it was pointed out to Baba that it was inadvisable to have boys and girls, even though young, together in the one class; and he ordered a separate room to be built for the girls.

One evening at supper the bread ran short and Baba angrily got up from the table and walked away up the road. Bal ran after him with his slate and pencil and

Arjun and Behram followed and they persuaded him to come back.

On the 27th Nelhams passed away, and his body after being saluted by Baba was taken to 'Nagar and given a Christian burial. Baba said that Nelhams had put away his gross body but his mind was still living and very soon this mind would cover itself with another form and would come quickly to him.

Arjun Master was given four days' leave, and the boys all lined up along the railway line and cheered him as the train passed.

With the beginning of his Silence Baba began writing from six to eight-thirty every morning in the zhopdi. None was allowed to approach him during that time. This writing was continued on and off in various places at different times during his stay at Meherabad. For some time it was not divulged that he was writing a book which would be the Book of Books and reveal for the first time many secrets of the Path of Realization.

A reading from Upasni Maharaj's book of lectures, 'Sai-Vak-Sudha,' was given and Baba explained passages of it.

A fakir from Ajmer in the north came, and Baba asked him to fast for a day, repeat the five Mohammedan prayers and repeat the Name of the Almighty five hundred times.

Rustom Masa, Baba's maternal uncle, came from Poona where he had been working under Baba's orders, and rejoined the resident mandali; Baba gave him the job of night-watchman — the same job he had had at Manzil-e-Meem.

A goat was run over by the train and killed. Some *Mahars* (untouchables) came and took it away. When Baba heard of it he set off with two or three of the mandali and overtook them outside one of their huts. There were four of them. He made them throw away the animal and swear never to think of eating dead meat again. With their so swearing, Baba took them back to the ashram and gave them as much as they could eat of fresh wholesome food.

The untouchable and Maratha boys were examined

and their progress was found satisfactory. Baba gave a salary rise of one rupee to all the teachers.

The segregation of the untouchables ended with Marathas sharing the same classrooms. Soon, with the increasing number of students the accommodation was inadequate and Baba ordered a larger building to be built — himself turning the first spade of earth for the foundations.

Biculla, the leading bhajankari of Kasba Peth, came to have Baba's darshan and to entertain him. During his performance there was sudden rain. Presently Baba leaned over to Gulmai and said, 'Rustom has fallen.' And then asking generally, 'Why isn't Behram here?' went out into the rain — presumably to look for him — and came back drenched.

At the same time, some miles the other side of 'Nagar, Rustom was driving a passenger bus belonging to his father. There was a heavy downpour, but he drove on till the road became submerged, and then stopped on the edge of a culvert across which the water was racing. After awhile he thought he would get down and explore the road ahead, but on doing so his foot slipped and he fell with a cry, 'Baba!' into the torrent. He managed, however, to catch hold of the mudguard, and two or three of the passengers hauled him back into the bus.

On the 16th August Tajuddin Baba dropped his body. He was the first of the Five Perfect Masters to do so. Baba discussed with the mandali how to mark that glorious Event. It was decided finally to fast for twenty-four hours and then put flower petals on Tajuddin's photo and break their fast with jalebis — which would also be distributed to the school children. In his recitation that afternoon Pleader skilfully brought in Tajuddin Baba's passing.

Baba advised his companions that from 1st September he would fast completely and stay in the zhopdi most of the time.

For a time the mandali played cricket mornings and evenings, with Baba joining in sometimes.

During one of the after-supper talks Baba touched

on marriage. He said that if one could lead a life of continence, that was best, for marriage created many subtle bindings. But if one could not conquer desire, then marriage was the only alternative; but the partners must remain strictly faithful to each other.

Chanji, Naoroji, Ramjoo and Khodadad came home to the ashram from their outstations for a few days.

One evening after supper Baba touched on Lord Jesus. He said that Christ had not only survived the crucifixion but had come to India where he wandered for a long time and eventually was buried in Kashmir and the exact spot is still pointed out.

By the end of August the school had been open for six months, but it was found that some of the boys when they went home ate meat. Baba told Arjun not to give them their daily meal; only their clothes and books were to remain free. They were also not allowed to attend bhajans nor pay their respects to Baba. But the withholding of the food only lasted a few days. Commenting on the matter Baba said, 'Kabir and Nanak tried to improve the lot of these people but they remained backward.'

A poor Mohammedan from Hyderabad, Deccan, came and asked Behram for food. Talking with him Behram found that he seemed well-versed in qwaali, and after he had a good meal Baba asked him to sing two or three ghazals. Baba enjoyed his singing and gave him a handsome present and sent him on his way.

A plan was now made to build a twenty by thirty foot dharmshala of corrugated iron sheeting on the north side of the well on the Dhond road for visitors from outstations and those passing through.

The parents of the boys from whom the meals were withheld trooped in before Baba and begged that the meals be continued. Baba made them swear with their hands on their throats never to cook and eat eggs, dried fish or any kind of meat. Then he told them that those who were sincere in their oaths should come next Thursday and the men would each be given a dhotar, and the women each a sari. Baba distributed sweets all round.

The boys now were being bathed twice a month and having their heads shaved.

On Pendu's birthday the mandali were served with tea and pastry.

The Anant Chaturdashi (the concluding day of the Ganapati Festival) came round, and the divine Elephant was taken in procession with village music and with great enthusiasm immersed in a well — with Baba sitting under a tree enjoying the fun. After supper they played atya-patya till after ten o'clock.

On 4th September a new dormitory for the mandali, forty by twenty feet with a galvanized iron roof and sheeting, was opened and named *Makan-e-Khas*.

Baba came to know that some of the Arangaon people were planning to perform a vulgar form of comedy that night. He went and talked with them, patiently explaining that such performances had a disastrous effect on the young boys and womenfolk. He paid them ten rupees to cover the expenses incurred. He also gave one hundred and thirty rupees to build a shelter for the children for their bhajan performances.

A young Maratha of twenty-three or twenty-four years named Rama Bhiera came to Baba and asked to be taken into the school. He was from a village near Kopargaon, and upon his asking his father to have him taught Marathi to the extent that he could read the Rameshwari, he had replied that his son's place was on the farm not in the schoolroom. Baba had him fed and then changed his name to Bholaram, enrolled him and started straight away to teach him the alphabet. Baba told the mandali that whether the young man stayed or not he would make good in spite of his age.

In celebration of Asho Zoroaster's birthday the school and dispensary were closed. Poems in praise of him were sung and Baba explained that he was a great spiritual Master like Christ and Mohammed. At this a great cheer went, up: Zoroaster Maharaj Ki Jai! Tea and jalebis and bhajyas were served liberally. When Baba was welcoming Yashwantrao from Sakori and Sadashiv Patil from Poona, Arjun said something in a loud tone and Baba struck him a blow which felled him to the ground. (It will

be remembered that Arjun had the body of a wrestler.) The whole assemblage became silent. Baba then said that the moment of the blow was the exact time of Zoroaster's down-coming. No one could understand this saying, but soon the festive atmosphere came back.

Two telis or oil-sellers came to Baba. They said that their annual feast had come round and it was the turn of one of them to have it at his house, but because of Baba's wish that they should not eat meat, and their vow of abstention, they had decided not to kill a goat, as was usual for this feast, with the result that some of their friends had declined the invitation. Taking all the mandali with him, Baba went to the village. He sent Rustomji to talk to those who had refused the meatless feast, but they would not listen. So Baba and the mandali ate a little of the food prepared and returned to the ashram. As they walked along Baba said, 'In spite of their stubbornness I like these people. But their lot must be improved; they must be freed from their ignorance.' Baba then asked the mandali to go back the following day and talk to them. He told them never to use violence with such people no matter how provocative they were.

Accordingly, first thing in the morning Rustom and all the mandali went to the village and talked with the people concerned and prevailed on them to come to Baba. By the time they got to Baba's zhopdi there were sixty or seventy of them all talking loudly at once. Baba talked to them again, and after some time the ringleaders apologised and asked to be forgiven. Whereupon, much to their confusion, Baba gave each of them a turban (a very high mark of regard among these men) and a dhottar. It rained heavily in the night, and Baba said in the morning that it was a sign that the apologies had been sincere and were acceptable.

It was reported that some of the villagers who had promised not to put on the vulgar comedy, had gone to a similar performance in another village. Baba said that because of a few, the whole village should not be punished.

On 20th September the new dharmshala was opened. The school and dispensary were closed for the afternoon.

Baba asked Waman the tailor to give the opening address. Waman had an elephant's body and a sparrow's tongue and the shyness of a small child among strangers. He stood there perspiring and clasping and unclasping his hands, and what finally came out of his mouth was, 'I thank you, Baba, for opening this dharmsala. Baba was in fits of loving laughter. He signed to Vishnu to make the speech, which he did in flowing Marathi. Jalebis and pastries with tea were served, some bhajans sung and the visitors went home, and the mandali moved into their new place, Makan-e-Khas.

In one of the Thursday crowds was a young woman apparently mad. Baba had her put in the hospital and, as always with these afflicted people, fed her with his own hands.

One evening there were two different kirtans — from four to six-thirty, and from seven to ten.

The festival of Dasserah came round (September 27th) and was celebrated in a grand way. At the earnest request of the mandali Baba allowed them to bathe him in a room they had prepared. Fragrant oils were rubbed into his body and then washed off with scented soap and water. Then he dressed in fresh clothes and sat on a richly decorated seat. Arti and puja were performed with much fervour. Pleader explained the origin and importance of the great Hindu holiday. Baba gave sweets to all with his own hands, and the morning program ended. After dinner Baba ground flour for two hours as usual. In the afternoon the photos of Maharaj, Sai Baba and Baba were taken in procession in decorated palanquin with village music, singing and dancing. They had gone up the road some distance when the rain clouds banked up and Baba sent word for them to return quickly. When the rain ceased, arti was again performed and more sweets given out, and Baba asked them all to go home before it rained again. Baba had said that there would not be any fireworks at night, but Kishan Master lit some and got his hand burnt. Baba applied oil to it and told him that that was the result of not listening to him.

After one of his morning rounds of inspection Baba

was sitting at the entrance of the makan (the mandali's new quarters) in a cheerful mood and had another of his name-changing whims: Rustom Masa became Major; Khodadad, Sailor; Eruchshaw, Pesotam; Pawar, Ajoba.

Rustom became the father of a second son and asked Baba's permission to spend fifty rupees on a treat for the mandali. Baba asked them what they wanted. The majority voted for laddoos, chuda, bhajis, tea and pan and a singing party to which the public could be invited. The singing was not good. One of the visitors, a Mohammedan, started dancing and jumping about as though overcome with emotion, and Baba threatened him and he left. Baba then felt great pain all over his body because of his resisting striking the fellow, and had some of the strongest of the mandali press his limbs and body for a good fifteen minutes. After supper he joined in a vigorous game of atya-patya till ten o'clock.

Baba sent for Arjun and told him that he was very dissatisfied with his management of the school and unless he did his job better Baba would not come down to them all again. Later all the mandali were summoned and Baba put it to them whether or not they should continue with the institutions — for none of them followed his instructions to the letter. After a couple of hours' discussion and no conclusions arrived at, they all marched off to Shahane's place where the Thursday tea-parties had for some time been resumed; and the mandali thought the matter ended. But when they were going to bed one of them saw Baba walking away from the place, and raising the alarm rushed after him. But he left the road and took a sweep across the fields and arrived back before them and went straight to the zhopdi. The next morning he greeted them as usual, inquiring after their health and sleep. But later on hearing that some of them had taken extra sweets he ordered all activities to stop and walked away again and sat down under a tree. When the mandali approached he waved them back.

God-Man's Silence had at no time given the impression of voicelessness; the Silence itself spoke, and only

a casual visitor noticed that he was not speaking but that one of the mandali was speaking for him. It was a dynamic Silence invested with words according to the requirements of the situation. But the silence that now fell upon the ashram was that of arrested action; no one spoke and no one moved but remained dumb and rooted, within the boundary of his helplessness. Baba remained aloof till well into the afternoon when he sent a message by his slate-bearer that everyone should take up his work again. Then he sent another message that he was going away alone, and everyone should continue as usual during his absence. At this the ashram's silence was broken and the mandali and the boys and the teachers went to him in a body and begged him to return, and he came back with them. This was at the beginning of October.

A new seat was made for Baba under one of the neem trees by the roadside opposite the zhopdi. It was a large table with a cupboard at one end just big enough to sit in, while the rest of the table-top made a little veranda to come out on to.

Baba's mother came for two or three days. She now had a new pride and bearing: her 'Meroke' (her pet name for Baba) was a great man. Look at the crowds of people who came to him. She had only one fault to find: He should make the mandali do all the fasting, instead of doing it himself.

Baba attended a bhajan session in the 'untouchable' colony. Two days later he came to hear that a dead bullock had been dragged in and made a feast of. Baba immediately ordered all the boys of that area to pack off home. But the parents of the dismissed boys came and told Baba that no one who had taken the Oath had participated in the meal, and he readmitted the boys. Then with two or three mandali he went into the village and took down the names of those who had eaten the flesh. The following day these came and asked that their sin be forgiven. Baba forgave them, but told them not to repeat this offence against their own well-being. If an animal died it was to be taken and buried outside the village. He promised them five rupees for

any such burial to compensate for the loss of the beast's skin.

Tea with sweets and bhajis was taken at Ramabhai Mali's house, after which the party went on to Sitaram's place for a dinner celebrating the anniversary of Sant Buaji's samadhi near the well.

Baba declared that he intended fasting on water and weak, milkless tea for an indefinite period, and asked some forty of the mandali to fast for twenty-four hours. He also said that although he would continue supervising all the affairs as usual he would not be able to play with them as much as he had in the past. All were warned not to come near his seat when he was there. He now left the zhopdi and spent his nights at his new 'Gadi' or seat under the table. He continued his daily supervision of the ashram's activities and also his share of flour-grinding.

A man was introduced to Baba as a Mamlatdar and M. A. Baba said, 'I have little regard for such things. In spite of your attainments you are still an ignorant man.' The man did not take offence but began to weep in acknowledgement of the truth of what Baba said.

Diwali began on 17th October, and after having fasted for six days Baba took a little food. He explained to the mandali that the particular work he had been doing required him to breathe in the opposite way to which a man usually breathes, and an empty stomach was a great help for such work.

Baba was again bathed — this time by the women devotees and many visitors of different classes and castes as well as by the mandali; after which arti and puja were performed.

In the afternoon Baba called the mandali together and divided them into three groups with a new fasting program. Those in the first group were to fast on water and weak tea for three months; the second to fast for twenty-four hours every Thursday and Sunday; and the third to abstain from food and water on Thursdays only. After this they played atya-patya with Baba joining in. In the evening, instead of bhajan the boys let off the fireworks which Gulmai had brought for them, and they

all skipped and jumped and yelled till the last little flame flickered out. After supper little lectures were given by some dozen of the mandali and at the end Baba awarded marks of merit.

After nine months of wearing a beard Baba was shaved by the Manzil-e-Meem barber Gangaram nicknamed Khan Mogul, who had come again to see him.

The new residential quarters for the Director of Education (Arjun) were occupied by him after the due ceremonies of occupation.

Sadashiv Patil and his family from Poona and many others from the 'early days,' came for darshan.

Gustadji had been provided with a whistle to blow if danger approached; and each of the mandali was given a stout stick to use if necessary. In the dead of one night Gustadji blew the whistle and the mandali all piled out ready for anything less than an armed invasion. But it was found to have been caused by one of the women devotees who had been allowed to stay on, screaming when a rat ran over her. For awhile the men mumbled about in the dark until the chill of the night and the pull of sleep drew them back to their beds.

Two school inspectors who after taking darshan were shown the school were greatly impressed by what was being accomplished.

Now it seemed that the faith of the people was being supported by many material blessings which flowed from God-Man's ever-abundant beneficence — and so the crowds continued to increase.

Baba was given another ceremonial bath — the occasion being Kartiki Ekadashi. In this men and women from outside were allowed to join in.

Baba was often seen moving about during the night. He was now doing his writing in one of the schoolrooms. He spoke of having charts of the spiritual Planes done.

A young man came to Baba to question his knowledge of astrology. Baba patiently answered all his questions and then told him that it was dangerous to try to sound the depths of a Master.

After many requests to open a flower-stall on the

roadside on Thursdays and Sundays, Baba permitted Rambhai Mali to do so.

Baba asked the mandali one evening to dress in fancy-dress, and he would give prizes for the best costume and acting.

A party of rich men came for darshan. They were so impressed by Baba and what he was doing that they wanted to help financially. But he said. 'I am a poor one; what have I to do with money, God is enough for us.'

Because of the increasing number of in-patients, the Girls School was shifted to the outskirts of the village and the place it had occupied added to the hospital.

Rustom was given new family quarters; but unlike Arjun, who was a Hindu and enjoyed ceremony, Rustom, being a Parsi, held it of no account. Instead, with Baba's permission, he had a tea-party for all with plenty of cakes and sweets.

At one time there was a great scarcity of rain and it seemed that the crops would all fail. Baba went and lit the dhuni and after some time it began raining and continued for fifteen hours.

Behramji's brother Khodadmurad had been told by Baba never to go to Poona without first obtaining his permission. For a long time he remembered this warning. Then circumstance so came about that he went, and the car he was in had a head-on collision with another car, smashing the windscreen. No one in either vehicle was hurt except Khodadmurad whose throat was badly gashed. When he came out of hospital he went to Baba and acknowledged his fault and begged forgiveness.

The school was closed half day and the mandali were asked to compose verses about the dhuni. They were judged that evening by Baba.

The rain was accompanied by bleak winds, and Baba gave everyone a quinine tablet. The makan or mandali's dormitory leaked so badly that Baba had the mandali sleep in one of the schoolrooms.

On one of the evenings when the mandali were sitting with Baba by the dhuni, he told them, as he had many

times earlier, never to leave him. He said, 'The dreadful time when I will be laid up in one place may come soon and most of you will be impatient to leave me even though I might continue asking, arguing and even pleading with you to stay. Try your best to stick with me and keep on repeating my name mentally and I will see to it that we all come through the difficult time.'

After he returned to Poona, Sadashiv Patil had kept himself aloof for some time, so Baba wrote asking him to come and see him the next Sunday. At the same time Sadashiv in Poona was writing to Baba excusing himself in his round about way for his absence. 'I have not been keeping well for some time,' he wrote, 'but at present am feeling much better, although I am still feeling very weak. I don't expect complete recovery without seeing you and so have decided to present myself at your service on Sunday next.'

The numbers of the poor and the blind in the dharmshala had greatly increased and Baba asked the superintendent to pay particular attention to their food.

Doctor, Ramjoo, Baily and Syed Saheb came for darshan. Syed Saheb brought a qwaal who, when called on to display his art, sang and played atrociously. Not being satisfied with injuring everybody's ears he then had the effrontery to ask Baba to give him 'the box' — meaning the harmonium case and the instrument. Syed Saheb was furious at this, having already paid him allotted fee. But Baba told him aside to let it be and the fellow would be taught a good lesson. When it was time for the visitors to leave, in the midst of the farewells Baba had the harmonium removed and the box presented to the 'qwaal'; but he did not pick it up and take it but asked for a coolie to carry it. At a sign from Baba two of the mandali stepped forward and making a show of its weight one lifted it on to the head of the other and he marched off toward the station, six miles away, with the man by his side. After a few hundred yards, Syed Saheb put the box down and said he could go no further. The fellow swore at him as though he were a coolie, but Syed Saheb refused to go any further; whereupon the fellow picked it up himself — but expecting the weight

of a heavy instrument and lifting only a light box, nearly fell over backwards. And Syed Saheb fell over with laughter.

One evening by the dhuni Baba asked the mandali to tell their dreams. Of those who told theirs two are repeated. Murlidhar said that in his dream a big plate heaped with all kinds of tasty food was offered him. He reached out his hand to take it, but the food changed into a large black snake. He ran, but the snake followed him, and he called on Baba to save him. At the repetitions of Baba's name the snake began turning in circles and gradually assumed the form of Krishna with his flute raised to his lips. The second dreamer, Rustomji, saw what he believed to be a complete manifestation of Brahman (God).

On Padri's birthday, 27th November, Baba garlanded him and kissed him. Later on at Shahane's place, after all had been served with tea and sweets, Savlaram, the blind bhajankari, praised the Lord who was seated before him, and with his own hands Baba gave him an expensive harmonium — such as one will hardly see nowadays.

A party of some thirty to forty came from Walki, a village a few miles beyond Arangaon, to sing to Baba. Some of the Poona mandali brought a noted singer, Piaroo Qwaal and his party. The business of the day was put aside; the school and dispensary were closed and the in-patients made comfortable elsewhere. The hospital hall was decorated with leaves and bunting and thick blankets were strewn on the earthen floor. The party arrived mid-morning and the midday meal was served early, and when that was finished Baba took his seat and the singers sat in front and to one side of him. The hall was packed, but there were more people sitting outside under the open windows than inside, for word of the famous singer had reached the general public.

The singer's tale of separation and complaint went on till mid-afternoon when tea was served, and after a short rest, the pleading and praise was resumed and went on till evening. And even then, the tale was not complete — for if it had been, the singer would have ceased

to be and he would have merged himself forever in the eternal Beloved.

Baba was well-pleased with the singing, and the mandali said it was the best they had ever heard. The singer and his band were given a good meal and then they left.

It was time to build a large meeting hall. Baba marked out an area of 96' x 66' between the school and the road, and turned the first sod of earth for the foundations.

It was near the end of November and a great cold settled down, and Baba looked over everyone's clothes and bedding, and those who needed extra things were given them. He told them all to keep their chests well covered. None, he said, must die for at least another eight months.

The mandali were told to discontinue their fasting.

A report from the village that a goat had died caused Baba to include the Mahar area in his evening round of inspection to see whether the goat had been buried. At night all the Mahars were summoned and Baba talked to them about clean living and the avoidance of meat-eating and dealing in dead animals.

It was reported that one of the villagers had struck a female member of his family. He was fetched and Baba warned him never again to strike one of the weaker sex and asked him to fast for twenty-four hours as a penance.

A party of some dozen wealthy Parsis from Bombay — the chief place of opposition — came and paid their respects to Baba and went back.

There was talk in the newspapers about Mahatma Gandhi looking for a Guru. Baba told the mandali that Gandhiji was much more advanced than he knew he was, and that in a few more lives he would become Self-realized. 'But,' Baba said, 'how much more fortunate are you who have found your Guru than he who is still seeking his.' He then explained some of the differences between a yogi, a wali and a Sadguru.

Sitaram Bua asked Baba's permission to open a stall to sell coconuts, gram, puffed rice, camphor and other

things. At the end of the first day, which happened to be a Thursday, with its usual crowds, Baba asked him how he had done and he said, very poorly. Baba bought a paper bag of puffed rice and distributed it amongst the mandali.

Besides Sitaram Bua's shop and the flower shop, a number of 'hotels,' where meals were served, started up, while of hawkers of all kinds there were dozens, and the place looked like a miniature bazaar. One day with the mandali not on duty Baba went round the hotels and they all ate a little food at each.

Baba with the mandali had supper by the stone tank on the hill. The food was prepared and sent up by the women. Because there was not sufficient food for some late-comers, Baba on his return had one of the women give Naja, the chief cook, a stroke with the cane. Behramji was taken to task because of some slight negligence of duty. Behram answered rather uncivilly and impolitely, but soon repented and gave Baba a written apology and repeated his oath of surrender.

A watch was stolen and Baba asked them all to be more careful with their things — nothing should be stolen from the place.

Pandoba asked permission to dine with a non-Hindu party. Baba gave it, but said that unless ordered otherwise by a Sadguru one should stick to one's religious observances.

The number of daily visitors was now between two hundred and three hundred, and on Thursdays and Sundays there were crowds; and irrespective of class, caste or creed Baba saw individually all those whose share it was to be seen that time by him; but he kept his time for writing, which then was from 8 a.m. to noon; and the mandali had strict orders not to allow anyone to disturb him during those hours.

There was an announcement in the newspapers of Mrs. Besant, and the coming of a World Teacher in the person of Krishnamurti with a circle of chosen apostles. Baba said it was all humbug. 'The Theosophists,' he said, 'including Besant Bai and Master Murti do not have even a smell of the Truth.'

Continuing, Baba said, 'It is said that the spirit of the World Teacher will manifest itself to the world through the medium of this boy, and the wire-puller of this show is supposed to be somewhere in the Himalayas! There is nothing but ice and stones and dust in the mountains and on the plains. The real Teachers like the Buddha, Krishna, Jesus and Zoroaster never kept themselves perched on some mountain peak or hid themselves in the jungle; they freely mingled with those they had come to save. In spite of their unimaginable exultation they came down to the lowest levels of men. Not a single spiritual Master ever required any vehicle save his own physical body. In truth, this false-note of the Theosophists in the eternal God-Man's Song of God and Man, is the result of the multifarious aspects of my work and my methods in clearing a path for my manifestation.'

At another time speaking about fake mahatmas and false mahapurushas, Baba remarked that one who, under the guise of a divine personality and spiritual guide, entertains ideas of acquiring wealth and women that rightly belong to another, such a hypocrite should be cut into two pieces and there would be no sin in doing so; on the contrary many devoted but simple men and women might be saved by so doing. Then Baba said, 'At present Gandhi is the best man among the unrealized millions throughout the world. In spite of being called a Mahatma by so many, he unreservedly admits that he is miles from the Truth. Realization is a very difficult achievement.'

One evening when they were sitting around the fire Baba told the mandali to be very careful not to show temper or express anger. 'Anger,' he said, 'as expressed by a Sadguru is of great benefit to the recipient, but an ordinary person greatly hurts himself by it. Don't hurt the feelings of anyone. To those who speak angrily, reply politely; and to one who persists in error, fall at his feet. Try always to curb anger. I am teaching you true asceticism. Listen to me; otherwise do what you like.'

'The worst thing is to be a hypocrite. Either one should remain a crow or become a swan; one should

not be a heron, which it is said is white on the outside and dirty black within.

‘Keep aloof from money and women that are not yours. Expect anything from me except those two things — or the ceaseless chain of birth and death will keep you enslaved continuously.’

A sadhu who had been staying in the village of Raitala, where hundreds of people took his darshan, came to Baba and unreservedly in public paid the most humble homage to him.

A Mohammedan dervish who had come from Baghdad to India in search of saints in spite of his high attainments humbly paid his respects to Baba.

A villager was reported to have beaten his wife. Baba sent for them and when he admitted the beating asked him to give in writing that he would never use violence with her again under pain of whatever punishment Baba might think fit to impose. The bond was duly executed and the couple went home with peace between them.

Another man was reported having paid unwanted attention to one of the girls in the village. At first he denied it, then admitted the offence and threw himself on Baba’s mercy. He also was required to execute a bond of good behaviour. A girl was accused of stealing five rupees and some silverware. She promised to return the silver, but denied any knowledge of the money. The girl’s mother, who was in service in the village, also denied any knowledge of the money. Baba ordered her to pay back the amount from her wages, and the girl was given three strokes with the cane.

Three ascetics, two men and a woman, came and asked Baba to settle their differences. He listened patiently to them and then told them to forgive and forget.

A Christian youth appealed to Baba to intervene in a law suit one of the mandali intended to bring against him to recover money which the youth said he did not morally owe. Baba investigated the matter and told the mandali member to drop the proceedings completely.

Two men were brought before Baba for stealing a pig. They pretended innocence but in the end owned up. Baba had one of them caned on the hand once and

the other, twice. At the same time the owner of the pig was warned not to let it root up other people's cultivation patches.

The construction of the hall went on apace and was another item of Baba's daily inspection.

Baba was still fasting most of the time, but occasionally, at odd times ate a few scraps.

Baba said, 'My real appearance (Swaroop) is quite indescribable. It will be seen by a few when I start speaking again, and at the same time my external form will also be seen, as it was with Christ, Mohammed and Zoroaster. They too had hands and face as I have!

'You people (the mandali) have no idea how I suffer externally as well as internally. On an empty stomach I go about looking into all the affairs of the place and then sit for four hours cramped up writing — which makes me stiff with pain.'

A letter was received from a devotee named Mohan Shahane (not the Shahane of the tea-parties) and was read out. He said that since Baba had not forgiven him his fault he had stopped eating, and now was in no hurry to receive the pardon he had vainly sought, for fasting made him remember Baba all the more: that was his trump card in the game Baba was playing with him. Baba at once sent a telegram of pardon and told him to break his fast the next day.

Pleader's weekly Puranic readings had become very popular. At one session a Gujerati gentleman swooned. Baba explained that it was due to a very sensitive nature and a devotional tendency. Hearing the divine recitation and constantly looking towards him, Baba, had overpowered the man with ecstatic feelings. Such a state was far superior to a man's ordinary feelings; but without the realization of Truth itself, had no value.

Sitaram's stall had grown into a regular 'hotel' — although only of gunny-sacking and bamboo matting. Baba with all the mandali again paid him a visit and ordered two cups of tea for each, but the supply ran out and Baba moved on to another 'hotel' for the remainder. He named the two places 'Raj Mahal' and 'Taj Mahal.'

A Puranic recital was arranged, but the recitalist must

have received word about Baba's non-observance of caste, for he sent word that untouchables must not be allowed within earshot of the recital. (The Sanskrit language, in which the Puranas are written, is considered by the orthodox to be too holy for the low castes even to hear.) Baba cancelled the performance and had the fellow informed that he was welcome to his religion, but for himself all people there were treated alike and such distinctions as the man wished could not be tolerated.

A young woman named Dhakoobai Shankar Diwani of the Sali caste, suffering from tuberculosis came to 'Nagar for a change of climate. She went out to Meherabad twice and had Baba's darshan. On the second visit, Baba had told her she could stay four days, and in that period she had become greatly devoted to him, and subsequently it was said, performed puja to his photo. One morning she told her mother that she was going to Ganga (the river Ganges) to bathe in its holy waters. In the evening she called her little daughter to her and caressed and kissed her and asked the family to look after her well. After that she did not look at the child again. About ten o'clock she seemed to pass away into a deep sleep, but after awhile revived and started speaking clearly and distinctly, but none of the family knew in what language. Then with the words, 'O white and pure Meher Baba, release me, release me! — Ram, Ram,' she breathed her last.

On Christmas Eve Baba kept company with the mandali till midnight, and to pass the time he had them give short talks on spiritual themes. When all who wished to speak had done so, Ajoba, as previously instructed, went outside and returned, wearing a white kafni which reached down to his feet and carrying a huge Cross, and delivered a short talk on the life of Jesus.

People started arriving at dawn. The mandali, school staff and boys were treated to sweetmeats and pastries and tea. Games were played with enthusiasm. There was a great holiday atmosphere and Baba moved about making himself available to all. In the afternoon there was a sports program for all ages. In the evening Savla-ram entertained everyone with his sweet bhajans, and

at night there was a kirtan by a Ratnagiri man.

So many grievances and appeals for justice were being brought to Baba that he could not handle them and he appointed Rustomji and Behramji to give judgements. On New Year's Eve Baba called a meeting of the mandali. He told them that Meherabad was now a village of some few hundred souls including school boarders, and he wished the management of it to pass from one person to a committee. Nineteen were chosen with Rustom and Behram as chairman and vice-chairman, Vishnu as secretary and Karim and Tyab as orderlies. The rest were: Padri, Pendu, Pandoba, Arjun, Jal, Baba's brother — in one more attempt to get him involved in the Work — Misel, Kishan, Gulabshah, Anna, Pesotam, Masaji, Ajoba, Maroti Patil and Kaka Shahane.

He also named the new hall 'Sai Durbar' (the Court of Sai Baba).

Then there was that mixture of chit-chat and serious talk which Baba so enjoyed. And every now and then at a signal from him, Savlaram with his sweet voice would enumerate the qualities of God. And so 1925 passed away into 1926.

There was a sports program in the morning of New Year's day, and bhajans at midday for a couple of hours, after which Baba distributed sweets. In the evening it rained lightly.

Great crowds came out on the following Sunday. Baba spent all the next day in the school planning the expansion of the classes. In the evening Ramayan-Katha was performed, and the following evening there was a kirtan by the Bua of Shevgaon.

One of the village untouchable boys became ill, and it seemed to greatly concern Baba. He was admitted to the hospital and someone was detailed to sit up through the night with him and a messenger was sent to bring the boy's parents who were staying in another village. In the evening after another kirtan Baba went to the Arangaon Maharwada and inquired of the boys how their health was in the cold weather and instructed the parents how to look after them through the winter season. After Baba's return there was some general talk and Baba

said that he was the Ocean on which all the human beings in the world were appearing and disappearing, like bubbles. In the morning as soon as he came out, and without taking his bath, he went to the hospital to see how the boy was.

Baba's brothers Behram and Adi came and stayed for a few days and took Vishnu's mother with them when they returned to Poona.

Frequently for the whole day Baba would move about between the school and hospital and dispensary.

A lawyer from the village of Pathadi who was also a yogi came to test Baba. Baba gave him a slate to write his questions on, at the same time picking up one himself, and as soon as the man started writing Baba also wrote. When he had filled the slate he handed it to Baba and Baba handed him the slate he had been writing. The lawyer was amazed to find that while he had been writing his questions, Baba had been writing the answers. Later on Baba told the mandali that it was the first time he had had the fancy to do such a thing. There was a similar performance five years later when he was interviewed by a journalist in London on his first visit to the West.

Some of the mandali slept in one morning, and Baba had a message put on the notice-board that all were free to get up when they liked and also to grind flour only when they had the whim for it. Baba composed some poetry in the evening.

Every Sunday now there were enormous crowds, and the place looked like a country fair.

Patil, Ramjoo and Babu Cyclewala came for a short stay. Babu brought a stack of coloured prints of mythological figures to decorate Sai Durbar, the Hall of Audience.

A man who, during Baba's first stay at the place, had abused and insulted him now came for his darshan.

A devotee received the gift, of a child through, he said, Baba's grace. The family wanted to name him Ramchandra, but he said he would go and ask Baba to name it. To his amazement Baba told him to call it that very name.

Pleader began giving readings from the Ramayana from seven to eight every evening, and the mandali were told to attend them strictly. His Purana recitations on Thursday and Sunday also continued.

There was a boy Kashinath who fell ill and Baba asked the doctor and his assistants to give him special treatment. A special messenger was sent to 'Nagar for ice. The boy's parents came and were given board and lodging. The boy recovered and a special tea-party was given the doctor and Padri and Pendu. The doctor was also given a silver cup.

A play on the life of Shivaji was rehearsed for Baba's Birthday — his thirty-second — in three weeks' time.

A strange rumour circulated in 'Nagar that Baba had died, and many of his devotees hastened out to see if it was so. This amused Baba very much and he assured them all that he would not leave his body for the next twenty-six years even if heaven and earth conspired together for that purpose. After that it would be a matter of fancy how long he kept it, but he would not live till ninety.

Because of the number of horse-drawn carriages, bullock carts, some motor-cars and many lorries, parking zones had to be marked out.

Babajan's birthday (26th January) was celebrated with great enthusiasm and din.

At the Thursday afternoon tea-party at Kaka Shahane's which was being continued every week Baba brought up the subject of 'vital forces' or 'vital fluid.' He said that the loss of this — excepting in the relations of man and wife which are based upon mutual love and respect — was a serious matter. Indulgence for its own sake, whether natural or unnatural or in dreams, simply increased one's *sanskritic* load. 'There are people,' he said, 'who say it is natural for the energies of the body to be spent. Spent, yes — but in service, not in lust. So the best remedy is to keep the mind engaged in love for God and in service for others. Without the rains people would not get food or drink, but they must come at the right time, at the right place in the right quantity; otherwise they may destroy the crops and flood the countryside.'

Sheriarji and Shirin and the four brothers: Jamshed, Jal, Behram and Adi came a week before the Birthday and stayed through.

A new pump for the well was brought out. Baba laid it down that the work must be finished that same day, otherwise the pump was to be thrown away. The mason, who was from outside, was asked to complete his part of the work before knocking off, but he sneaked away to town at the usual knocking off time, and Baba finished the job himself.

With the return of Chanji from Bombay, where he had been sent on work, the Birthday play rehearsals took on direction and purpose.

A low masonry-walled, earth-filled platform was built at one end of the Sai Durbar. A wooden box 6' x 5' x 5 1/2' with an open side towards the body of the hall was placed in the centre of the platform. By the evening before the 18th February, this work, which had been entrusted to Ajoba, was not finished, and Baba sat with him while he worked till midnight to finish it.

The Sai Durbar, the specially made bathroom for the ceremonial bath, the dhuni and the zhopdi were all decorated with bunting, and leaves and flowers. Baba supervised every detail but still found time to go to the hospital and inquire after the patients, and to the dharmshala to see that all were comfortable.

People from distant places began arriving in the dark of the morning, to celebrate Avatar Meher Baba's thirty-second Birthday anniversary, and by sun-up the road from the city was a flow of carriages, tongas, bullock-carts, walkers and some motor-cars and lorries. This stream met an opposite one from Dhond way in a confusion of vehicles, for the zoned areas were too small and soon filled up. Baba moved freely among the people in the eternal spring of his own glory. Dozens of refreshment, flower and toy shops had been erected for the day on both sides of the road around about the Durbar.

At eight o'clock the ceremonial bath began with first the women bathing Baba and then the men. Each was allowed only one tumbler of water to pour over him. Many, after taking Baba's darshan, left, and soon some

motor lorries began plying between the place and 'Nagar, taking some people back and bringing more. At any one time there were not less than five thousand.

There were continuous bhajans. The surging crowd around the bathroom became unmanageable and the mandali had to lock arms and keep a cleared circle around it. The bathing went on for a full hour and was declared over, but still hundreds had not been able to catch hold of the tumbler quickly moving from hand to hand. Baba was then dressed and, encircled by the protective cordon of mandali, was conducted to the Sai Durbar and seated in the Box.

Pleader began his Purana recital and skilfully wove Baba's early life together with historical and mythological figures, and included Shirinmai's dream about him before he was born in which the Goddess proclaimed that he belonged to the whole world, not to his earthly mother. This recital ended at ten o'clock, and then the Birth ceremony was performed with a rain of flowers falling around his seat.

Arti was sung at 11.30 and the mandali went for their dinner. But Baba, after taking a few morsels, moved about the tables with his loving glances and gentle and humorous words. Shirinmai was the proudest mother in the throng, but Sheriarji praised God for fulfilling his prophecy that his son would be a great light in the world.

Food cooked by Babu Brahmin and his helpers was served throughout the rest of the day.

In the evening, to satisfy the wishes of his close lovers, Baba allowed himself to be borne on a flower-decked palanquin round the ashram and up the hill accompanied by exultant drums and the insistent steel of scores of tals. Arriving there the din fell over itself and was drowned in a pool of silence, and the women performed the arti. On its return the procession called at Kaka Shahane's home and the final arti was sung and tea was served. And so the usual Thursday tea-party was also enjoyed.

After returning to the ashram Baba took his seat again in the Sai Durbar so the people could again pass before him one by one and enjoy the full sight of his beautiful

form. With the night, fresh crowds surged out from the city. There was a fireworks display for an hour, and then Baba took his seat in the Durbar and gave darshan till midnight, when he retired to his seat by the dhuni. It was estimated that 50,000 people had had darshan of God-Man. Many from distant places were bedded down in the Sai Durbar. Others slept about. It was one o'clock before the mandali sought their own beds, exhausted with restraining the enthusiastic crowds. And so passed God-Man's thirty-second Birthday celebration.

Consequent to the recent betrothals of two Mang and four Mahar boys from the school, their marriages were performed by a Brahmin at Meherabad strictly according to Hindu rites. Baba had told the boys' parents to look out for suitable matches, but the actual selection was made by the boys and girls themselves — thus breaking the age-long custom of arranged marriages. In the general excitement it was overlooked that one of the boys was a Christian, and this led to a great dispute between both sides; but it was eventually agreed, to have the marriage according to that religion. However, later on, the girl's parents pressed Baba for a Hindu 're-marry,' but he would not allow it. Almost the entire village turned out; and Baba provided the wedding feast.

The play 'Shah Shivaji' which was to have been performed on the Birthday and was not, now was. As well as most of the people in the colony, many came from the village. It went on till 2 a.m.

News was received of the passing of Jamshed, Baba's elder brother. The mandali were profoundly shocked. They could not believe that a healthy man of thirty-three years, who had been with them only a few days earlier, could just die without any previous symptoms. They also could not understand Baba's apparent indifference to the event — his matter-of-fact tone in reading the telegram as though it were of no more importance than any ordinary occurrence,

Baba said: 'Jamshed persistently refused to remain here; he went away, and so is gone.' Then he asked the mandali if they felt any grief. Many said they did; and Baba said that it was all hypocrisy and selfishness. At

this someone said, 'But from the worldly point of view, Baba, everyone must feel the loss of someone dear.' Baba said: 'Why must they? That is where the mistake is made. It is all false.' One persisted, 'But Baba he was your brother, and now he is dead.' Baba replied, 'Indeed he was my brother, but now he is resting in me.' 'But how,' asked another, 'are we ordinary, worldly people to know and appreciate that?' *'By believing those who know the secrets of life and death,'* Baba replied.

Baba continued: 'Death is common to all. It is an essential step towards Real Life. The soul merely changes its abode, discards its old coat. It may also be compared to sleep — the only difference being that after death one wakes up in a new body, whereas after sleep it is the same body one is inhabiting. People do not go into hysterics when some dear one has gone to sleep; they know that they will see him awake and about again. Then why not be unconcerned when someone sleeps the sleep of death, since he is bound to wake up again in a new body?

'The reason is that people having mortal, and therefore defective, eyes cannot see the subtle form of their beloved or friend, and so they cry (or silently feel), "My beloved father is dead," "My support is gone," "The light of my eyes is dimmed," "Where is my sweetheart?" It is selfishness, not consideration for the one just passed away, that makes them bemoan their loss.

'Since the Day of Beginning the sword of death has been swinging freely right and left. Every day I see hundreds of thousands of my brothers dying, without feeling anything about it. Jamshed was no exception to the rule and could not be exempted from death's stroke.'

After some discussion, Behramji, Jal, Masaji and Pendu left by car for Poona for the funeral, and Baba took up his daily round of inspection, and in the afternoon played some games of table-tennis. The party returned in the evening, when it was learnt that Jamshed had died from a heart attack and had taken Baba's name till the end.

The school, grinding, tailoring, watering and dispensary were suspended for Jamshed-e-Navroz, and

the day began with the women performing arti in the Sai Durbar. Baba and the men were photographed together. He also posed alone. For the noon-day meal a special pulao was cooked by Masaji for the non-Hindus of the mandali and by Vishnu's mother for the Hindus. This was the first time since the ashram came into being that such a substantial and tasty meal had been served.

Piaroo and his band of sweet singers came again and gave two programs — in the afternoon and at night — at the conclusion of which Baba gave him and his Tabalji silk scarves.

A School Committee elected by the boys themselves was formed to make recommendations to the Circle Committee on action to be taken on school matters. The parent body was reduced from twenty-seven to fourteen and was put on a permanent basis.

At one of the tea-parties at Kaka's place Baba gave a discourse on intelligence, thinking and imagination. He said: 'Intelligence not thinking is unconsciousness, and may be likened to sound sleep. Thinking and imagination are latent in intelligence. When intelligence thinks of itself, it is God. When it thinks about imagination, it is world, body, ignorance.

'Take the figure of a gramophone record. When it is riot playing it is in "sound sleep," or intelligence not thinking; but when the needle is put on it, the latent imagination manifests (it begins to play), that is, becomes the world of thought and action.

'Take another figure and liken intelligence to the ocean which is calm at first; but when wind (desire of intelligence to know itself) blows, the water gets ruffled (begins to think) and forms into waves which, in turn, become uncountable bubbles. The ocean intelligence is in each of the bubbles as imagination in a limited form.'

Baba then put some water in a big pot and turned a glass upside down on it, and pointed out that although the same water was in the glass as in the pot, its quantity was limited. Similarly the ocean is in the bubble; intelligence is in the imagination, but limited.

At another time when there were a lot of visitors

present Baba said, ‘The whole world is enmeshed in women and wealth while the real aim and object of life is to achieve Truth. Unless God is realized, the purpose of acquiring a human body is frustrated. But Realization is impossible until the purity of intelligence is freed from the imagination — and this can be achieved only by keeping the company of real saints. But those heroes who have had the actual experience of Truth are indeed very few, while the world abounds in hypocrites who pose as divine guides. How can one who has not had the experience himself guide others towards it?’

The same evening the new Deputy Collector of the district came to see Baba, and he talked to him on divine subjects for some time.

Baba mused: ‘Who is going? who is coming? why going? when coming? where going? whence coming? going why? how coming? The wave asked the ocean to make it ocean. The ocean in return said: “Stop ruffling me.”’

Baba formed a debating club for the boys. He now had a new program: after getting up and leaving the zhopdi, bathing and doing the round of inspections, he shut himself in the Box in the Durbar till noon, and from then till six o’clock devoted himself to visitors. This went on for some time. Sometimes in the evening he played cricket with the mandali.

For the first time Baba explained to the mandali that the universe came out of nothing, but at the same time he showed that nothing was something. When one says, something is nothing, the is-ness of nothing is there. This was to become the theme of his book *God Speaks* published thirty years later.

Baba heard that a certain Gulabshah who had been staying in the ashram for some time now considered himself to have the same station as Baba and could equally give others a spiritual lift. Baba sent for him and asked was it so, and he said it was. Baba then said that there would be no purpose in his staying there any longer; but if he had full faith in Khwaja Saheb of Ajmer he should go to him, and there he would learn who Baba was. The man said that he had full faith in

in that Master; and Baba provided him with the expenses for the journey to northern India.

Regular physical fitness exercises every evening were now introduced for the boys. But many of the villagers thought that their sons were being trained to be sent to war, and came to Baba in a body asking that the boys be allowed to go to their homes to sleep so that under cover of darkness military recruiters could not whisk them away.

Baba told them that it saddened him that in the face of all his disinterested labour for their welfare and uplift they could have so little faith in his guidance. Did they really think that he would be having the boys trained to be sent away to war? And would they be more secure in their homes than at the ashram under his protective eye? Well, they could take their boys home and keep them there, he would no longer have them in the school. Forty-four Mahar boys went, leaving only forty Maratha boys, but late that night, after the mandali had gone to bed all the Mahars trooped back and begged to be forgiven for their foolishness. Baba agreed to take the boys back on condition that their fathers gave in writing sole charge of their boys to him; and that they, the parents, would fast for three days as penance for their sins of unbelief. Everyone was happy with this and thanked Baba again and again and went home.

The next day Baba called a meeting of the debating club and this gave much amusement and good instruction to the boys. Then Baba took them for a walk in the fields, and when they returned served them with tasty food which Ajoba had just brought from 'Nagar. The next day again Baba went to the village and collected all the fasters and brought them to the ashram and gave them milk and bread with which to break their fast.

Because of the recovery from what had appeared a hopeless case Dr. Karkal gave a tea-party to Baba and the mandali, and Baba gave him a silver flowerpot. Padri and Pendu, the doctor's assistants, were each given a woollen muffler.

For the first time dhansak, a substantial dish most enjoyed by Iranis and Parsis, was served.

A party of professional jugglers passed through and gave a performance for the boys, for which they were given five rupees.

For the first time there was a shortage of water and its use was curtailed.

A large number of Sikh soldiers came for darshan. Vishnu's mother had Baba and the mandali to dinner. The birthday of Hanuman, the great monkey devotee of Rama was celebrated with the lavish distribution of jalebis and the singing of a new bhajan by Baburao Talati from the village.

Baba now summoned the mandali and told them that he would stay for some time in the tank on the hill. He enjoined on them to be very attentive and punctual in their duties and maintain a good discipline during his absence. He went up in the evening after a light supper, with mandali and boys following in procession to the recitation of bhajans and the ringing of tals. Arrived there he distributed sweets to all, and with a final warning to be careful and thorough in their duties he signed them to return. Two, Jal and Bal, remained to attend him. This was on the 3rd May. He stayed in confinement for seven days and then came down and spent a day with the mandali and returned to the tank in the evening. This became a daily practice — coming down in the morning and returning in the evening.

One evening just before Baba returned to the hill, Pendu lost his temper over something or other and walked out, and it took some time to get him to come back, and consequently Baba did not go until nearly eight o'clock.

One day he told the mandali something of his experiences prior to Realization. His mind received a great shock and vibrated with inexpressible violence. This was followed by a great darkness, and finally there was Light, unimaginable Light. A vague idea of that Light can be had by considering the sun of our world as but a shadow of a drop of an infinite Ocean of dazzling light. And the Darkness bore no similarity to what we call darkness. Very few see the Real Light and the Real Darkness; and very few experience the Real Pain

— the agony of separation from beloved God and the longing to see Him. The worldly pains and sorrows are nothing but mental weakness. There is not a single truly unhappy person in the world except those who are like fish thrown up out of the water twisting and turning to return to their native element.

Pleader, who had gone to Narayan Maharaj's place in Kedgaon to deliver some Puranic lectures, returned. He reported that he had met that Master and had casually mentioned that he also went to Meher Baba. Maharaj told him, 'I and he are One. You serve me by serving him. He is a Sat-Purush. He once came to me in the past.'

Baba frequently impressed upon them all the sacredness of their Cause and exhorted them to be steadfast and vigilant in duties and in control over their desires and emotions; and frequently he folded his hands in namaskar (salutation) to them — thus showing respect to the essential nature of each. And this courting and compassion touched them more than anything else could. He told them that without making the Circle realized he would not leave Meherabad. 'But,' he said, 'don't compel me to do so earlier through your inattention to my orders and instructions and general lethargy. I fold my hands before you and fall at your feet, and ask you not to leave me before I speak. Even if I scold you severely, show displeasure or disgust, don't leave your duties. Beware of lustful thoughts and actions and impulses of temper and anger. Follow my words; they are for your own good. The company of a real saint, the service of humanity and the repetition of God's Name — these three are the highest possible yoga and religious practice. Serve the sufferers who come to the dharmasala and hospital whole-heartedly, and you will be serving me.'

The boys were given new times for rising: the big boys at four-thirty, and the small ones at five, while the mandali did not have to get up until, six o'clock.

There was some discussion about Mahatma Gandhi's latest declaration in the papers, that he was in search of a Guru. Baba asked did they think that this would be so. Answering the question himself he said: 'One who

is really after the Guru could not rest contented with statements to the press but would be searching along the highways and among the alleys until he found his heart's desire.' Ghani put in, 'If Gandhiji is not going out after the Guru, why doesn't the Guru go to him?' Baba replied, 'The Guru does what he does at his own sweet pleasure; he cannot be stirred by a wish today and a new idea tomorrow.'

The talk turned to Hafiz and Baba said that his Diwan was the best book in the world because it engendered feelings which ultimately led to illumination.

Vishnu was asked to see that the compounder's son was given two hours' tuition by Chanji on his return from some outside work. Vishnu did so accordingly, and considered that that was all he had to do in the matter. But when, later, Baba heard that only one hour's tuition had been given, he blamed Vishnu for not seeing that the order was carried out properly. Baba told Kishan to give him, Baba, three stokes with the cane on his hands. Kishan did so, and Vishnu stood rooted and speechless until it was over, and then with a bound left room and ran hither and thither crying out. Some tried to reason with him, some tried to catch hold of him but he eluded them. At last Arjun was able to bring him to Baba, and he soothed and comforted him.

Twelve new boys were admitted to the school.

Baba one day asked his companions did they think he needed anything. Some said, no, some were vague and indefinite. Baba said, 'Though I still need and require things, it is through love and nothing else.'

Another time he taught them, 'There are three kinds of Sat-Purushas or divine men:

(1) Videh-Mukta or Majzud, who is Self-absorbed in the experience of Infinite Knowledge, Existence and Bliss, and is completely unaware of the world of imagination including his own body.

(2) Jivan-Mukta or Salik, who after Self-realization comes down to the gross sphere and is conscious of his body and immediate surroundings, but does not take part in material activity.

(3) Acharya, or Kutub as he is called in the Persian

language, who after Realization not only regains gross consciousness but also takes up the indescribable functions of universal upliftment. All three are God-realized, all three are perfect and true.'

Baba put some questions to Chhagan who failed to give prompt and clear answers, at which Baba fell at his feet and told him, 'Hereafter you don't do any work. Just eat and drink and loll about the place.' Chhagan was petrified for a moment and then rushed, away over the fields — somewhere, anywhere out of Meherabad. Baba ordered the good runners to pursue him and bring him back. After sometime and no one had returned, Baba had the horse harnessed to the small tonga and set out with Rustom across the fields; but the going was so rough that presently he had Rustom take the horse out of the shafts and ride after the run-away. Rustom soon caught up with him and brought him back, and in a few minutes there was no sign that anything untoward had occurred. In the evening he played cricket with the mandali, and after supper went for a spin to Shindiwada with ten or twelve of the men.

At a tea-party at Kaka Shahane's place Baba told the mandali two of the external signs of the Sadguru's inner working. The movements of his right hand and right leg reflect divine help being given towards Realization and the movements of the left hand and left leg spell worldly happiness and miracles. These miracles in fact happen automatically through Maya to those persons who have a certain faith in the Sadguru. But of course they cannot be expected to occur for the mandali since the Sadguru is always working for them.

A most unusual wind occurred. Doors and windows (casement type) banged, papers flew everywhere, the bamboo matting creaked and the iron roof hissed. Baba asked someone to put on the gramophone — a seemingly curious time for music! Before the record was half finished the wind passed on leaving a fine powdered dust covering everything, and everybody looking at one another in astonishment.

The Trustees of the tomb of Bapu Saheb (which is in the Meherabad area) came for a donation for their

anniversary celebration of the Master's Samadhi. Baba gave them fifty rupees. In passing, Baba said that that Master was not actually a Salik but a Majzub. Asked again what was the difference between the two, Baba elaborated what he had said recently: 'The Sadguru or Kutub after Realization comes back to serve humanity and so is perfectly aware of the imaginative universe, whereas the Majzub is drowned in Divinity and never returns. He may be likened to an innocent child, a ghost or a madman: a child because he cannot be tempted by wealth or woman (those two irresistible attractions of Maya): a ghost because he is constantly moving about from place to place without any purpose in view; a madman because he has no consciousness of his own body. He is of no 'use' to the world at large, although personal benefits can be obtained from his company and by serving him — though he is unaware of such service. But the Sadguru is aware of everything, knows everything, is everything and does everything. If at all God could not do something, the Sadguru could do it at a stroke.

'If anyone were to ask me who is the greater, Ahuramazda or Zoroaster, I would unhesitatingly answer, Zoroaster. But because the people of his time were in a primitive state and would not have been able to appreciate such teachings, he directed them to pray to Ahuramazda. Mansoor, when he spoke the truth and said he was God, was tortured for saying so. Jesus not only claimed that he and the Father were one, but also held up to people the possibility of that blessed Union for all who would do away with lust, greed and anger and meditate on the Almighty with love. But when one has the company of a living Master that is the quickest and surest way to obtain divine upliftment.'

Baba likened the Path to God to four courses of a schooling (i.e. levels of education):

Primary. Observing ceremonies and the dry drills of religious injunctions.

Matriculation. Service of humanity without selfish considerations.

B. A. Repetition of the Almighty's Name with love.

M. A. The service of a Sadguru by following his orders to the letter in all matters.

Upasni Maharaj's fifty-sixth Birthday came round (15th May). The long range of fires had been lit, and the huge cooking pots set thereon were beginning to bubble by the time most of the mandali tumbled out of their beds at 4 a.m. Tea was soon served, and Masaji took over the cooking and put his own special flavours into the simple dal and rice that was to be served to an expected three to four thousand guests.

The principal buildings, especially the Sai Durbar, had been decorated with flowers and bunting as designs in jubilation.

At nine o'clock Baba fed the mandali with his own hands. It being also Sailor's birthday, they received an extra handout of jalebis. The school was closed for three days and many of the daily activities slowed down.

The public feast began at ten o'clock and went on till four in the afternoon. Pleader gave his Puranic recital to a packed and attentive audience and then the Birth ceremony was performed. But the thing that created the wildest enthusiasm was the palanquin procession at night which carried Maharaj's picture round the ashram and to the hill and back. Then there were fireworks for an hour. The next day was a sports day with running and obstacle and sack and other races. Awnings had been put up for Baba and the women devotees.

The pre-monsoon rains began. During tea at Kaka Shahane's one afternoon when bhajyas were served, Baba remarked that the real bhajya is prepared from the Flour of sanskaras and fried in the Oil of devotion over the Fire of love. A shower of rain fell, and looking out Baba saw some of the day boys running home drenched. He immediately set off in the rain to the ashram where he took Pandoba, Vishnu and Chanji to task for not timing better the boys' leaving the school to go home. The Circus came to town, and a party was made up to go, but transport could not be arranged. Baba said, 'No matter. The whole of existence is a circus, so why go to this little one anyway?' But he provided a good entertainment

the same evening by having different ones give in give lectures in the languages they knew least. (Indians being multilingual find twisted and broken sentences hilarious.)

Dr. Karkal was to give a party for which a number of eatables were being prepared at his house since early morning. At nine o'clock Baba went with the mandali to the house and asked the doctor if all was ready. On being told that only the dish of sev was ready Baba told him to cancel the other things and they would have only sev and tea. So tea was made and poured, and Baba distributed the sev.

Then Baba said, 'There is one Key to the treasure-box of the world, but it is in the hands of five Masters. One is the actual Key-holder without which the box the box cannot be opened; the second is the guard over the box whose permission is required before touching the box; the third alone can open the box; the fourth has the authority to distribute the treasure, and the fifth has the power of authorizing the distribution. In this way the Five equally hold and use the one Key.'

One of the boys absconded. Baba said that unless he returned he would fast for seven days. 'I have told you all a hundred times,' he said, 'to be more alert and attentive — even bowing down to your feet — but nothing stirs you.' But presently he started laughing silently and said that the boy was a rolling stone anyway.

The Bombay Parsi Theatrical Company came to town with a play on that great lover of God, Surdas, produced for Baba's entertainment. Baba went with twenty of the mandali and eighty-one boys in a lorry making three or four trips. After the first scene-change Baba got up and roamed about even in the wings talking to everyone he met. Back at the ashram after supper Baba invited discussion of the play. Chanji repeated the whole plot. Baba said it was a good play since it successfully presented the subject, 'When lust is left love is met.'

Kaka Shahane gave a special tea-party to celebrate his son Mohan's passing his B. A. With his weakest subject, Saxon English, Mohan invoked Baba's help by taking his Name and opening the textbook and memorizing

the page he opened at. At the examination he found that that page contained the answers to the questions. Masaji complained that the talk being in English, he could not follow it, and Baba sent him outside. However, the inquisitive old man was soon allowed to come back. Tea with milk was served, and Baba distributed the sweets. He then played cricket for awhile and went on up to the tank.

On the 16th June Baba said he would fast till February because he 'had to go into reverse breathing' — the same again as he had earlier — for now he must give the final touches to the perfection of his Circle.

The next morning Baba came down early and there were a lot of people to see him, including a sadhu who wanted to see God. Baba told him that if he would remain silent for a year and take only one meal a day, he would show him God. He said he would. But nothing came of it — he was still itching from the bite of the wander bug, and Baba sent him to Narayan Maharaj to serve him.

Because of some mistakes committed by the mandali Baba refused to go to the next tea-party at Kaka Shahane's but Mrs. Shahane headed a deputation to him and prevailed upon him to come.

From the 19th the mandali were asked to fast in turns for nineteen hours from 8 p.m. to 3 o'clock the next afternoon until February. Young Mohan was appointed Fast-manager.

Baba and mandali went to the village police patil's place for a marriage in his family.

A kerosene pressure lamp was lit for the first time in the ashram, and the children were wonderstruck at its brightness.

Although he had begun his long fast till February, Baba accepted some tasty food cooked by some of the women, ate a few morsels and gave the rest to the first faster, who had just finished his time.

On Rustomji's birthday all at Meherabad were treated to milk-tea, and various pastries and sweets,

Baba now ground flour for half an hour each day. He also for some time had been washing the clothes of

five boys. He started taking tea at four o'clock each day and any of the mandali around got a few sips. Shankarnath joined the full-time resident mandali.

On the evening of the 30th June Baba was leaving to go up the hill and suddenly stopped (as he had some five months earlier) and said, 'Maya is mere imagination, illusion. Where there is lust there is Maya; where there anger there is Maya; where there is greed there is Maya. Don't be the slaves of your own imagination. Conquer it and you will see the Real Personification of God.' Then he went on. That was the last night he spent in the tank. In the morning he came down with his bed-roll and began sleeping in the Box in the Sai Durbar.

The one year of Silence was up and all were looking forward intensely to hearing him speak again. Consequently it was a great disappointment when he announced that he intended to remain in Silence for another. The disappointment was the keenest, among the women, for they had always been entranced by his voice more than moved by the words he spoke. His voice was the *sound* of Love, and the only thing that mattered was that during the short time he gave them his company, that sound should flow through their hearts and into their actions of service. Another year was too long to wait.

Mehera recalled (among a thousand recollections) a special little song and dance he had done for her once outside her window. The Troubadour and his Lady — divinely so. And the other women remembered special occasions of his voice, of his glance, of his stride across the landscape. Another year before they again heard his golden voice! Impossible. Baba was only joking.

Had he told them — and the men also — that his Silence would continue for the rest of their lives — that his Advent, in fact, was a mission of Silence — none would have been able to support the loss. So he egged them on with announcements and promises that he would break his Silence by, or on, certain dates; and furthermore that when he did speak all people would bear witness to that speaking and his inner circle would

become God-realized — for his speaking would not be mere speech but the Divine Creative Word which rules and loves and sustains the universe and the affairs of men.

A party from Talegaon came and recited their bhajans and left.

A lame donkey with a running sore came along the road and Baba took it to the hospital and cleaned and dressed the wound.

Finding the mandali irregular in attendance and inattentive to their flour-grinding Baba ordered it to be stopped for the day, but he finished his own period of it.

Teaching them, Baba gave out the following: Param-atma equals God Unconscious. Ishwar equals God as Creator. Jiva equals the individual soul. Shiva equals conscious (knowing) Self (God).

He then explained Kabir's famous verses:

Ek Rama Dasharath ghar dole — One God in a cradle
(is rocked) in King Dasharath's house;

Ek Rama ghat ghat main bole — One God in the
depths of every heart is speaking;

Ek Rama ka sakal pasara — One God sustains
everything outspreading;

Ek Rama tribhuvan se nyara — One God is beyond the
whole creation.

He said the verses referred to body, mind, spirit, self.

Continuing, Baba said, 'In order to know Itself Paramatma took form (Jivatman) but it also got karma at the same time — and karma means sanskaras or mental impressions. Now none can escape karma (the impressions of actions on the mind), but he can, and must, act in such a way that opposite sanskaras are found to counterbalance the first ones. Devotion, charities, prayers, bhajans, kirtans, Name-repetitions, etc., make such opposite sanskaras and burn away the ones already made; while tapascharya (austerities, starvation and yoga etc.) create bindings. The Real Starvation is when the mind, not the body, is starved.'

The year's Silence had done much to confirm the mandali's faith in their Master: that he was what he obviously was — Man and God — which is what all Sadgurus or Perfect Masters are. But he did not for a long time yet, some thirty years, say he was Avatar (God Descended — God-Man).

Many men have remained silent for even a lifetime — but under special conditions of solitude and seclusion, taking no part in worldly affairs. But who except God Almighty could engage in all the activities he had taken part in: the detailed supervision of the ashram and the colony surrounding it, bathing the boys and washing their clothes, writing a book, grinding flour, giving darshan to tens of thousands, and interviews to hundreds, as well as dictating more discourses than the previous year when he was speaking, dispensing justice and healing the villagers' quarrels, helping the untouchables to stand up as human beings, playing cricket and football and other boys' games; and in the midst of all this, assuming anger, displeasure, joviality, seriousness, mirth, pity and sorrow without once being heard to utter a sound.

Here, surely was a Man immeasurable in human terms — and the mandali insisted on celebrating the anniversary of his Silence with a holiday and a twenty-four hour fast. This was broken with a special dinner in the afternoon. And thus a new universal date was added to the Calendar.

Two or three of the mandali reported having dreamt of the passing of Babajan, and Baba said that she had finished her work and relinquished her Office. She might, drop her body in ten, twenty, or the most two hundred days. For two or three years after that there will be great upheavals in the world and then there will be a period of peace and spiritual advancement in the world.

In the afternoon at Kaka's place Baba gave prasad, and somehow or other Waman Subris was left out. During the bhajans which followed it was noticed that Baba was looking at him in a peculiar way; and at night when everyone took Baba's darshan before retiring, he seemed to be prevented from doing so. All of a sudden he cried

out loudly, ‘Sadguru Meher Baba Maharaj ki jay!’ and started slapping himself violently. Many of the mandali ran to him and tried to pacify him, but he seemed to be possessed of a supernatural strength and burst through them still shouting and slapping himself — all the time saying that he had been deprived of both Baba’s prasad and darshan. This went on for some two hours till, midnight and then just as suddenly as it started it ceased.

Baba now began a new routine or phase which was to last till February: The one meal he had been taking every day was stopped and he took only milk-tea and dal. He would take only a passive interest in the ashram’s affairs; no more explanations and lectures. Save for a round, of inspections each day, he would keep to one fixed place. He would not play any more games with them or attend any more plays. The mandali who had been in turn keeping fast with him would go on to liquids instead.

Most of the next day, 12th July, the first day of the change, he occupied his old seat under the neem tree by the roadside.

A great dispute started to seethe in the village over certain rights and privileges. It seemed that almost everyone was involved and remembered things about one another long thought dead or forgotten. Baba called them all before him and after some hours of claims and counter-claims, accusations and assertions brought about a peaceful settlement that satisfied everyone — so much so that the leaders apologized to Baba for being so much trouble to him.

Another aspirant for God-realization came and Baba gave him the usual terms which of late had been handed out to men with lofty ideas but obviously small determination: stay for one year in a hut near Baba’s, taking only one meal a day and remaining silent for the period. As with most of such seekers, he readily accepted the terms, but when a little later Baba asked him what he was thinking, he answered, ‘I wish I was in Shirdi.’ Baba knew that the fellow considered himself to be one of Sai Baba’s followers, so he told him that the shrine in Shirdi would be the best place for him.

Although Baba had said that he would not give any talks and explanations, he continued to do so.

Pleader brought a high government official and his family to see Baba but Baba came out late that morning, much to the annoyance of the man. Pleader even tried personally to bring Baba out. After they had left, Baba reminded him that distinguished or obscure were the same to him, and he deplored Pleader's snobbishness.

News came one night that a murder had been committed at Kala Wada one mile from the ashram on the road to 'Nagar. The mandali could not believe it and thought 'murder' was merely an exaggeration of perhaps injury in a scuffle with robbers, but Baba sent some of them to investigate. When they arrived they found three men lying in the nullah. One was dead, killed with a blow from a sharp instrument, and the other two were still living although badly bashed up. Rustom was the first to recover from the shock and set out on his bike to the railway station to inform the police and get a carriage. The Arangaon police patil was also reached, and came and guarded the body until the police from 'Nagar came. In the meantime Rustom arrived back and took the wounded to the ashram hospital where Karkal took them over. Some police officers came through the night to see and question the injured. They commended Rustom for his prompt action. Early in the morning the District Superintendent came out and inspected the place of the murder and with the consent of the doctor had the injured removed to the 'Nagar hospital. Later in the morning Baba called a general meeting and appointed full-time night-watchmen. Baba was very pleased with Rustomji.

For the celebration of the twelfth day of the month (Dwadashi), the Hindu mandali again turned Meherabad into the semblance of a country fair. Baba was ceremonially bathed and arti and puja performed. Then the Mahars came with a beautifully decorated carriage drawn by a pair of horses also decorated, and took Baba in procession to the village where a mandap had been erected and a seat prepared under it for him.

The road from the ashram to Arangaon was spanned

by bunting-wound arches and Baba's progress was cheered all the way. When he took his seat, arti was performed and bhajans were sung and people pressed forward to get a better sight of their beloved Lord.

At night in return for the honour the Mahars had paid him Baba gave a dinner at the ashram to several hundreds of them.

It had rained solidly for three hours during the afternoon and three people of a party which tried to cross the swollen Arangaon River were drowned.

On the 23rd July Baba changed his meals and stopped taking liquids only and had one meal a day between three and eight o'clock.

There was a discussion whether it would be possible for the Hindu and non-Hindu mandali to share the same food and cooking and the same waterpots. The discussion became heated and so Baba wound it up by advising that it would be best to continue the present separate arrangements, even though to him all Sadgurus are equal and all religious observations mere drill and routine. Still, the religious feelings of one another should be scrupulously respected — in fact, facilities and encouragement should be given to any staunch follower of any religious law.

Fifteen new boys were admitted to the school.

There was another false alarm one night and Baba with all the mandali went round the whole place with, lanterns and their stout sticks.

Three days after the celebration of Dwadashi the Hindu mandali observed the Guru Purnima or full-moon holiday and Baba told them that the real Guru Purnima for them was bowing down at the feet of the Guru with the innocence of a child and swearing not to leave him until he speaks again. Naoroji's birthday was the same day and Baba distributed sweets to them all. During the evening bhajans Baba leaned over and took the 'duff,' a sort of tambourine, and played it in beautiful timing and a very serene atmosphere prevailed. At night Baba played atya-patya with the mandali for two hours under the full moon, and then served them with milk-tea.

Eight new boys were taken into the school.

One Raya Mandapwala with his family were allowed to give a tea-party to the whole of Meherabad. He served a large variety of sweets and salty pastries.

Kaka Shahane's younger brother who lived in 'Nagar reported that he had been to the bazaar and there saw Baba with four strange men. He bowed down to him and when he raised his head Baba was not there. (Baba had, of course, been in Meherabad at the time.)

The mandali's diet was changed from liquids only, to weak tea without milk, bread morning and evening and dal and rice in the forenoon.

There was considerable discussion about celebrating the Zoroastrian New Year (Kadmi Papati) in ten days' time, and a lengthy program was drawn up including pulau for dinner and Bhagwan stew for supper, but for some reason or other the meals did not eventuate and the only sport played was a cricket match with Baba captaining one side.

Barsoap had again become restless and full of grievances and wanted to go away. After long talks, Baba fixed a date and a time (six o'clock in the morning) for his leaving; but he had not gone far when he was called back and Baba again talked at length with him, and he stayed.

Baba again changed the time for his and the mandali's meals.

Under the excuse that spices were being too freely used, Baba cut them out altogether and had the dal cooked plain. 'Less than prison-fare,' one of them said.

One of the Sattha brothers for some time had been cycling out from 'Nagar every Sunday. On one of his trips his machine broke down just as he arrived and it couldn't be mended, so in the evening he had to walk back. Baba with four of the mandali went with him to the station — which was most of the distance — where they got tongas, Baba and the four to the ashram, and Sattha home. On their return they found that a snake had been killed. Kaikhushru picked it up, and Baba told him to drop it and go and wash his hands twenty-four times.

Eight glasses and plates were found to be missing, and as a punishment for negligence, eight, of the staff were given a fast for twenty-four hours beginning the next day; but in the morning the order was cancelled.

The postmaster was transferred to another town, and he gave his dog to his nephew and the boy brought it to Baba. After a couple of days Baba ordered the animal to be returned. It transpired later that at the very time of his order the postmaster's wife had been feeling the loss of the pet.

Rustomji and Kaka went to Nasik to give evidence in a case against Ragunath who was being charged with stealing a bicycle — with the result that he was only fined a hundred rupees instead of going to prison. Baba arranged payment, pardoned him and allowed him to resume his duties at the ashram.

Arjun was sick and for the day Baba took over his duties of looking after the boys' clothing, food and baths.

At one of the Thursday tea-parties, Kaka made an offering of special dainties for Baba, but Baba had the mandali draw lots for them.

In Poona one night Shirinmai and her sister Piroja were returning home from a visit to Babajan when they saw Baba get down from a carriage. They hastened towards him calling his name, but he disappeared down a dark lane.

The 15th August was Khordad Sal (the Birth of Zoroaster) and the ashram was awakened in the early morning by a procession of schoolboys with bugles and drums. After bathing and taking the darshan of the living Prophet a program of cricket matches began which went on all day with a tea-break at three o'clock in the afternoon. At seven o'clock the Birth ceremony was performed according to Hindu rites. A small cradle was decorated and a picture of Zoroaster placed in it and his birth announced with solemn chanting. Then Baba's arti for Maharaj was performed. After which bhajans were sung for an hour or so.

A yogi-looking sort of man came to Baba for guidance. Baba gave him the instruction, 'Matla, Ghatla, Ghotla,

Satla, Vatla Chotla — Potla.

Several cricket matches were played over the next few days and much of the talk was about the current test matches between Australia and England. Baba greatly admired the English players, especially Hobbs and Sutcliffe.

One day Baba called on visitors to help him wash the boys' clothes.

The women played cricket for an hour in their own compound. Baba umpired it and Kaka Shahane scored.

One of the boys absconded in the night, and Baba held the director, monitors and all the teachers responsible, and as a punishment made them hold quinine powder on their tongues and not gulp nor swallow it, but as soon as they began to show signs of acute distress he told them to spit it out and gave them sweets to take away the bitterness.

The boys played a regular cricket match for the first time.

Pandoba became the father of a son and he took a big box of sweets out to Baba who distributed them to everyone.

Coconut Day was observed, and in the evening Baba was taken in procession up the hill and a new arti was recited by the women. Coconuts and flowers were thrown into the pond and then with the men Baba retired into the tank room and chit-chatted for an hour before returning down the hill.

In the early hours one morning before the mandali had finished their tea Baba suddenly ordered all to take up the work of an extension of the school. Some paid carpenters were sent for to do the necessary alteration of the roof structure. Baba not only supervised the work but every now and then pitched in himself, urging a faster and faster pace. By evening, what normally would have taken many days was finished.

They all played cricket for awhile. When Baba returned from the field there were a number of visitors to see him and he talked to them for an hour.

Baba received a telegram that his mother was seriously ill. While he was reading it to the mandali a din

of music announced a marriage party come from the village for his darshan. He put aside the telegram and talked with them and sent them off with his blessings.

Rustom was sent to Bombay, among other things to buy clothes for the boys and mandali.

Baba declared that he was very satisfied with the management and progress of the school and the other institutions, especially with Chanji. This was the first time that he had so expressed himself.

With sixteen of the mandali in a lorry, Baba visited a school called Anath Ashram in 'Nagar which is conducted by a pious Hindu recluse who received the party very cordially. Tea and fruits were served. One of the boys, who was blind but had been going to Meherabad regularly for Baba's darshan, was promised eyesight when Baba began to speak again. The party returned in the evening.

When the ashram boys saluted him at bedtime Baba told them to stick to him under any circumstances whatever until he spoke. Those who remained with him, at the time of his speaking would, he promised, receive a tremendously great benefit.

The yogi-like fellow who had come to Baba a few days earlier and had been given the strange instruction, 'Matla, etc.,' said he did not want to stay on. Upon deeper inquiry it was found that his main complaint was about the food. Baba laughed and said, 'Come for God and gone for bread.'

There was some trouble between Behram and a new man at the ashram named Murlidhar, a tailor from Lonavla. Behram thought the man had deliberately disobeyed an order and told him to get out of the workroom. He went out and sat under a tree. When the matter was brought before Baba, he held both men responsible. He told Murlidhar that by stopping work he had broken his order. In spite of Behram's order to him to leave he should have stuck to his post until actually thrown out by force. But he warned Behram never to turn out anybody without express orders from him to do so, and to report any serious cases of disobedience to him for necessary action. Later in the day

Behram had a misunderstanding with Baba. Behram became so excited that he started to walk away, but some of the mandali went after him and brought him back and Baba soothed him, and peace returned.

The Gokul-Ashtami holiday, 30th August, was observed. The school was closed and most of the day was spent playing cricket with Baba also taking part. The Sai Durbar was decorated. At five in the afternoon the birth ceremony of Krishna Gokul was performed and the boys sang bhajans.

The holiday was continued the next day. Atya-patya was played from 7 a.m. to 8.30 a.m. At ten the boys came in procession from their house in the village bearing a large earthenware pot of curds and arrived at the Sai Durbar where it was hung from the ceiling. Bhajans were sung and then Rustomji broke the pot and there was a wild scramble by the boys to scoop up the curds in their cupped hands. (This is one of the most popular of Hindu ceremonies.)

In the afternoon Baba called a meeting of the intimate mandali. He told them that he had become very weak because of his fasting, but shortly he would abstain from the one meal and only take liquids such as sips of tea, coffee or milk. Even these would be given up towards the end, and in February, for seventy hours, he would actually be as one dead; but after that he would rise again and raise the Circle with him. Of course, even now he was dead — dead to all but himself, the Glorious One — but then even his body would bear the appearance of death. He told them how fortunate they were that at that time they would get Realization in an instant.

The talk turned on a certain Angya Swami, who had been staying at the ashram for some time but lately had become very disturbed in himself and talked about leaving the place. Then one night he had a dream. He saw Upasni Maharaj, Narayan Maharaj, Babajan and Sai Baba and ranged behind them other spiritual personalities, and all were telling him to stick it out and remain where he was. Upasni caught hold of the swami's hand and hissed. 'You madcap, where will you

go if you leave? If, at all, your desires are to be fulfilled, it will be here, where you are.'

A fancy-dress carnival was held in the Sai Durbar from 7 to 9 p.m. Rustom and Mohan were adjudged the best costume and shared the ten rupee prize.

Baba announced generally that from the next day, 2nd September, he would leave off eating any solid food for five to six months, and he invited the mandali to prepare various dishes for his last dinner. The cooks, both the regular ones and those for the day were on the job early in the morning and everything was ready by noon. Baba tasted each dish and then, distributed it as prasad — first to the one who had cooked it and then to the others.

There was another man who wanted to leave — the milkman. He could go out to buy the milk for the colony, but if he went out for his own reasons without getting Baba's permission he would fall sick. His health had become quite spoiled. He went to Baba and confessed his attempts to go out without permission. Baba told him never to leave the place without his permission, but to remain until the end. There was another also, a wrestler, who had left without permission. Within a week he suffered a humiliating defeat in his art.

With Baba's permission Barsoap left — probably for good.

Adi's birthday was celebrated with tea and jalebis brought out by a young 'Nagar lawyer, Dhakephalkar. He was to have a scattered association with Baba over the years till the end.

A three-way cricket match was played on some holiday beginning at 7.30 in the morning. Baba captained one team, Rustom another and Chanji the third. There were to be prizes for the winning team, the captain of the winning team, one making a century, and the best bowling average. They played for three hours. After tea in the afternoon the games were resumed. The first match, between Baba's and Rustomji's teams, was won by Rustom's. The second match was a draw. After supper there was music until nine o'clock, when Baba declared that he was hungry, and naming a variety of dishes, said

he wanted them in seventeen minutes.

The mandali were astonished. It was only one week since he began his fast — and a meal of many dishes in seventeen minutes! But somehow in seventeen minutes it was ready. Baba was very pleased, and after tasting each dish mixed them all up and gave the mess to his companions.

The Ganesh festival came round. His image was installed in the Sai Durbar and Baba with help from the mandali served the boys a good feast.

At seven-thirty one morning a Colonel Irani and a Professor Kapadia from Deccan College, Poona, came to see Baba. Rustom showed them around and came to know that Colonel was his uncle by marriage. The two men made no secret of their ill-feelings towards Baba and the colony. The professor was particularly hostile to Mohan whom he recognized as one of his own pupils. He said he was amazed to find such a good student from such a cultured family wasting his time on superstition and false teaching. But the boy answered him boldly yet respectfully. The two men were greatly inquisitive about the finances of the place. Mohan said that for himself he was not interested where the money came from but how it was being used; and surely education, especially of the depressed classes, and the healing of the sick, were the very best ways of spending money. But the visitors said it was all done for self-advertisement and to impress ignorant people with assumed spiritual greatness. Baba kept them waiting for three hours and then sent word that he would see them. They seemed eager enough to meet him, but when Rustom asked them to remove their shoes before approaching him, they became confused, and hesitated, and left.

The Colonel had for some time been the most active and vehement in the Zoroastrian community's opposition, and later on organized public meetings to denounce Baba as a fraud. After they had departed, Baba said that for people who all their waking time are engaged in pursuing wine, women and wealth (intoxication, lust and greed) it was sheer hypocrisy even to mention, let

alone criticise, the great Truth. How could they for a single moment think about that Truth? It was a pity that they had not fulfilled their pilgrimage and seen him, for he would have given them the lecture of their lives. Still, their coming and their three hours' wait will one day be rewarded. They had fared worse at Sakori with Maharaj. There they had not been allowed even to drink the water of that sacred place lest they polluted it.

Baba continued, 'It is the general tendency of the human mind to cling to its own ideas. The Parsis consider their religion to be the only true one, the same with the Mohammedans and Christians — each holds his religion as true and anyone who doesn't agree is a heathen.' Rustom put in that the Colonel had said that he had read widely about the life of Zoroaster but nowhere had he found any similarity to what was going on at Meherabad. Baba said, 'Zoroaster did what he thought was the best for the people at that time. What is being done here is best for this time. If they — or you chaps — don't take it up what is that to me?'

One morning at their breakfast of weak tea and bread someone mentioned the hardships and pleasures that the early mandali had experienced on their tours with Baba before they had settled down at Meherabad, and then put forward the suggestion that Baba should go on another tour so that the new-comers to the mandali should also have that sort of experience.

Baba liked the idea, but said that if they went they would have to go without a penny in their pockets and beg their food and other needs. It was decided that they would go for a seven days' walk, and the names were taken of those who wished to go. Then Baba said it would be better to go out for only one day as a try-out, and they would leave at ten o'clock. Twenty set out towards Walki, a village a few miles past Arangaon.

It was a merry party with Sarosh playing a mouth-organ and the others expressing their feelings of joy in song. Most of the way Baba was lifted up and carried pair by pair in turn. The day was hot, but hospitable clouds shaded them from the direct sun. Three or four

times Baba asked them all did they wish to return, but majority wanted to go on.

They halted on the outskirts of the village, and two were sent to find a shady spot where they could rest for an hour or so. Kaka went to arrange for tea, and Arjun was asked to go back to the ashram to get money for it.

In the meantime a woman passing by recognized Baba. She came nearer for his darshan. Baba asked her to bring some food if she could manage it. Mention of food roused the mandali to remember Baba's condition, of begging their meal, so they split up into small parties and went into the village leaving two with Baba. At first the villagers were amazed to find this horde of beggars everywhere. Some gave food and some abused them and told them to clear out. Pendu and Syed Saheb particularly were targets and asked were they not ashamed to beg when they had such well-cared bodies and could work if they wanted to.

They returned to Baba and found that they had more than sufficient for their meal. He mixed it all up and distributed it.

Now the identity of the beggars and the presence of Baba spread through the village and a lot of people ran to have his darshan. Those who had refused alms and had abused them were remorseful and cursed themselves for their discourtesy to the Master's disciples and their losing the opportunity of the highest service the householder can perform — feeding the spiritual wayfarer; and they begged Baba to allow them to run to their houses and bring something to put in their bowls. One man persistently entreated Baba to graciously enter his house for a moment. Baba liked the look of the man and complied with his request. By this time the tea was ready, two cups each, and sent by the innkeeper. After they were refreshed they started back to the ashram which they reached mid-afternoon. They took the surplus food with them and it was shared by those who had not gone for the walk.

The Mahar boys were again giving trouble. Contrary to the agreement their parents had signed that the boys were to be in Baba's sole charge and should not see or

Speak to anyone including parents and relatives, some of the boys had done so. When called before Baba they admitted having done so deliberately. Baba told them to leave the place. They pleaded for leniency. Baba said he would forgive their disobedience if they would abide by their parents' oaths and signatures. It was clear that they had no intention of doing so and Baba dismissed them.

The Mahars retaliated by killing a bullock with the avowed object of seeing what Baba could do to them if they broke his order not to slaughter any animals under any circumstances, an order they had sworn to obey. One of the ringleaders, Shankar Veskar, who it was said had actually done the killing, rode past Meherabad the next morning at a leisurely ambling pace. Just opposite the hospital, without any seen cause the horse took fright and threw the man heavily to the ground. One of the mandali ran to his aid and another went and told Baba who came immediately, and seeing the man in a senseless state ordered him to be removed to the hospital where he was treated for shock and then sent home.

A middle-aged man who had had Baba's darshan a few times came late one night with sweets and flowers in gratitude for a son whom his wife had just presented him with. She also was middle-aged. Together they had gone on many pilgrimages, performed the ceremonies connected with child-getting and given much in alms; but she had remained barren. Now he had remembered that Baba had once told him that his wife would bear a son and so, although it was late at night, he had to come and thank Baba for his great gift.

Rustomji was sent to Poona on some work.

The Mahars again played mischief by leaving a piece of flesh near the dharmshala in the night. A meeting of the mandali was called to consider the matter. It was suspected that some of the Mahars who had been allowed to stay on at Meherabad were in league with their kind in the village — especially Harinath the lame, because of his evasive answers when questioned. Baba put the following proposals to the mandali: 1. Drive away the remaining Mahars from the place; 2. Get two or three

of the ringleaders in the village arrested and charged with trespass with intent; or, 3. Send away the men of the village who had been taken into the mandali; 4. Leave it all to God to sort out and remain passive onlookers.

After some discussion the mandali voted unanimously for number four. Baba was very happy with their decision, but he warned them that under certain circumstances it might not be easy to stick to that decision. He pointed out particularly to the Hindus among them that the Mahars were obviously testing him they might even throw some flesh in the well — in which case, since they had put the matter in God's hands, they should not complain; on the contrary they should continue to use the well water for their cooking and drinking.

When all affirmed their decision Baba gave the following three special orders:

1. None of the mandali, and particularly the Mahar mandali, are to have or keep any connection whatsoever with the Arangaon Mahars. (Any infringement, of this order must be reported immediately.)
2. The village patil should buy meat every day with money that will be given him and throw it to the dogs that roam about the colony.
3. Everyone at the ashram should pray to God for one minute every day, to give better wisdom to the village Mahars.

A pitiable ragged boy muttering incoherently wandered into the place. Baba bathed and fed and played with him. In a couple of weeks he seemed normal, but some of the mandali teased him and he had a relapse. Baba caned the men.

There was considerable discussion among the mandali on the subject of doing away with separate drinking pots for the different classes and castes and all drinking from the same vessel. Hearing of this some of the Maratha (high caste) boys started packing to go home. Baba called a meeting and asked that the issue be fought out before him. A heated debate ensued, and when a vote

was taken it was found to be twenty-eight for no change and twenty-eight for change. Baba gave his casting vote of no change. He said, 'Why all this fuss about drinking water. Let us all be put on the same level not only for water but for food, dress and religion. All should eat at the same place and do away with both untouchability and touchability completely. All should wear gunny-cloth kafni style robes, and all should do away with the symbols of their religion: the Parsis their "sudra" and "kusti," the Hindus their "janois," and the Mohammedans should shave their beards. So let us leave the experiment for now and let everything go on as at present. The work of uniting all people will be done at the proper time by those who are empowered to do these things. Such things cannot be done merely through men's efforts.'

After the stormy debate, a cup of tea and a cricket match.

A Hindu gentleman whose son had left home and could not be found came to Baba. But it was obvious that, he had come to test Baba, for instead of seeking his blessings to find his son he abruptly asked where the boy was and when would he be found. Baba told him to go to Sholapur. Then, after a little more talk when the man was preparing to leave, Baba asked him who he thought he, Baba, was. 'If you take me to be a saint, he said, 'then why ask questions? And if you think I'm an astrologer, where is the fee?' At this the man was greatly abashed and asked forgiveness for his presumption. Baba then kindly advised him to go to Narayan Maharaj and then to the Christian Missionary School, and promised him his son would be restored to him.

At night when the mandali were sitting round Baba under the light from the pressure lamp and enjoying a tasty supper, Baba told them among other things that once in Maharaj's company he had gone in disguise to Kashi and Jaganath (where only Brahmins may set foot), and Maharaj told those 'holy men' to bow down to him, Baba for he was Vishweshwar.

On the 1st October a special meeting of the mandali

was called. Baba told them that he was seriously thinking of winding up Meherabad and its activities. He was tired, he said, of having to satisfy the whims and fancies of them all and of their half-willingness in their duties — this applying particularly to Behramji, Arjun and Padri (three of the best workers) — and in consequence, all his labour of slate writing. But the majority wanted Meherabad to continue, and so he did not push the matter.

A letter was received from Poona saying that there was a strong rumour going about that Baba had been seen there, or was expected to come shortly.

The talk turned to Angya Swami and why he had had left. Baba told them that after his taking an oath to stay at the place for one year he had finished up demanding immediate Enlightenment, or 2,000 rupees to feed the poor. Baba laughed and said, ‘See the humour of it all, the peculiar mentality of a man who in plain words begs in one place to make a show of charity in another!’ (A similar thing, but with different details occurred when Baba went to England a few years later. There the demand was for Enlightenment or 500 pounds — not for charity but in remuneration for services rendered.)

Baba visited the Sattha family in ‘Nagar who greeted him with great respect and love. The party returned at eight o’clock and from nine till midnight performed a drama, ‘Matlabi Dooneya.’ Then there was some talk by Baba, and Sailor and Pendu danced.

Baba spent three hours in the afternoon with the women. (This is the first mention anywhere of such a long visit.) From eight to ten at night the Nath Madhav Mandali performed bhajans.

A village patil’s wife died and he rushed to Baba with his grief. But Baba did not console him; instead he abruptly asked him how many children he would wish to have, and he answered, ‘Ten.’ Baba said, ‘Your wish is granted,’ and dismissed him. Then Baba said to the mandali, ‘what a game, what a joke!’

‘You have seen grief and desire manifested on the same breath.’ He continued, ‘Sexual desire is to be checked and mastered. That is not easy; even great yogis have fallen to the wiles of women. The real credit for such

checks and mastery is when they are done in the flush of youth, not through drugs or surgery.

After impressing upon Chanji to strictly supervise the whole school, Baba now for the most part was keeping himself aloof, often sitting in one place for hours at a time passively observing the ashram life and the movement of people on the road.

One day, however, he noticed that some of the men had not put out their bedding in the sun according to standing orders, and he caned them, and also Behram for not having enforced the rule. But they did not accept the punishment, and said that it was unjustified. Whereupon Baba called a general meeting and gave them all a hard choice. He said, 'Henceforth things will go like this: If I find the slightest fault in the discharge of your duties or find that my orders are not being followed strictly and in the right spirit I will have the defaulter caned with up to ten strokes. This will naturally be very painful. Therefore I want your candid opinions of the following:

1. Whether to let the Meherabad affair go on as it is, but on the condition that every order must be obeyed most strictly and minutely without any excuses whatsoever, or bring it to an end.

2. If you are willing to stay here for the next four months under these strict conditions and work as hard as was done during the Gamela Yoga period you will have to taste a bitter experience. And, moreover, none will receive any payment — only food and clothes as now some of you receive.

3. Are you willing to go home to your places and attend your respective occupations? In which case I will go on tour abroad with a select few.

4. Are you all willing to accompany me on a journey begging your food?

A great discussion followed. One of the men said, 'Please, Baba, try and pull on with us as we are without making any changes, overlooking our errors and mistakes.'

Baba replied, 'You try to pull on with me and my orders. I am tired of having my orders frequently disobeyed.'

The spokesman said, 'All right, we will try our best to follow your orders and will accept any punishment for our errors and mistakes.'

Baba said, 'Mind your heads and hearts will begin to whirl.'

The other said, 'Never mind, we will try to control them.'

Baba said, 'All right. Then I won't mind; but don't let your feet turn with your heads.'

Then Baba asked that granting the stay was brought to an end, which of the alternatives were preferred. Seventeen voted in favour of No. 1, that of staying on at Meherabad with hard labour for four months. Twenty-two preferred No. 4, that of going out on the roads as beggars; and five wished to go home and take up their occupations again. But when the general feeling of the men was taken, whether to let the place go on or close it down, the majority favoured continuing. Only Baba said that in view of his keeping himself aloof somebody must be appointed to assume the proper management of the colony and keep order and discipline. Rustomji, Gustadji and Behramji were nominated and a vote taken. Seventeen were for Rustom, four for Gustadji and four for Behram, and accordingly Rustom was declared the head of all departments with full responsibilities and discretionary powers. And with that the meeting ended.

But in the afternoon all were called together again and Baba said that he now proposed to go to Iran or Rangoon with seven of them. They were asked to decide which place. But when many more than that number evinced interest in the proposed tour, names were taken down and the number was thirty. A vote was taken on the issue of which place, and twenty were for Iran. But once more the feeling was taken whether to go on with the arrangement reached in the morning, or not; and the general feeling and wish was for the continuance of Meherabad. Baba confirmed this by saying, 'Let us at least wait ten days for developments and in the meantime see how things shape under the new management.'

Chanji's notes were taken to Baba for correction and returned to him with permission to type them.

In spite of his being the 'passive spectator' Baba joined in the evening cricket. In the middle of the game a man looking very distraught came along. Taken to Baba he said, 'I want to learn some work. If you will have some pity on me God will do you good, and I also will remember you for the rest of my life.' Baba gave him over to Arjun to teach him something; and if he was unfit for any job, give him food and clothes just the same. In the evening Baba went to Kaka's place for supper taking with him seven of the mandali who carried him on their hands in pairs in turn. During the meal Baba talked about future things and repeated what he had said before — that from the twentieth he would stop taking any food for one hundred days and, as a consequence, would become very weak and reduced almost to a skeleton. At the end of the hundred days he would lie as dead for seventy hours, but would revive and not only begin eating again, but would speak as well: and with that his internal work would be manifested and the world would be turned upside down. He asked them to stick to him and they would 'thrive spiritually if not materially.'

Then there was general talk during which the mandali expressed their desire to celebrate the Diwali next week and Baba's Birthday in February on a grand scale and asked Baba to set aside 1,500 rupees (a very large amount in 1926). Baba told them they could hold the Diwali ceremonies and processions but without spending a lot of money on them; and as for his Birthday, who could tell what things would be like then? The future workings were being kept a dead secret. He sanctioned five hundred rupees only for his Birthday.

When he retired to the hill at eight-thirty to begin the 100 days' fast he allowed the mandali to take him in procession with musical instruments, and bhajan-karis leading it. They stayed for an hour singing and dancing and then tea was served. Commenting on this and that, Baba mentioned the low water level in the wells and said that, people came for his blessings and

got what they wanted including abundance of water when they needed it, but the humour of it was that there was insufficient water in the three wells within the boundaries of the sacred place for the colony's needs.

The next day Baba came down from the hill in the afternoon for a few hours and sat by the dhuni idly watching the cricket which was being played every day now — two days by the boys, and three by the mandala — often with hot discussions and disputed umpire rulings carried on after the match was finished. Arun casually mentioned to Baba that some of the boys had been punished by being made to fast, and Baba said that the only punishment should be caning. Walking back up the hill Baba stopped three times.

Baba discoursed upon Love, and the mandali were spellbound.

Such were the feelings of love now that many of the mandali bowed down to Baba every time they passed him in their duties. He told them that twice was enough — in the morning when he came down from the hill and in the evening when he retired. He also asked them not to speak to him directly, but through a few who of necessity had access to him at all times. The same applied to visitors.

The auspicious Dasserah holiday began inauspiciously with Baba calling a meeting at which he dwelt at length on the mismanagement of the school affairs — such as fights breaking out among the boys and none of the staff on the spot to check them. He warned Rustom that the institution was to be conducted as peacefully and thoroughly as when he himself was supervising it. He said that if he heard again of such misbehaviour of the boys, he would not wait for meetings and conferences to discuss it, but would shut down the institutions immediately. 'If you are all tired of this life,' he said, 'say so.'

Then he turned to Arjun, Vishnu and Gustadji and questioned them. Gustadji seemed indifferent. If they did not like the state of things, why, Baba asked, had they at the last meeting raised their hands so promptly in support of their continuance? They replied that they

still favoured going on with things as they were, but so long as they were human beings there could be no guarantee of there being no trivial mistakes on their part. They were sorry about it, but that's how it was. Thereupon Baba pardoned them but warned that they should be very careful in everything they did.

Hockey was introduced in the school for the higher grade boys, and Baba played with them.

Dasserah was continued at one o'clock with Baba being bathed by the mandali near the dhuni and then conducted to the Sai Durbar where arti-puja was performed with great devotion. Then Baba went into the little garden around the zhopdi and picking some flowers went back to the Durbar where he made two garlands to enframe photos of Maharaj and Babajan and then placed them in the decorated coach which would be taken in procession in the evening.

Following these ceremonies a cricket match was suggested by Baba. At five-thirty tea and sweets were served to everybody, and at six the sacred coach, accompanied with music, wound its way up the hill with great rejoicing on all sides. There arti-puja was performed. On the return Baba was carried in a chair all the way. It was dark when they got back. With twenty of the mandali Baba went to Kaka's place for tea and gramophone records.

Baba was specially invited to the ceremonies at Bhingar conducted by one Nath Madhav. He went with fourteen of the mandali. So great was the crush of people to have his darshan that he left lest any were injured. There was a man drunk who had the idea that Baba should be given a military salute and stood to a wobbling 'attention' with hand raised to his forehead until Baba acknowledged it. Baba remarked to the mandali that for all their faults and intemperance he liked these so called low caste Mahars and Mangs as they knew a regard and humility that the so-called cultured yet proud and haughty did not possess. On their return they found one of the Sattha brothers waiting for them with a big bag of sweets.

The day before Baba began his 100-day fast the

assembly bell rang and the mandali hastened to the makan, their dormitory and meeting hall, where Baba invited them, each and all, to ask a boon, and, providing it had a majority support or approval, he would fulfil it. Each was given a slip of paper and pencil to write down his request,

Some of them were:

Mohan: Baba should speak.

Sailor: Baba should eat today.

Behramji: Forgiveness of all sins.

Chanji: A lecture.

Ramjoo: A cup of tea and a packet of 'pan.'

Rustomji: Tea and sweets.

Doctor (Ghani): A cup of milk-tea and a good meal
IMMEDIATELY.

There were some requests for money. The majority wanted food and that Baba should eat with them. Baba said, 'The majority has it. Today being the last day before I begin my hundred-day fast, let all of you singly or in small parties prepare whatever dishes that appeal to you by eight o'clock tonight, and I will eat with you. Ask from the superintendent any ingredients you need and if he hasn't them, someone can go to 'Nagar for them.'

This was greeted with great cheers.

What happened was that the real cooks like Syed Saheb, Masaji and Bomanji set about their business, and the rest for the most part attached themselves to them as 'helpers.' But Ramjoo and Doctor potted about together frying a mess of chillies which had to be thrown out. Three hours passed very happily for these (mostly) young men with keen appetites which for nearly two years had seldom been satisfied.

Syed Saheb and helpers came up with steaming rice and curry; Masaji and helpers, various dishes; Bomanji and his helpers, pulau and Bhagwan stew, while Mohan and Kaka made the chapatis and bhakri (the two kinds of bread).

The meal was served in the Sai Durbar by Baba who

tasted each dish with great delight. Then all partook of the fine food which was fittingly accompanied by music and the recitation of sacred verses.

Then atya-patya was played under the full moon for an hour when especially rich coffee was served to all and Baba went up the hill at eleven-thirty, and the mandali went to their quarters. Before leaving he told the mandali not to pay their respects to him until he said they could again do so.

The next morning, the 20th October, the day he began the 100-day fast, after he had greeted the mandali, Baba had the big table shifted under the neem tree where the track to the hill leads off from the road, as a new seat from which he would have a clear view of all activities. Hardly had that been done when Masaji broke the new rule of 'no approach directly to Baba' by telling him that a Bhil's wife had been seen loitering near the place. But Baba had Behramji called and blamed him for the broken order, and added that, because he had not been elected the general superintendent, he was conniving at creating disorder. Rustomji was called and asked to relinquish his post in favour of Behram and work under him as assistant supervisor — to which he willingly agreed. Later on Rustom blamed Masaji for taking such a trivial thing to Baba, and Masaji flew into a temper. When Baba came to know of this, he called them together again and told them he was disgusted at such petty quarrels among the mandali.

The 21st was an extraordinary day altogether. From the very start Baba was in a disturbed mood. In spite of all the warnings he had given them the mandali kept making mistakes and blunders. The order given the day before not to pay respects to him might as well never have been given — so frequently was it forgotten. Indeed with some of them it was as though they were seeing him again after a long absence — and bowed down to him every time they passed by.

Half way through the morning he called a select meeting, and when they had gathered he told them that the school, dispensary, hospital, Sai Durbar and dharmshala were to be closed down and, with the exception of

the hospital, their buildings demolished by 1st November. 'With a few of you,' Baba told them, 'I will go to Persia and stay there till February, when others such as Rustom, Adi, Doctor, and Ramjoo will join me. From there we will see what our next move will be.' A list was made of about twenty who would accompany him, and they were told to see that their passports were in order by the 28th. This would necessitate those who did not have their current passports, going to Poona or Bombay. The discussions were carried on so earnestly and seriously that it seemed that some were already on their way to the distant land of Persia.

A general meeting of the mandali was now called and all were appraised of the decision. Most of them were very disappointed — so Baba turned the turn another turn and said that although all the institutions were to be closed, he would remain at Meherabad with the mandali and not go to Persia on the following conditions: that there should be no distinctions in anyone's duties and general conditions; that the same food (dal and rice for dinner and jowari bread for breakfast and supper) prepared by Babu Brahmin and his helpers would be eaten by all without any caste distinction. None were to expect any money under any circumstances.

Those who could not accept these terms were free to return to their respective homes and occupations. Nearly all wanted to remain.

At the usual tea-party at Kaka Shahane's place details of disposal were discussed. It was decided to sell the school stationery and equipment for eight hundred rupees — half price. The hospital equipment and medicines, worth 4,000 rupees, were offered to Dr. Karkal for 1,000 less 400 in lieu of salary in advance for four months.

The demolition of the buildings commenced.

The parents of the boys were informed of the school's closing and asked to take their boys away by the end of the month; but if any of the boys, with their parents' consent, wished to stay on with Baba they could do so, not as students receiving regular lessons, but as members

of the mandali who lived according to Baba's whim and pleasure. Some twenty-five of the big boys wanted to stay. Baba said, 'We'll see how many will stick.'

During a private talk with Rustom, Baba told him that he had not thrown everything overboard with no thought or heed for all those who had become dependent on him; on the contrary every individual, young and old, had received his careful attention, and suitable arrangements were being made for each. All of which, Rustom said later, had left him dumbfounded at this man's great love which flowed out to the edges of the world and into every detail of individual lives — for the thought that so many people were to be rendered homeless and helpless had caused him deep sorrow.

By the 22nd of October the dharmshala and hospital were vacated, except for a few bed-ridden cases; and during tea the following afternoon the reallocation of duties according to the changed conditions, i.e. the continuance of the colony till February 1927, was being discussed.

Dhake, Kaka and Chanji were asked to set up the school again in the vacated hospital and reorganize the classes. If Baba approved their plan they would be given a tasty dinner; if not they would have to fast the next day. The work of pulling down the old school buildings was commenced on 31st October.

All the mandali now were placed on an equal footing regarding clothes and food and work; but despite their majority acceptance of Baba's new conditions this met with strong opposition from the Hindu mandala — not for their own sakes they said, but because the Hindu public would think ill of Baba for it. Baba said he was quite capable of looking after himself. Then they complained about the excessive amount of sports and games and not enough time spent on religious observances, Baba ordered arti to be performed three times a day, the first at four o'clock in the morning followed by two hours' meditating. Some said that was too early and too long. Baba said it might be too early for arti, but it wasn't too long for meditation, and so they were to meditate for two hours, and anyone caught dozing would get

a bucket of water poured over his head.

By the 3rd November the work of demolition was completed and all the materials stacked in neat piles ready for disposal. The Sai Durbar was the last to go, leaving only the makan and the hospital building — now the new school.

34. *Interlude*

THE sale of the materials was put in Khan Saheb Kaikhushru's hands, and he obtained very satisfactory prices for everything.

There had been another dry spell and one of the farmers came and told Baba that they needed rain badly. Baba as good as said that that was an easy matter for him — all he had to do was to turn a certain key and open the rain gates and Swoosh! there would be all the water they needed. And with that there was a sharp downpour much to the farmers' astonishment and satisfaction. The mandali's quarters were flooded, as the galvanized iron roof had been stripped off and sold and replaced by matting, and Baba told them to move into the new school which had been the hospital.

The mandali now had a new complaint — Baba's allowing outsiders his darshan but not them. He asked them would they accept the toss of a coin — heads, they could again have darshan regularly: tails, things would remain as they were. Many were dubious about his intentions, looking for some trap, but in the end a coin was tossed and it came down heads and they all threw themselves at his feet.

Baba now began to talk of going to Bombay for the next few months. The routine of the place had become monotonous he said, he needed a change. Especially was he fed-up with his Silence.

The anniversary of the lighting of the dhuni came round and a new arti was sung. It rained again as it had when the sacred fire-place was first installed and lit.

There was a discussion between Mohan and Dhake on self-sufficiency and independence — especially regarding money. Baba told them: Everyone in the world in one way or another depends upon someone or something.

Even to take a single breath one has to depend upon on the powers of nature. The things which you think are great and necessary for your advancement are, in the eyes of the Masters, injurious to you and prevent you from advancing. It is for that reason that they neither allow you to dabble with such notions as 'self-support' and 'independence,' nor themselves put their minds into them. Such being the case, the best possible thing is to depend on One Who Does Not Depend on Anyone or Anything.

By the 11th November the talk about going away materialized into a definite decision to go. A circular to that effect, and giving a list of names of those who would be going with him, was issued. There was much grumbling from those who were not listed, so Baba called a general meeting and asked everyone to state his wishes. Most wanted the change — 'excursion' probably was in their minds, or 'diversion,' but a few, which included Padri, were willing to abide by Baba's wish and will. They were asked to remain behind and caretake the place, always believing that he was with them. Gulmai, Baba's spiritual Mother, and Shirinmai, his earthly Mother, and the other women who were staying at the place were present. After much discussion Baba said there would be no move before the twentieth and closed the meeting. Talking to a few of the mandali privately that night he said that the real reason for winding up the institutions and activities including the school (as it had been) was that he intended leaving the place. Presumably he was referring to the proposed trip, but his companions could not be sure that he was not hinting at another 'going away by himself' as he had done twice before.

Then he went up the hill with the intention of staying four or five days; but came down again on the second day when Bomanji and Behramji were in the midst of a heated quarrel. Peace was restored immediately, but Baba felt it keenly that such a thing had taken place; and he ordered the food to be served by a Mahar. This was a great punishment for the Marathas and Brahmins. Furthermore, all meals were to be eaten in the makan.

Arjun became the father of a son, and Baba asked

him was he going to put on a tea-party? He replied that since he had left all his affairs in his hands, Baba should do what he thought best.

A general discussion on marriage came up, and Baba said that it was one of the great essentials of life, and that was why Buddha, Mohammed, Upasni Maharaj, Tukaram and other Masters were married; only those Masters who became realized before the usual time of marriage remained single like Christ, Sarikaracharya and himself. Baba asked who among the single mandali wanted to marry. No one stepped forward. Finally he told Naval and Kishan they would have sons.

Baba had another passing fancy to give names to some of the mandali, as he had a couple of years before. He came out with: Sikandar, Dalindar, Bori Bundar. Grinder, Plunder, Wonder for various ones. Then he gave himself one: Samundar (Ocean). He said that from the following day these names should be used; but later cancelled the order.

Baba now decided to stay in Lonavla for ten days and Bombay for twenty. Invitations had been received earlier from Sadashiv Patil and Sailor to stay at their places in Poona for some time, and he considered including that place. They might also go to Karachi. Votes were taken and the majority wanted Lonavla and Bombay. Shirinmai returned to Poona.

One time Pandoba was passing by Baba's seat and was heard muttering that there was nothing important in the world, and Baba from inside replied that he was quite right — for the one Realized it was less than a dream. Even an intellectual giant like Shakespeare with his marvellous poetic flights was not even a shadow of Existence-Bliss. Hafiz says the world is nothing into nothing.

By the 24th all was ready. Except for the caretakers, everyone, mandali, women and boys were going. One item had been difficult to decide — whether to keep the huge pile of letters that had accumulated over the last two years. Finally Baba said, burn them. They left the next morning after breakfast of bread and butter and tea. Every precaution had been taken to keep the departure

secret but the news of it had leaked out and there was a small crowd at the railway station to have Baba's darshan — perhaps for the last time; but only Chanji, Masa and Kaikhushru with the luggage came; Baba and party left in lorries direct to Lonavla where Ramjoo and Doctor had rented a large bungalow.

When the luggage-party arrived, Baba inquired had they had anything to eat on their journey? Chanji and Masa had, but Kaikhushru was vague. Suddenly Baba seized him and shook him and reminded the three of them of his order not to eat outside Meherabad without his permission. They admitted their mistake, but said that they had thought that order had been automatically cancelled on their leaving the ashram. Baba then leapt at Masa and shook him so violently that half his clothes fell off. This caused great consternation among the mandali and Baba ordered them all out of the room; but in a few minutes called them back, and in a jolly way asked what they thought of his strength; and then solicitously inquired of Masa and Kaikhushru were either of them hurt. This reminded Baba and the mandali of the scenes of violence (jalal) in the Manzil-e-Meem and how they had to be constantly on the alert. A tasty supper was served and the mandali went to bed with the assurance of sleeping till six o'clock.

They awoke to sunshine and scenery and hill air and an immediate well-kept garden; and presently a heaped table of bread and butter and tea with milk. After two years in the semi-desert of Meherabad and semi-starvation, this was indeed a holiday. There were no duties. Baba played marbles and cards with the boys and men and they were allowed to go for walks: only Chanji worked — keeping his diary and making notes on Baba's recent explanations. Referring to these explanations, Baba said they were interesting, but not to be compared with the three hundred pages he had written over the last two years; and even those pages were only points to be developed and elaborated. They contained secrets never before divulged by saint or prophet.

Baba spent some time with the women every afternoon. Babu wrote from Poona offering to bring a good

singer. It was put to the vote and all were in favour.

Baba briefly visited Ramjoo's house, and Doctor's new venture — a flour mill. On returning, someone pointed out Dr. Biwalkar's Health Home. It so happened (so it was found out later) that the doctor and his family were waiting by their gate on the chance of seeing Baba, when the car stopped and Baba asked could he come in. The doctor, delighted by this stroke of fortune, welcomed him in and showed him round; and Baba insisted upon being shown every spot in the home. Baba was away for less than an hour and was annoyed when he got back to find that some of the mandali had gone for a walk, for he had told them he would be spending the morning with them.

Barsoap came from Poona late one night. His manner was most boorish, but Baba spent more than an hour with him.

One afternoon the tranquillity of the place was rudely broken by some relatives of the landlord who did not know the bungalow was rented, trying to enter the compound. Pesotam who was watchman asked them what they wanted, but they tried to brush past him. But other mandali quickly ran forward and blocked their way. This so exasperated the intruders that they started abusing the mandali with foul language, and this, in turn, infuriated them, and, forgetting the rule of non violence, Ramjoo sprang at the throat of the leader of the party, but was dragged off, and the intruders at last were hustled out.

The moment they were gone Baba came out of his room where he had been listening to it all and told them to start a game of marbles immediately. Many of the mandali were white with anger, but because of their discipline, they promptly obeyed the order and started playing. After some time when the atmosphere cleared, Baba stopped the game and discussed the incident with them. Then he said, 'If you who are with me become angry when provoked, what is the fault of worldly people when they lose their tempers?' The next day there was a note of apology from the landlord. He added that the party could stay as long as Baba wished.

At cards one evening a new merriment was introduced — losers of each game had to stand up and sit down quickly again several times in quick succession.

The schoolboys were sent back to 'Nagar, and instructions regarding them sent to Sattha and Shahane.

Arjun's health had not been good for some time and now his condition became serious, and he was taken to Dr. Biwalkar's hospital.

Abdurrehman entertained Baba with his fine singing. The next day, 3rd December, was visitors' day at the bungalow, and for a small town quite a lot of people took advantage of it. Some only came out of curiosity or for blessings, but many earnestly desired Baba's darshan. When the last had left, Baba went to see Arjun. The following day was also made open for visitors, and at the end of it Baba again went to see Arjun. After supper he played a few hands of cards.

On 5th December they all went to Bombay. They arrived at Dadar with nearly a hundred pieces of luggage, to find that because of some strange conjunction of holidays there were no vehicles of any sort for hire to tranship the mountain to another railway system that would take them to Santa Cruz, their destination. Neither were there any porters except at exorbitant rates, so the mandali had to do it themselves. Gentlemen acting as coolies was a novel sight, and soon a small crowd gathered to give advice and encouragement. Eventually they got hold of half a dozen porters with a hand-cart, but its small rubber wheels got stuck in the tracks. The headlights of an oncoming train cut through the darkness and the gates were starting to close. With a great shouting and swearing and some useful help from the mandali they picked up the cart bodily and got it over to the other platform.

Baba and his two attendants took a Victoria carriage to the bungalow which one, Shri Ramdas, had made available to them. Rustom escorted the women. It was ten thirty before everyone and everything arrived. The food hampers arrived last, and it was midnight before they all got a meal and went to bed.

The holiday mood continued with plenty of good

food: breakfast, bread and butter generously spread and milk-tea; dinner, dal and rice and one vegetable; afternoon tea and supper of bread and vegetables; walks and talks and marble and card playing. No duties.

This lasted for five more days and then a meeting was called and the desirability of the mandali getting jobs was discussed. Baba cautioned that the lack of regular work could spoil their health and make them apathetic towards future activities. He suggested that some get jobs in tea shops. Other suggestions were made. Eventually the majority voted for match-box labeling — which work was obtainable at piecework rates to bring home and do. Baba gave his consent and said that at least twelve must earn money. Gulab, Kaikhushru and Behram were detailed to apply for the work. They were taken on, shown how to do the work and given materials for a thousand boxes. Baba gave them two days to pick up the knack of it and then they would have to turn out a fixed quota each day. Baba also practised. After the two days the quota was fixed at eight thousand or get other jobs. This was far in excess of their practice output, and an emergency meeting was called to review the situation. Other means of livelihood were discussed, but they came back to labelling matchboxes. They appealed to Baba to be lenient and give them more time to become proficient.

Daily reports on Arjun's condition were received and various ones were sent to give him round-the-clock attendance, but there was no improvement.

Baba sounded everyone's opinion on Shiraz in Iran, Kashi or Benares, Ajmer, Nasik, or Talegaon as suitable places for a stay.

Nadirshah had a dream, in which Baba was sitting at his bed-side passing his hands over his face as though giving him Realization.

Chanji dreamt that he saw a great procession of elephants richly caparisoned, the chief of which carried Babajan's mortal remains in a jewelled casket.

A lot of people came to see Baba on visitors' days for his darshan or for advice on their problems of living, and he did not stint them refreshment; and at night

the Dadar Bhajan Mandali entertained their Lord.

On the nineteenth Arjun's condition was causing anxiety and Baba sent Vishnu to Lonavla to personally report.

Word came from Poona that Babajan was becoming more and more popular, and day and night there were Hindus around her. She was spending most of the time under a great tree just outside the Bund Gardens or driving about. Baba said it was a sign that soon she would drop her body; and that he must remain near her 'territorial boundary.' The same thing, he said, had happened when Sai Baba was about to drop his body and Upasni, who was touring in Bengal, returned to Sakori.

Talk about going away now centred on Talegaon as the most suitable place for a stay — it being accessible from all sides, near Babajan, and where work would easily be obtainable. There was no further talk about other places, except a brief mention of Sinhghadh, Shivaji's great fortress. Ramjoo was called to discuss details.

Arjun's illness, Baba's insistence that they do outside work, the uneventful days and a return to monotonous plain food was making the mandali restive again. Some murmured about returning to their homes.

Arjun became paralysed down one side. Biwalkar called in another doctor for consultation; he recommended application of leeches to the head. (It was thought that paralysis was caused by blood-pressure on the brain.) Biwalkar concurred and wired to Baba for his permission, which was given, and the leeches were applied 'very successfully.'

Arjun the fisherman expired at five o'clock in the morning of the 22nd December. The first of the giants among the mandali had fallen — with no crash of armour on the battlefield: his soul escaped from its cage and Baba seized it and buried it deep in his heart until the time of his disciple's next coming-forth in love and service. His position had been unique inasmuch as he was the only one of the Hindu mandali that had access to Baba at any time. Perhaps this was because

of the quality of his obedience which admitted few obstructions to the carrying out of the Master's word, and so he was preferred to the higher castes.

The mandali were shocked over Arjun's passing, but Baba told them that he had died well and had been greatly pushed forward on the Path.

There was now a general restlessness in the air. Although Baba had settled on Talegaon for their next stay and had sent Ramjoo to arrange accommodation, and some of the mandali had begun a suggestion of packing, he had not given the final order to leave, but on the contrary had reopened the discussion of where to go. In the midst of this Rustom arrived from 'Nagar, and after listening to the talk said why not return to Meherabad. Baba said, 'That is just what we will do — return to Meherabad.' And the mandali were too astonished to speak.

They arrived back at the ashram at nine o'clock in the morning of the 25th December. They had been absent one month.

35. *Meherabad* — 2

THE Christian New Year, 1927, was observed as a holiday with milk-tea and sweets for breakfast. The post brought many greetings which Baba shared with the mandali. There was a letter from a friend of Vishnu's, Vinayak Neelkanth, who said that on the 27th of December he had met Baba on the Poona Express near Kalgaon and Baba had talked to him about Arjun. A letter from Babu in Poona said that Babajan had been keeping ill-health, and Baba commented, 'These old people are very sticky.'

There was some discussion about the political scene in India and a prominent Mohammedan barrister was noted as exhorting his audience of fifteen hundred co-religionists to convert as many Hindus as possible so that when swaraj was established in the land, the Mohammedans would have a decisive voice in the government.

Baba said that the present turmoil in the country was due to the internal workings of the Masters, and in time this would set the whole of India at loggerheads. 'At present,' he said, 'things do not look particularly serious; but a trifling cause could upset everything and nothing could check it. Even Gandhi is reported as saying that he had studied all the religions but preferred Hinduism. Such sentiments are nothing but a sign of weakness and narrow-mindedness, Gandhi is a sincere public worker but the amount he can do is limited to the instrument of his physical body — the only means he has of serving — while there are many who have gone beyond the subtle and mental realms. Gandhi can never be compared with such great Workers. These workers are for the most part unseen and unknown; they are like the electric power-station, which

is, as it were, itself in darkness while lighting a whole city. This place, Meherabad, is such a power-station, and all of you should stick to me.'

Baba distributed sweets many times during the day, and closed the holiday with a nice story, 'The Sadguru and the Yogi.'

There was once a Mohammedan Sadguru who always went about alone with no mandali or fixed place of residence, and was almost unknown. Once as he was passing down a street an animal fell into a well. A yogi who lived in a little house by the well saw the animal fall in and, for the ego-tickling time-pass of the thing put his hand down the well and pulled it out; whereupon the Sadguru shouted to him, 'Learn faqiri (Poverty) and leave out the jugglery' and went on down to the river and crossed to the other side in the ferry and sat down in a quiet spot away from the town.

The yogi was not only addicted to sleight-of-hand tricks but also given to sudden anger and he decided to show up the Sadguru. So he had a pulao of rice and vegetables and dog's flesh with herbs and spices prepared, and gave it along with a bottle of wine to a beautiful girl to go and tempt the Master; but he after doing full justice to the meal, sent back word, 'Enjoyed all three. Thanks.' This enraged the yogi, who summoned his flock of disciples and got a horse for himself, and started off to teach the other a lesson.

Half-way across the stream the horse stopped and relieved itself, and the Sadguru shouted, 'Hey, your horse is spoiling the clean river water.' The yogi turned to his followers and mockingly said, 'Has there ever lived such a simpleton? Now we'll have some fun with him.' So he shouted back, 'How could a few drops of horse piss possibly pollute a great river?' Came the Sadguru's rejoinder pat, 'How could a bottle of wine, a dish of dog flesh and a girl's smiles spoil the infinite Divine Ocean of Consciousness?' The yogi left his way of error and took the true way to the feet of the Master. Before retiring, Baba told them that from the next day he would cease writing, both with a slate and pencil and pen and paper, what he had to say; and gave them

all necessary instructions. He did not know when the writing (and even speaking) would be resumed — it all depended on Babajan. Shankarnath and Masaji were given watchman duty at night outside the zhopdi.

The next day opened with much confusion and an almost total breakdown in communication, so Baba had the English alphabet and numerals naught to nine painted on a board about 8 inches X 6 inches and began forming words and sentences by pointing to them — also using signs and his inimitably expressive gestures.

Barsoap came from Poona demanding five thousand rupees from Baba. His manner was very insolent and Baba told him that he himself was short of money then and could not lay his hands on anything like that amount, but later on, after Babajan dropped her body, he would give him double that amount. He asked Barsoap to return to Poona and remain near Babajan. Baba spent nearly three hours trying to get some sense into the man's buffalo skull — even clasping his hands before him in supplication — but without any success. He had called those of the mandali who were around, and who had been wondering why Baba was giving so much time to this man, and told them the situation. This enraged many of them, and but for the standing order of non-violence they would have seized him by the throat, and choked him. Baba then got up and walked towards the hall. Barsoap started following and Baba turned round and waved him back, but he continued to follow and the mandali quickly cut him off and he retreated to the road and lay down under a tree where they ignored him but kept a watchful eye on him. A few hours of this seemed to bring him to his senses and he asked someone to convey to Baba his willingness to return to Poona and would Baba help him in his immediate money difficulties. Baba had a hundred rupees given to him, but on condition that he should no longer consider himself as having any further connection with Baba. And with that he left.

The next day Baba called the mandali together and referring to Barsoap reminded them all that they should

stay with him without expectation of spiritual or material reward.

A new school for the village children accommodating forty pupils was opened in the bungalow previously occupied by Kaka Shahane and his family on the outskirts of Arangaon. They went to their homes in the evening. Pandoba, Gadekar and Nisal were appointed teachers. The higher grade boys were sent to various schools in 'Nagar at Baba's expense.

Behram drew Raba's attention to the fact that most of the mandali had nothing to do. The flour-grinding was now being done by women in the village and the bread-making by the ashram women. Patil with a helper fetched water. Chanji attended to correspondence and kept his diary. Apart from these and the three teachers, the rest of them were idle. Baba allotted duties to various ones, including to some, the repetition silently of the Name of God. 'This,' he said, 'should be done with heart and soul. Think of one thing only — God — and remain in a fixed position without fidgeting. Let the Name of the Lord alone be on your lips, but if in spite of all efforts your mind wanders, don't give up — continue to try to concentrate upon Him, and you will see my True Form and many other wonders.'

The old 'Mess Quarters' was thoroughly cleaned and whitewashed.

The mandali met together and discussed forming a committee to organize Baba's Birthday celebrations. They began making out a list of possible donors. Baba showed no interest in the matter — he had already agreed to allow only five hundred rupees for expenses.

In the second week in January after breakfast Baba with most of the mandali set out on house visits in 'Nagar. They went first to Kaka's place, then to Chinta-mani's and Laxmanrao's, then to the photographer's and lastly to Khushru Quarters. At each place they were given refreshments and sweets. On their return Baba asked them to fast for the rest of the day.

Then with Rustomji, Behramji, Padri, Pesu, Jal and two of the women Baba went to Poona, arriving at Abdulla H. Jaffar's place in Main Street at ten-thirty.

Rustomji took the women to the Registrar's office in connection with some property transfer. After tea the party went to Kasba Peth to Patil's house. Here, many of the old Manzil-e-Meem companions came for Baba's darshan and also many new ones. They left at four-thirty, but because of car trouble took five hours to cover the seventy miles to Meherabad.

Now one, Hormusji Rustom Mobedji from Dhobitalao, Bombay, came to see Baba. He had been on the verge of ruin financially, and his health was shattered and he contemplated suicide. Then he read a life-sketch of Baba in some journal, and felt so strongly attracted towards him that he started concentrating mentally on him and repeating his name. One night he dreamt that he went on pilgrimage and met a holy Dastur. (He now saw that the place resembled Meherabad and that the Dastur was Baba.) He sought help in his affairs and to his great surprise it was immediately forthcoming from an unexpected quarter. Gradually all his difficulties melted away marvellously; so he had, he told Baba, to come and pay homage to him. Baba asked him to stay for a few days.

A special meeting was called to discuss work for the mandali for, he said, he did not like to see them idle even for short periods. He asked each to suggest a suitable occupation for himself. None could think what needed to be done or whether he could do it — or think well in terms of labour which was foreign to him. So Baba asked them would they accept his suggestion — that everyone meditate on God for three hours daily — for remembrance of God and repetition of His Name was the best work that anyone could do. All agreed to this, but some asked for a trial before committing themselves. Baba allowed this, and was just about to give them an oath to swear when Pendu suddenly dug his toes in. He said it was impossible to meditate for three hours. He had been doing the one hour and that was a stiff job and he wasn't doing any more. Pendu was at his most excitable. Baba was much disturbed at this and told Pendu to pack up and leave; but later cancelled the order and also the three-hour meditation project all

round, but asked all to do one hour daily, diligently and sincerely.

Dhakephalkar rejoined the school staff and lived at the place. On the Hindu holiday of Sankrat, Baba showered sweets on the mandali inviting each to get as many as he could.

One day during general chit-chat Baba said that the next day they would have to dig a pit four feet deep. On that day a broken blind old man who had been staying for some time in the dharmshala, died and was buried under Baba's own supervision.

In one of his talks Baba now approached the subject of women and wealth from a different angle: he said that if they could control their thoughts of these two allurements he would put up with all their other defects and mistakes. This alone — not thinking about money and women — created in him a love for them.

There was another meeting to discuss the celebration of Baba's Birthday. The discussion became very heated, and Baba was disappointed with their general tone and attitude. Behram so lost his temper that he wanted to leave the place, and Baba sat with him later alone by the zhopdi for two hours to bring him back to normality.

The next day, the 10th January, a Thursday public day, after the visitors had all left, Baba called the mandali and told them he was so disappointed with their general attitude and behaviour that he no longer wanted any of them with him; they could all go away — to their homes or anywhere else they liked. They could scarcely believe their ears; but Baba went on discussing the date and actual time of the dispersion and sent a special message to 'Nagar to fetch Rustomji to help organize it. Then he said that he also would go away by himself and Meherabad would be disposed of. This so touched them that they declared in a body that they wanted to stay with him under any circumstances.

Baba then said that they all could continue with him and he would not go away on three conditions:

1. All should stay with him as long as he observed Silence.

2. He might break his Silence whenever he liked; the next day or after a year or so.
3. None should ask for money under any circumstances.

All agreed to these conditions, and Baba sent for fire and incense, and when it was brought he took an oath from each of them and gave them some incense to burn as a seal of their oaths.

With this, all were forgiven their little sins. But Behram was so filled with grief for his outburst the day before that he offered to accept any punishment Baba might order. But Baba said that his grief was sincere, and that in itself was sufficient punishment. By the time Rustom arrived there was peace, soft-falling and enveloping, born of gratitude that they had not been disbanded.

Now for a few days Baba stayed in the zhopdi. He did not take any food; occasionally he called Chanji to play draughts with him. He said he was thinking of reopening the Boarding School, but did not pursue the idea because of the work it would entail for him in persuading and goading the mandali to get it going. It was better for him to sit quietly in the zhopdi, for that would help the mandali to remain aloof from thoughts of women and wealth.

Despite the oaths taken over the three Conditions, Dhake and a few others tried to sneak away to their homes.

Baba came out from the zhopdi quite suddenly and called a general meeting to discuss the question of reopening the school and also the free hospital. Rustomji was made chairman of the meeting. First it had to be decided whether the majority wanted a new field of work or preferred to go on as they were. The majority wanted a new field. The next point was finances. Baba said he would provide Rs. 100,000 to set up the institutions and Rs. 1500 a month for running expenses. No outside donations or grants would be accepted. The mandali liked that because it would leave them free from any outside pressures or interference. Then the

scarcity of water was brought up, and Baba guaranteed that as with a sufficiency of money, there would be abundance of water for all operations and development.

It was decided to spend Rs. 20,000 on buildings: the school, to be erected on the site where the Sai Darbar had been; the hospital, where the dharmsala was; and a dispensary where Arjun had had his house.

The staffing of the school was the next consideration Baba wanted teachers who could give their time free; and as a step toward this he asked the mandali to sign agreements to give ten years' free service. Privately one of the mandali complained, what was all this talk of schemes and plans if not Baba's tactics of gradually edging them toward acceptance of *a very long stay with him?*

It was agreed that Rustom be in charge of the whole concern, answerable only to Baba.

The curriculum was the next point discussed, and that discussion was lengthy. Some thought it should conform to that of recognized government schools, and some wanted Baba to run the school on his own lines — whatever those lines should be. The former pointed out that without the regular subjects being studied the boys upon leaving would find it difficult if not impossible to find employment; while the latter contended that if they taught only the recognized subjects, their hands would be tied and there would be no point in having a school at all. This led to the question, should government recognition be sought or should it remain a private concern. Someone was detailed to get a copy of the government and municipal rules on such matters, and Pandoba said that his brother, who was an architect, would start making a plan of the proposed building.

The discussions were continued the next day, and the opinions of visitors were asked. Rustom reported that he had succeeded in obtaining the hire of a government boring machine to drill a new well. Pandoba's brother came back at night with a rough draft which was inspected and commented on by everyone, and many alterations, additions and subtractions were suggested. The draftsman promised a finished plan in a week, and

also undertook to see that no hitches occurred because of government or municipal rules.

Before retiring for the night Baba walked up the road with the mandali past the village and back.

Discussion continued the next morning. Then Baba brought up a new topic, the war in China and the sending of Indian troops there as reported in the Indian Daily Mail. Baba strongly condemned this move and the refusal of the Viceroy to allow discussion on it in the Council. He said that if these hostilities did not cease soon, the British would be the greatest sufferers — losing name, fame and possessions.

With all their underhand dealings (called diplomacy), they had already made most of the world their enemies, and they would suffer for all their injustices. But, Baba added, the cause of the present trouble in China was Bolshevik Russia's mischief-making.

This talk naturally led to the possibility of Indian military taking over the Meherabad colony and set up another military camp there. Baba went along with it for some time and then told the mandali not to bother over the question. 'Raise the new school,' he said, 'as quickly as you can and leave the rest to me.' He said that the key to all the affairs of the world was with him and when he turned it there would be a great conflagration in the world — yet all there at the ashram would be quietly going about their daily lives as usual. Sai Baba had started and managed and brought to its conclusion the Great War while sitting in an out-of-the-way place like Shirdi seemingly doing nothing.

There was an announcement in the papers of the death of Dastur Kaikobad, an eminent priest in the Zoroastrian community. Baba said that these 'dasturs,' 'pundits,' and 'maulvis' do nothing but preach, pray and pocket the money that blindly believing people poured out to them. But they alone are not to be blamed: people should have the courage to refuse to give them money. As it is, they shell out to the priests and at the same time complain bitterly that they are used too heavily.

'Look at all the fuss and show (and the cost of it) of

marriages in nearly all creeds and classes. The purpose of it all is simply to publicize the fact that so and so man and woman have united as man and wife and none else has any similar claim on either of them. Could not this be done simply and cheaply by registration and advertisement?

‘As for the “blessings” and advice of the priest (which are proportionate to the fatness of the fees) what can be said? It all amounts to: not to quarrel, not to separate from each other, love one another and live a long time. These pious sentiments are then sealed with heavy wining and dining and many vulgar exhibitions under the very nose of the smiling priest who pats his pocket where he put the money, and at a convenient moment, still smiling, begs to be excused, and retires — a hired murmur of prayers, a paid conferrer of blessings. And sometimes it happens that with the dying away of the sounds of the feast (if not earlier) the couple begin quarrelling. To where have gone the blessings and the prayers? And what can the poor priest do except look grave or laugh and offer more advice? — For knowledge is not his share; it is not his time for blessing, but to be blessed with honest sense.

‘It is not bought blessings and ceremonies and feasts that can save us from evil consequences, but our own actions. It is the understanding, love and goodness of each for each that alone can make the couple happy, as it is only their selfishness which makes them quarrel. All should realize this and stop wasting money on rituals and ceremonies.’

At night they all went for a walk on the ‘Nagar side.

A yogi from the village of Rahuri attracted much attention on one of the Thursday public days. It was believed that he was three hundred years old and that he had been living continuously without a gap for fourteen hundred years, changing his body by his yogic powers whenever the sanskaric store of that body was used up and another was required. It was said that at times he does not eat or drink water for long periods, but in his own words ‘lives on air.’ He demonstrated to the mandali something of his control of breath — filling his belly

with air until it was like a great drum. He spent his time cooking food for ascetics and wanderers and especially feeding animals. From time to time he made collections or invited subscriptions to pay for the meals. Baba gave twenty rupees and applied dhuni ash to his forehead. Then Baba applied the ash to each of the mandali.

The China War continued to be discussed. Baba repeated that unless Britain did not soon modify her policy, she was doomed.

Babajan's birthday (January 28th) should have been of great joy, but it turned out dismal and desultory, with the mandali messing up the times and items of the program and not having the arti paraphernalia at hand. The teachers had forgotten to tell children of the holiday, and the classes went on till noon. No one, not even some of the boys, came from the village and a few only from 'Nagar—the exact opposite the animated scene the year before. Baba showed his displeasure with the mandali for the poor show, especially took the teachers to task for not getting boys there.

With the bell for the evening meal the mandali as usual lined up with plates and glasses. Suddenly, to the amazement and consternation of everyone, Baba seized the great pot of vegetables and hurled it out of the window. This was the old storm-signal flashing again, and in less than a minute not a soul was to be seen. After some time they were recalled, but only for dry bread and water. Baba spoke quietly to them. He contrasted their lack of effort through the day with Arjun's devotion to his work and his zeal and enthusiasm on such occasions to have everything just right. He then served milk-tea to everyone and soon the peaceful atmosphere was restored, and each was left free to enjoy himself as he wished until bedtime. Some amused themselves with singing, some played gramophone records—spaced well apart so that neither interfered with the other—and some played indoor games. Baba spent an hour with the women, and when he returned he brought a large bowl of sweet things which they all enjoyed.

On February the first the school classes were brought

from the bungalow near the village into Meherabad proper. Discussion continued on the new boarding school. Someone said that there had been so many changes and additions to the plan that Rs. 20,000 would not be nearly sufficient. Consequently a steel-framed, corrugated-iron roofed and sheeted structure which is cheap and quickly erected, found favour with many, but some opposed it on the grounds of 'inelegance.'

Then Baba took from his pocket a rubber ball and threw it against the wall and caught it, several times at first gently, then gradually more swiftly until he failed to catch it.

Then he said, 'A ball rebounds to the thrower with the same force with which it is thrown. The wall does nothing and remains unaffected — like the Sadguru. It is for the thrower (if he intends to catch the ball) to gauge the force with which he throws it. And so with our building. If you go in for good appearance the cost will rise and rise until it becomes unmanageable. First look at the amount of money at your disposal and then talk about elegance and beauty. I am the wall which does nothing. You are to throw the ball and catch it on its rebound. So gauge your capacities before you make the throw — "Look before you leap."'

Rustom had been away all day on ashram business. When he was told about the meeting, he objected strongly to the steel and iron proposal, saying that the tin sheds would look like stables. So Baba increased the allotment of Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 30,000, and called for a fresh set of plans — but for two hundred boys, not four hundred as originally required.

A young todiwala, Manhar, lost his wife and wanted to renounce the world. Baba told him not to grieve and that his wife was very fortunate for she was one of his real devotees and had performed his arti very fervently only a few days before she died. Baba advised him to remarry soon and he would give him a nice and well-favoured son. Marriage, he said, was no binding at all; it is the mind that has to be kept free, unattached and quiet in all conditions. It was very easy to talk about renunciation — but that was the work of heroes.

Baba now brought all discussion of the school back to base: Did the mandali want to go on with the project, or not? All were asked to answer freely. All did. Then the first step, he said, was to decide who would permanently stay there, organize the constructions and manage the place when built. Rustomji, Behram, Chanji, Kaikhushru and Vishnu immediately offered themselves. They were accepted.

Baba went round to the dining hall to serve the evening meal, and was angry to find that some left-over dal had been mixed in with the vegetables — when he had expressly ordered that dal should not be served twice in one day.

Robbers were reported to be active in the district and Baba said there should be a night-watchman outside the makan. Padri volunteered for the job.

Gopala Swami, the sanyasi who had asked for 5,000 rupees some time ago, came again to the ashram. Whether it was intentional or coincidental was not apparent, but Baba talked at length on hypocrisy and false pretensions. He was greatly displeased, he said, with those who posed publicly as his special disciples and allowed people to bow down to them. ‘What earthly use,’ he said, ‘is it to make believe that one is a mahatma, or guru or saint when one is not? To lay claim to such a state and station one must be one with God; if one isn’t it is a very great sin, a spiritual crime of the worst kind. First become the Dev (God) and then become a Guru.’

Baba then asked the Swami why he was still dispensing drugs when he had been told not to. The man denied having done so and said that Baba had given him permission to treat the public to the extent of his knowledge and without consideration of money. Baba asked him would he like to stay with him. He said he would and took Baba’s permission to go to Bombay and bring his things.

In the first week of February Rustom came back to live with the mandali.

A couple of days later Baba took his five ‘key’ men aside and proposed a brand new plan. There would be only one building, and it with a dual purpose: a school

during the day and a hostel at night for the boys. The present, dining-room would also be a boys' hostel. The mandali would either live in the converted stone tank on the hill or in the old post office. The dispensary would be in a part of the Arangaon bungalow. To begin with there would be not more than two hundred boys. This way, Baba said, the cost would be small and the job could be done quickly. His estimate of the cost was Rs. 9,000. The five concurred, and Naval was called and asked to draw a plan for the single building.

In the evening the proposals were put before a full meeting and discussion invited. It went on for some hours. The vote when taken was unanimous, but spiritless. Baba abruptly closed the meeting, saying that he was greatly disappointed with their apathy and went to the zhopdi and shut himself in, telling the watchman to allow no one to come near. It was now nearly three o'clock in the morning; and the mandali, tired and confused, went to their beds.

Baba remained in the zhopdi till early afternoon the next day, when he came out and walked away towards the village and lay down under a tree. The mandali in a body approached, and Behram, speaking for all, asked Baba to forgive them for causing him annoyance the night before. There was silence for some time, then Baba suddenly sat up and asked why they were all there. The spokesman repeated their sorrow at having annoyed him, and he said he was not annoyed, and to prove it invited them to come back to the ashram where he divided among them a basket of fruit someone had brought just a little while earlier. Then he turned towards the zhopdi, but the mandali asked him to come to the makan. He said he would later, now he wanted some more rest and peace. And with that went into the zhopdi.

Presently he came out again and there was another two-hour session, during which some couplets of Hafiz were stirred into the stew of companionship to give it more flavour.

‘Who told you to fall in love with the Beloved?

But since you did, don't murmur in complaint — keep quiet.

‘A bird trapped in a cage must wait till the door is opened.

It is useless for it to try and break open the cage.

‘The position of God-realization for you
Is that of an ant under the foot of an elephant.

‘The light of the eyes of the Beloved should be experienced

Before you gaze at the lovely curls of His head.’

It was finally decided to erect the steel and iron building near the dining-room.

Baba explained that the idea behind this project of a school with free boarding, lodging, clothes and books was merely an inducement to enable him through close personal contact with the boys to put as many as possible in the spiritual line and so mould their characters in an ideal way.

Behram suffered another of his aberrations of authority. The evening Puranic recitation had been reinstituted and one evening many of the mandali remained chatting together or playing draughts, and Behramji, mindful of Baba’s recent displeasure over the general waywardness and lack of discipline, ordered everyone to attend the holy recitation. But instead of tactfully reminding them that this sort of lolling about was displeasing to Baba he gave his order in a harsh, haughty manner which roused the entire mandali in open revolt against his managership. Behram went so far as to demand instant obedience to his order, but Naval and others jibbed at that. Baba intervened and peace was restored and they retired for the night. But when they met Baba in the morning there were, deep down, many knots of resentment and disaffection that sleep had not undone. And Behram had learned a hard lesson: that those who a few days ago had elected him now unanimously rejected him.

Almost immediately with Baba’s arrival there was a flare-up between Pendu and Kaikhushru, with the first accusing the other of double-dealing. Baba sympathized

with Kaikhushru for his having been called a double-dealer and made Pendu withdraw the remark. Then, after he had let Pendu feel his displeasure at his too-quick temper, Baba began praising his sincere service and mild good nature on the whole and so both were pacified.

Then Pendu and his father, Masaji, found some small fault with one another. They had had father-son difficulties from the beginning, when Pendu first arrived at the Manzil-e-Meem; and Baba now did not let their anger bite deep, but hushed it to sleep again.

Masaji had once thrown fifteen drunks out of his restaurant, but was old and sick now, and Baba relieved him of his post of night-watchman and had him made comfortable in a small room and detailed someone to look after him day and night. Baba gave him his own bedding.

Sattha was asked to draft a leaflet publicizing the purposes of the school and the advantages and benefits to be received from it. Particular emphasis was to be laid on the condition that once the pupil was accepted he must remain in the institution until the completion of the full course, and that the granting of leave to go home (even in an emergency) would be at Baba's discretion. The boys would be required to observe a strict discipline and purity in thought and all actions, for if they were allowed indiscriminate leave they would run the risk of being polluted in one way or another by the company of worldly people even though they were relatives or friends. But once the boys had passed through a long period of discipline and the restrictions of the school, their characters would be sufficiently moulded on ideal spiritual lines and they would be unaffected in the midst of worldly affairs. A draft of the leaflet was approved at a general meeting and sent to the printers.

Among the visitors at this time were the Public Prosecutor, two magistrates, the President of the District Local Board and other prominent citizens; and all seemed to be impressed and pleased with the scheme.

Now the discussions turned on the staffing of the institution with selfless workers. Many of the mandali doubted whether they could attract a sufficient number

of capable teachers on the bare terms of food, lodging and clothes and cited many national institutions failing recently even though led by men like Mr. Gandhi.

Rustomji went a step further and said that granted that there were a number of learned men who could afford to give their services free in exchange for association with a Sadguru, the question was how to convince them that Baba was a Perfect Master. The mandali's efforts to recruit such a staff would be useless, Baba himself would have to attract them; and if he did not wish to do that, he should not in the beginning insist on unpaid workers, but be prepared to pay salaries until such time as the atmosphere that Baba would create attracted such a staff—and the paid teachers would automatically be dispensed with.

Baba seemed to be concurring with all this and even nodded his head in approval, but it was soon clear to all (as it had been to the few that he had told earlier) that the real idea behind the proposed school was to put both pupils and their teachers in the 'spiritual line'. And so he still preferred to have persons who would serve and, instead of receiving money in return, get spiritual benefit. Payment would destroy the 'poonya' (merit) of their services. However, since the mandali expressed strong doubts about obtaining free teachers, Baba for the time being gave in.

One of the infinite aspects of God-Man is surprise—his ability when opposite arguments have been exhausted, to lay down an entirely fresh approach and set of considerations, much to the bewilderment of the disciples. This Baba now did. Calling them all together after a two or three hours' interval he said that the earlier discussion had opened his eyes to the fact that he was neither God nor a Sadguru—as he had so long believed himself to be, and had allowed, even encouraged, others to believe. He was an ordinary man, and those who had expected spiritual benefits from him should no longer do so. He had not seen God; how could he show Him to others? From now on, those who wished to stay with him should do so on this understanding—that he was an ordinary man. All were made free from their words

and promises given on oath orally or in writing. They should think of him as their friend, expecting nothing materially or spiritually save food and clothes from him—but he would still require complete and immediate obedience from them. There would be no more talk about God. The only thing he could really tell them was that the whole universe was a dream and illusion: that much he had seen and experienced.

He told them that those who stayed with him would be kept aloof as much as possible from Kam and Kanchan (lust and greed)—the greatest causes of attachment to the Dream.

The surprise subsided; and the mandali were left with a stronger conviction than ever that Baba was Who-he was and that, his God-Man state was the one eternal Verity.

There was the usual game of cricket in the evening. At night they had special milk-tea and, refreshed, they all sat about with Baba discussing Pandoba's brother's latest plan for the school. Now there was an atmosphere of cheerfulness and enthusiasm. At nine o'clock they all went for a walk toward the city, at the same time giving company to Pandoba's brother on the stretch of road considered unsafe for solitary travellers at night. After their return there was more talk—general chit-chat about medical subjects and inventions. Someone mentioned snake-bite, and Baba said the best treatment was to make a deep cut on the spot bitten and fill it with permanganate of potash, and for the patient to remain without food or water for three or four days.

On 8th February an agreement was signed by the mandali undertaking to stay with Baba at least for three years of service.

A party of Indian Christians came to see Baba hoping to enlist his sympathy and monetary help for a new Missionary College in 'Nagar. After some general talk Baba abruptly questioned their spiritual condition. 'Were they, he asked, 'Christians?' Emphatically they were. Baba then said, 'What was the mandate of Jesus—was it not to dispose of everything and follow Him?' Assuredly it was. The next question startled them. 'Have

you done that — given up all and everything as your Lord did, particularly lust and greed?’ They admitted they had not done so. Then Baba said, ‘You are no Christians at all if you do not obey Christ’s mandate. I am a real Christian for I have given up everything.’ The visitors were dumbfounded and felt, much awe and reverence for Baba, and pressed him to visit them some day.

Again in a general meeting, Baba invited the mandali to discuss freely whether at all to go on with the proposed institution or completely drop it. No one came forward with a conclusive answer, but the general tone was in favour of a climbdown. There were many doubts about the success of the project, especially because of Baba’s frequently changing moods. Others pointed out that the poor and monotonous food and the general strict rules would be too severe for worldly paid staff. With the result that many of the teachers might not stay long, and others would have to be found to fill their places — all of which would seriously hamper progress of the school. In the face of this pessimism Baba said he should drop the whole thing. Without willing and enthusiastic workers among the mandali to come forward boldly and shoulder the responsibility it could not succeed. Still, he said, it had been a nice idea.

Then the question came up of continuing the primary school that had been started, but suddenly Baba seemed to lose his temper, probably because of what had just occurred, and he abruptly ended the meeting. But with the evening bhajans and arti he again became cheerful and told the mandali to go to bed early because they would be wakened early.

Chhagan’s brother-in-law came during the day from Akolner, a village about six miles away, to make sure that Chhagan attended the marriage of some relative the following day. He was scandalized to find Chhagan working in the cook-house wearing only a pair of shorts. To get rid of him Chhagan said he would come, and the man left.

When the matter was brought up with Baba, he gave him permission to attend the ceremony; but Chhagan

replied that he had no intention of going because of Baba's earlier order not to leave him under any circumstance — even if Baba told him to. After a long discussion Baba said that he and some of the mandali would go also.

They were aroused at 4 a.m. by Baba coming into the makan. Selecting those to go to the wedding, Baba told the others to return to their bunks till the usual six o'clock. Breakfast of milk-tea and jelly was served, and Baba kept on remarking that all should behave as men who are in a tight corner; but there were no real men among them. It transpired that Baba had spent most of the night trying to persuade Chhagan to go without him but still accompanied by some of the mandali. At five-thirty Baba rose to leave, and noticed that Chhagan was still wearing shorts, with the addition of a shirt, and Baba told him to put on a dhottar and look like a respectable Hindu. After they started Baba wanted Chhagan to walk ahead of them as leader, but Chhagan said that that was for Baba to do — in this incident as in all matters and on all occasions. Baba said, 'Take care; remember and take care.'

Walking briskly and breaking into a trot occasionally they quickly reached Akolner, but had much trouble finding the house where the marriage was to be performed, and arrived late. They were received coldly, and took their seats outside the mandap.

The ceremony concluded, the relatives, especially an uncle-in-law, began taunting Chhagan about his own marriage. Chhagan had been married as a child, and soon after he left school had joined Baba. Now the girl was of age to go to her husband's house and they wanted to know when Chhagan was going to leave Baba and settle clown to the householder's life. They also made pointed remarks to Baba and to saints generally.

Chhagan endured it all for a long time and remained firm in his determination to stay with Baba, until Baba himself asked him to return to his family and take up married life, and he gave in.

Baba was greatly disappointed. His apparent concurrence with the relatives was only to test

Chhagan; he wanted him to remain with him to the end. Hence the warning when they were leaving Meherabad to 'take care.'

Baba and the mandali then paid a visit to Chhagan's father-in-law before returning to the ashram.

All the way back Baba kept on talking about Chhagan: how he had all along shown an admirable spirit and had stuck resolutely to him; and because of this he had advanced him in the spiritual line. But now, at this real test he had failed. 'You see,' he said, 'how difficult this Path is! It is like trying to grasp one's own shadow.'

The talk about Chhagan continued after they arrived back. It was suggested by one that there might be the possibility of some higher motive on Chhagan's part in giving in — that he might have wished to save Baba the continuing painful scene. But Baba seemed to be aware only of the loss of one of his sheep. Finally he sent Vishnu back to Akolner to ask Chhagan to come back to Meherabad as soon as the feast was over without even touching his wife's hand. This, Baba said, would be his last attempt to save Chhagan from losing his place in the 'line' — the place which had been prepared for him with so much time and labour. 'He is a good boy,' Baba said, 'it would be a pity for him to lose what has been gained.'

Baba then called the 'few' aside and discussed Chhagan's future. It was settled that after the Birthday celebrations Chhagan and his wife would be given a couple of rooms there at Meherabad. In the meantime the girl would remain with her parents.

Vishnu returned at one o'clock with the good news that the mandali's guess had been correct — Chhagan had not remained because he was too weak to cope with the relatives; and that as soon as the feast was over he would come as Baba wished. Then began a long lookout and wait. Hours passed; and there was much wondering and guessing why Chhagan had not come.

Then the village police patil came and reported that a little while earlier Chhagan had come to the police station, stripped off his clothes and walked away. Baba at once sent out a search party; but he himself with a few

went to 'Nagar where he had another marriage to attend. He returned at eight, o'clock and was informed that Chhagan had been found. Baba sent straight away to him, and after a touching remeeting Chhagan related all that had happened after Baba's leaving Akolner.

First of all he assured Baba that he had not approached his wife in any way except for a private conversation. During this she had requested him to keep her with him as her parents and relatives troubled her very much taunting her in many ways. Chhagan, for his part, told her that when their parents had had them married they children, he could not know that he would take the spiritual line. However, now that he was in it she could join him if she wished and lead a simple chaste life with him under Baba's shelter; and to this she agreed.

Encouraged by his wife's attitude, and receiving Baba's message through Vishnu, Chhagan now boldly told the relatives that he was going to see Baba and would return in the evening. (Baba said it was a mistake to have told the relatives he would come back to them so soon but it was of no matter.) The relatives garlanded him and he set out. But as he went along he felt remorse for having caused Baba so much trouble — especially that he had practically forced Baba to go to the marriage after Baba for a large part of the previous night had tried to get Chhagan to go with some of the mandali and leave him behind. He therefore had been the cause of the ill reception given Baba and the veiled insults he had had to endure.

By the time he reached Arangaon he felt such keen remorse that he wanted to do away with himself. He approached the patil, took off his clothes and asked the astonished policeman to keep them until he came for them, and then went off to find a lonely spot. Presently he found himself on the tank hill and paused. He thought a voice was telling him to check his impulse. This brought him to his senses, and he drove out the thought of suicide and set off down the hill to throw himself at Baba's feet only to find himself cheered by Baba and the mandali as a hero for, Baba said, everything Chhagan had done was because of his profound

love and consideration for Baba, nothing of it was for himself. But Baba took a fresh promise from him never again to break the smallest of his orders. And this was sealed with an oath by Chhagan placing his head on Baba's feet and Baba applying ash from the dhuni to his forehead.

Baba contrasted the Akolner indifference with the grand reception he had been afforded in 'Nagar. At the former place, saints and spirituality were taken lightly; at the latter, there was eagerness just to see him. As for the Brahmins, they were mostly puffed up with their self-created social and spiritual 'importance'; their tongues were made smooth by meaningless repetitions and their ears cocked for the tabla of the cooking-pot lid.

After the usual arti Baba retired to the zhopdi taking Chhagan with him for awhile.

Chanji had a private session with Baba over his family affairs: should he go back to Bombay? Baba said it would not matter so much where he was so long as he stuck to him for the next three years according to the agreement they had made a few days back. A little later Baba himself brought up the matter and told Chanji that if need be he could be released within a year. In the meantime he would like him to conduct the primary school with the help of Dhake, Vishnu, Pandoba, Nisal and Mehd.

In a general assembly Baba talked at length on 'mind' as 'that which is always turning within one.'

There was also some discussion on Mahatma Gandhi's proposed visit to 'Nagar. It would be fine if he could be induced to meet Baba. Baba said there was absolutely no need to *induce* him, he should come of his own accord through his love for Truth. Love was the only qualification that counted in this line; without that no exalted position, not even that of a king, could help one towards Truth.

Baba received a letter from a Mr. Borkar, a well-known public worker, which he had read out to the mandali. The writer stated that after twenty-four years of great labours and samadhis and various other practices of self-control and discipline, he still knew nothing

about Truth — and wanted Baba to accept him as his chela (disciple). Baba said he was very pleased with the man's offer of service and his striving for Truth.

Then the discussion turned to the teaching of political subjects by Sattha at the National School. Baba was wholly against it and said that those who wanted to advance spiritually should avoid politics, and cited Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the great Sadguru of Bengal who would not allow even mention of the word in his presence.

Gandhi again came into the talk one evening. Baba said he was the best man among present day political workers and public servants. He was absolutely sincere; there was no meanness or deception about him, and in three life times (after one hundred and seventy years) he would get Realization.

Whether or not it was because of his continued passivity, Baba's thirty-third birthday celebration was hardly a shadow of former occasions when joy had flung aside restraint and the most-sought place was under the shelter of his feet.

A few days before, Ramjoo and Doctor in Lonavala had quarrelled over payment of a singer to go to Meherabad. Baba was saddened that these two should quarrel — and over such a small thing. Then the mandali were laggard in their preparations and had to work till three o'clock in the morning and be up again at five. Only about two hundred were fed. At one point a rumour spread that Gandhi, who was staying only two or three miles away, was coming to visit Baba. The reaction of many of the mandali was that he would be honouring Baba, instead of it being a possible occasion for Gandhi to receive his blessing. But Baba said that he would not come — it was not yet his time. However he added, if he did come, Baba would break his 'vow' of not-writing and explain Truth intellectually to him to his entire satisfaction, and make him stay with the mandali for a year. Vishnu kept a slate and pencil ready — in case.

But things livened up towards evening and all went in procession to the hill, where the mandali women

performed arti and puja, and returned to their quarters. The men and boys then indulged in dancing and singing with great enthusiasm. On the way up, Baba's photo was carried in a palanquin with him walking beside it; but on the return they insisted upon his being carried and he had to agree — and they lovingly fought for places on the carrying poles. It took a full half an hour to cover the quarter of a mile back.

The following afternoon for the first time since their return to Meherabad, Baba took all the mandali to tea at Kaka Shahane's place. Baba was in an exceptionally cheerful mood. Taking advantage of this and hoping to catch him off guard, Doctor Ghani asked Baba when he would start talking again. Baba replied, 'Within five days' and asked Ghani to make a note of that in his diary.

One Sunday afternoon some Parsi gentlemen with their wives and families came to the place. They were dressed in the height of fashion and strolled about like sightseers rather than devotees, and so went away only with what they brought.

Another afternoon Baba had all the mandali called from their jobs and asked them which was the biggest jail in India. Some said one, some another. Baba said, 'Your own body is to each of you the biggest jail.' Then he said, 'There are three different states in the Highest: Bliss — Knowledge — Power; so also there are three different ways or paths to Truth: Bhakti Marga, Dnyan Marga, and Yoga Marga. The first leads to Eternal Bliss, the second to Infinite Knowledge, and the third to Unlimited Power. There are three different stages of advancement: Gross, Subtle and Mental. When he advances from the gross to the subtle, the Bhakta (devotee) enjoys unimaginable bliss, the Dnyani sees unthought-of scenery, and the Yogi acquires undreamt-of powers.' Baba then likened the sanskaras or mind-impressions that keep us from the Truth to a tiger in a dream; an umbrella affording cover from the sun; and a tangled skein of wool. Someone asked why saints particularly liked children, and Baba said it was because they are innocent and so easily impressed with spirituality.

That was why he was keen on establishing a school where spiritual values could be imparted to boys.

There was another discussion on WATER. Some of the mandali much deplored the fact that while there was good water in most of the surrounding wells Meherabad suffered almost continuous drought. Baba said that that was because of his attribute of generosity which allowed the underground water to be distributed to the outside wells. But they should, he said, continue with the bore they were doing to a depth of 100 feet and if by then they did not strike water, they should start a new well just near the makan — where he had previously told them there was water.

Baba with fourteen of the mandali paid a visit to the Rashtriya Shala (National School) in Ahmednagar. During his address Mr. Borkar mentioned for the first time publicly the new school, Meher Ashram, which was going to be established under the personal guidance of Meher Baba who, Borkar said, was the Swami Ramdas of this age and would give the whole world a push forward materially and spiritually.

From there Baba went and inspected some land near the Cotton Market which had been suggested (probably by Sattha, whose family owned the ginning factory nearby) as a probable site for the school. They then went on to Kaka Shahane's for a tasty dinner. During the meal Baba referred to Mr. Borkar's remarks about material and spiritual advancement, and said that such a push can only be given by one who has acquired 'Sadguruship' i.e. who after realizing God has come back to help humanity. He advised them all to work sincerely for the new institution, even in the face of public opposition and adverse criticism. His final remark was, 'Don't worry about the money side of it.'

The following days were spent turning the primary school premises into a high school, fixing the courses, forming classes and preparing time-tables. Dhakephalkar, B.A., was appointed Principal, and Chanji, Gaikwar, Nisal, Mama, and Vishnu were the staff.

On the 1st of March the Hazrat Babajan High School came into existence.

Ramjoo, Doctor and Abdul Tyab came from Lonavla and asked Baba to settle some differences that had arisen between them. Which he did; and they returned home. But a few days later Doctor and Ramjoo came again as they had fallen out over the agreement arrived at in Baba's presence. Baba came late from the zhopdi and was ill-pleased to see the pair again — especially Ramjoo and told him that his mill business would suffer because of this lack of harmony. He again reconciled them but told them not to bring their business affairs to him.

Some Parsi ladies and gentlemen came to see Baba. One of them, a girl, was suffering from a malady that did not responded to any treatment, and her parents asked Baba to bless her. Baba said that she would soon be all right. Not content with that, an old man tried to question Baba about his Silence. He said, 'Why have you stopped speaking? It is a loss to those who come to visit you not to be able to hear your lectures and advices. What benefit can you bestow on the world by holding your tongue?' Baba listened patiently until the man had finished his say and then told him that all his contentions were right. One of the ladies asked for something in writing as a remembrance of their visit, but she was told that Baba had also, along with his silence, given up writing. This was too much for them — a holy teacher who did not speak or write! And they soon left.

Masaji once again took over the kitchen with Ardeshir, as his off-sider. Chanji was kept busy with correspondence, and visits to Bombay and Poona. On one of his trips he brought his friend Naoroji Talati and his family from Poona. With them was a young Persian student Meherji Karkaria, who lived with the family and who, later, became one of Baba's key men. Baba began again occupying the seat under the Table near the dhuni. Also he ground flour again. He told Chanji that he would stay at that seat for twelve hundred years. The evenings continued to be the harvests of the days — sitting around talking and discussing, with Baba at times giving a new discourse and shedding new light on perennial truths.

One night he spoke of the great efficacy of mentally repeating the Name of God. ‘Concentrate the mind on the repetition alone to the exclusion of everything else, breathing regularly while doing so. Inhale and exhale slowly and repeat the Name of the Almighty as given you individually. Let other thoughts come — they will come — but try to drive them away and keep the mind cool and steady during the repetitions. Once you begin to develop a liking or taste for it you will never leave this practice, on the contrary you will find a secret pleasure in this duty.’

A retired and leprous police sub-inspector came to Baba and poured out his tale of misery. In addition to his malady he had to arrange for his daughter’s marriage. He was greatly comforted by the sympathetic attention Baba gave him, and contrasted it with that received from Shri Shankaracharya (one of the four Popes of Hinduism). Baba told him that he would be helped through Mr. Borkar and Mr. Sattha.

A young sanyasi came hoping to be put on the Path. Baba promised that he would do that for him providing he stayed under a tree in the colony. All went well for awhile and he kept to his seat. Then one day some of the mandali stopped and chatted with him, saying how difficult it was to get in the spiritual line: they had been with Baba for five years now and still had no smell of Truth. At these words the young sanyasi lost courage and left the place.

‘Holi’ came and went without enthusiasm. Baba handed out sweets and told the mandali, ‘All that you do, do with all your might.’ After supper they played atya-patya for a couple of hours, and that put them all in a better mood before going to bed.

Baba now made it clear that none of the staff, administrative or teaching, could have connections with other institutions, because if they did they could not follow his instructions to the letter and in the spirit he wanted of them. It was, for example, because of Borkar’s and Sattha’s enthusiasm generated by their outside interests and connections, that Baba had even inspected the Cotton Market site. Obviously Meherabad with its

established purposes and its being a hub of blessings to tens of thousands — even though many of its buildings had been demolished — was to be preferred to all other places.

A letter on the expected non-participation of the staff in other interests was written to Borkar and taken to him by Vishnu. Borkar came out the next morning. He was very upset and Baba talked to him for four hours. The upshot of it was that Borkar was willing to drop all other connections and do only as Baba directed him. Baba was pleased with this and told him that, he would be the Head of the new institution provided Sattha was willing to give up his extra interests and be Borkar's assistant. Baba said it would work out well and be a great success if the workers remained sincere to the end and did as he told them.

A new pessimism settled down over the place. There was no lack of faith in Baba's state of perfection, only a feeling of aimlessness in their lives. One said that Baba would begin to speak again in 1950. Rustom wanted to leave — he was disgusted and disappointed with everything. 'In which case,' Baba said, 'should there be any further connection between them?' Little by little, with the patience of love, Baba brought him round, and the general illness was healed.

As arranged earlier, the next morning Baba and eighteen of the mandala — Baba with six in Rustom's Chevrolet and the others in a big truck — went to Mr. Raya's place for dinner. The host welcomed Baba in the grand manner of the established Hindu householder — with pride and humility — and set before him and the mandali a sumptuous meal.

Rustom informed Baba that Sorabji Desai of Navsari was due on the noon train, Baba asked him to bring him direct to the house. The train, however, was late, and the meal was finished and the pan-supari (betelnut) had been served when he arrived. After he had paid his respects to Baba, Baba introduced him to their host and to the guests as one of the most popular Gujarati writers of the day. Then he was served with food. In the meantime Baba received a note from another householder, Mr. Gadekar, requesting

him to grace his humble home for tea — which he accepted. Baba invited Desai to accompany him on some house visits. First they went to Bhau Saheb Singer's place, then to Dhake's, with several houses in between. Dhake had prepared excellent tea which they all enjoyed. Then on to Gadekar's with many stops on the way. Here again tea was served. At all these places Baba was received with warmth and joy, and worshipped through arti and puja. As he proceeded slowly in the car, people, not even knowing who he was, pressed forward to have his darshan — so beautiful was he to look at — and followed in procession.

Desai was greatly impressed by the deep devotion and enthusiasm among people of many different classes.

Leaving Gadekar's house Baba sent the truck back, but himself continued on to Rustomji's where he stayed for awhile and then returned to Meherabad.

R. K. Gadekar was the first of the Chamar caste, who work in leather, to take a B.A. degree. Baba blessed his studies and also helped him financially. He became a sounding-board to the Name of God; and rose to be an Assistant Social Welfare Officer, a man esteemed in his community, and so was able to bring many to Baba.

The Parsi New Year (Jamshed-e-Navroz) came round. As soon as the first bell of the day went out looking for ears to ring in, a great clamour and din was released from bugles and drums, kerosene cans — from anything that would sound, along with joyous shouts and cries — shattering the silence which ordinarily the dawn gently disturbs among the trees.

Breakfast of milk-tea and Indian vermicelli was served at six o'clock. At nine Baba was ceremonially bathed; after which he allowed the people who had come out from the city and from the surrounding villages to worship him. Ardeshir sang in Persian style a new hymn written for the occasion.

Vishnu took Desai around the ashram including the hill and Vithoba's temple in Arangaon and told him about the old ashram, and its dismantling, and of the new one and its educational intentions. The visitor was immensely impressed with it all, but more so with Baba's

personality — and he started seeing miracles everywhere. His hobby, he said, was to collect relics of holy men, and he had a big collection in his home. Baba gave him many things — photos of himself, rings, a Parsi sacred thread, sweets, fruit, coconuts, flowers, dhuni ash and some hairs.

While collecting some dust where Baba had walked, Desai suddenly thought that people might think him foolish. Later in the evening without any reference to the matter Baba said that Swami Vivekananda used to collect dust under his Guru's feet and apply it to the foreheads of others.

Desai told Baba that their high priest at Navsari was devoted to spiritual matters and often went to visit an ancient yogi. Many of the community tried to stop their high priest going after non-Zoroastrian saints but he refused to heed them; he even took off his shawl, the emblem of his office, and handed it to them saying that he would never go against his honest convictions. Baba was very pleased to hear this and said it was a pity that because of false prejudices and a hollow sense of prestige people tried to stop one seeking Truth, and asked Desai on his return to tell the dasturji to stick to his convictions, and that one day if they met, Baba would explain Truth to him so that he would understand, and he would guide him on the Path. Whereupon Desai invited Baba to come to Navsari, and Baba said he would surely come one day. Desai was then asked to retire for the night. Then next day he would go to Kedgaon accompanied by Chanji, pay his respects to Maharaj and return home.

Padri, Pendu, Dhake, Rustom, Behram and Sailor performed for Baba a comic play for two hours, and then all went to bed. Sailor left in the morning with Chanji and Desai to return to Poona.

Sarosh was married, and there was a grand feast. Neither the bride nor her family accepted Baba, but he played his eternal waiting game, and after many years she found herself at his feet. In later years she became one of the social hostesses of 'Nagar and so was the cause of many hearing about Baba. There was also the opening

ceremony of the new home for Chhagan and his wife.

A road-weary swami weighed down with various ironmongery asked permission to camp in one of the odd huts; but he became slovenly in his routine and untidy in his habits, leaving his unwashed pots about. He soon began to act in an arrogant manner as though he were obliging Baba by staying at the place. The hot-heads among the mandali (and that does not necessarily mean the younger men) were incensed, but since Baba bore it patiently, and seemingly cheerfully, they had to put up with the fellow. At last Baba had him called and suggested that now he had had a good rest he might like to continue his wandering. And so Baba got rid of him without hurting his feelings.

On the 25th March Baba called all the mandali to the dhuni seat to discuss the next step in the Meher Ashram matter. It will be remembered that a month earlier, 26th February, Baba with the mandali had inspected a site near the Cotton Market in 'Nagar and approved of it. He now informed them that the school and all the buildings connected with it should be at Meherabad under his constant eye, and the staff and pupils be in his continuous presence — for that was the sole and real purpose of the whole project.

Baba then named the 'key' staff: Mr. Borkar, head of the institution; Mr. Dhake, principal and head of education; Behramji, manager of boarding and lodging; Vishnu, general assistant to Behramji and Dhake.

The present school in the cottage in Arangaon was to be brought into Meherabad proper and accommodated in the mandali's present mess quarters. A new place would be erected for the mandali somewhere near the dhuni and the well.

Baba now said that many new men including university graduates would come to serve in this new institution, and if any of the old mandali showed signs of hesitancy and unwillingness they would be put on the 'retired list' and given two meals a day without any call for work being made on them. In short, he only wanted the alert and active in this new Work. He also pointed out to them that, once he conceived a plan,

sooner or later it was put into action. This very project which they were now taking up was first discussed by him almost the moment he returned from Bombay to Meherabad, and although it was apparently frequently shelved it would soon bear fruit. After supper the site for the new makan was selected, which was where the old dharmasala had been.

Baba sat down for awhile before retiring, and the talk turned on the tendency of the Bhils towards banditry. Baba told them of one named Sakhya Mang who with his band had terrorized the countryside for years.

‘Then,’ Baba said, ‘he had an urge to have my darshan — no, not at a public darshan, he would have been recognized — but secretly when all you chaps including the night-watchman were asleep. He came to me and confessed all his crimes, and I forgave him on condition that he never robbed again. He gave his promise. And he has held to it ever since despite great hardships. You see, in asking him to give up robbery I was actually robbing him of his means of support for himself and his family. They came near to starvation — for no one wanted to employ a brigand even though he had reformed. One night he became desperate and set off to a house in the village he knew could be burgled easily; and he even knew where the householder’s treasure was hidden. He broke in, and was about to take the money and valuables when, he said, I appeared before him and reminded him of his promise.

‘Gradually the people lost their fear of him and he obtained odd jobs — enough to keep him and his family going. Later he demonstrated to me and a few of the mandali his amazing capabilities — the most remarkable of which was his ability to climb a wall with his back.’ But Baba in his compassion kept him in poverty for the rest of his life so that his *sanskaras* of violence should be worn thin and the ‘link’ with Baba be made that would draw him to him in successive lives.

A second Parsi New Year called Khordad Sal which is preferred by some Zoroastrians to Jamshed-e-Navroz (celebrated a week earlier) was observed as a holiday at the ashram, but there were no ceremonies or feast. In

the evening Baba issued an order that all the mandali were to approach him one at a time in the morning and remind him about the marriage of the daughter of a retired sub-inspector of police that evening. It will be remembered that, this man, a cripple and very poor, had come to Baba a couple of weeks earlier seeking his blessings for his daughter who was of marriageable age, but he had not the cash or goods to attract a suitable match. Now it had all been arranged and Baba sealed the bargain with his presence.

There was further talk about the new ashram. Some applications had been received from parents desiring to have their boys enrolled in the new school, but most of them ignored the main aim and object: of providing spiritual training of the pupils; but they all wanted to know what training for material occupations would be provided, and whether there would be separate accommodation for 'untouchables.' It was a disappointing start. Baba said it showed that there was not yet a proper spirit among people generally, and so they had better drop the scheme altogether.

Accordingly Baba sent Padri into 'Nagar to tell Rustomji not to purchase any more building materials, and not to pay for the galvanized iron roofing already received as it was to be returned to the supplier. But later on in the day another meeting was called and Baba said that upon mature reflection he had decided that it would be better after all to set the ball rolling. 'Why not,' he said, 'send the printed forms of the rules and regulations of the proposed school to the applicants and see what comes of it? Even if we got 2, 5, 10 or 12 boys who were willing and fit to abide by all the rules and whose parents would let them pursue the whole course of studies, that would be a start. Anyway, we have four boys we could start with: Baban, Dutto, Vithal and Mulay. Also we would not need to begin building yet. The present school would do for the general education, while one of the mandali could look after the pupils' spiritual training. They could be lodged somewhere on the premises and they could board with the mandali.'

The mandali all liked the idea, and Vishnu was asked to send the admission forms to applicants. Baba asked Kaikhushru to write to Shirinmai, Baba's mother, telling her to send his youngest brother Adi to him if she desired him to be 'put in the line.'

Thus God-Man vacillated — because the world of our references swings from one point to its opposite and back; and he came here to demonstrate to his Circle and all who have 'ears,' 'eyes' and due to come in line, that the world is but a happening within a dream.

A sadhu looking well nourished came and asked Baba to give him money for a train ticket to Hardwar and other sacred places to see the mahatmas there. Baba asked him why, if he was bent on pilgrimage, did he want to travel by train? It would be more meritorious to walk from place to place to have darshan of the saints. The man seemed puzzled at this and left.

Nisal left the ashram, being enticed from Baba by his mother's worldly talk. Baba felt his going very much, and said he would come back.

At one time, referring to the Circle, Baba said: 'The clocks are all wound, the alarms set and at the exact moment for each, each will ring — wherever it is, near at hand or far away. But then why remain at a distance? Why not always be in the company of the embodiment of Truth? When the light comes it will come in a second! Watch and wait patiently for the alarm and the light.'

At another time he said to the mandali, 'In whatever you undertake, throw your whole heart and mind sincerely into it. Don't do anything half-heartedly, nor leave anything half done, nor have a mind wavering between two things. Take up one thing and finish it.'

Anna brought a woman who had deformed feet to Baba. As she approached him, somehow or other she lost her balance and fell down. Baba said that that which had made her deformed had fallen down. The next morning she found that the deformity had disappeared and she was whole again.

Baba called Chanji and had him sit with him for a long time.

Padri and Behramji quarrelled over a game of draughts. Baba reconciled them but prohibited further playing of the game. He also exempted Padri from all bindings of duties and petty rules, as Gustadji and Jal already were.

The following day was a Thursday, visitors' day, but for some time now, not many came. Baba had a long talk with Padri and Behram over their quarrelling the day before. It was eventually decided to free all the mandali from petty rules and bindings in general, and to leave it to each individual himself to behave in a becoming manner. The allotted duties remained, but all were free to go about the colony wherever they wished, except to the women's quarters. This freedom, Baba told them, would help the mandali to go on living together amicably should he lock himself up for any considerable time.

In the evening, as they were gathered around the dhuni, Baba explained something about life after death. What the ordinary human being sees and experiences after death, the yogi sees and experiences while still in his body. After death, for four days, the astral body remains about the place of death. Then it rises up towards the planes of higher consciousness but cannot enter even the lowest of them. Rather, through it the soul experiences pleasure and pain according to its good or bad actions in the past gross life. These experiences are commonly called heaven and hell. When the stock of poonya (virtue) and paap (vice) is exhausted the soul again takes a gross body, that is, is reborn in the gross world.

Yogis who misuse their powers, unless saved by one of the Sadgurus, are reborn in the STONE STATE and have to go up the whole chain of evolution again before getting another human form. The human form is the best of all forms: it is the only form by which one can realize God; and until one has that realization, one has to continue taking birth after birth.

The sanskaras of identification (the mind-impressions which cause one to identify oneself as oneself) began as soon as the drops of self issued from the Creation Point in the Ocean of Truth that it might become conscious,

and Self-knowing. Thus Knowledge requires countless births to achieve and during the course of these births fresh sanskaras are being created every moment, till at last they become so 'thick' and 'sticky' that they remain about a person dead or alive. The 'drop' has forgotten its original mission and aim and is conscious only of the motion and momentum given it by the very sanskaras it must shed.

Another evening Baba talked about his work. He said that the worries and troubles of the whole world were all due to *thinking*, and soon he would have to take this thinking upon himself, and as a result most probably his health would be affected to such an extent that someone of the mandali would have to feed him. His sufferings could be so acute that it would be difficult for the mandali to look at them, and many of them would go away and only a few remain. His body would be a wreck; and it would be after this that he would open his mouth and work wonders with words. When one asked why that would have to be, Baba replied that it was beyond intellect to understand; yet it had to be because it was essential for the future work which would be tremendous and affect the whole world.

He then gave some hint of the duties of the God-realized Masters. They give the subtle worlds an outward push, but their Head also has to prepare the members of the Circle for Realization and give an onward push to the gross universe. To do this the Master has to come down from the Nirvikalpa (Ananda-Ananda) state, the top of the head, and take up his position in the Brahmand between the eyes, which is the Junction of the upper Bliss state and the lower human form and from where one can see the whole of the lower parts of the body — equivalent to seeing the whole chain of past lives that one has passed through before God-realization. The uppermost (crown) state is Bliss only.

It is the duty of some few selected God-realized ones (those who are in the topmost Bliss state) to come down to the Junction and bring up those in the world who, because of their preparedness, are ready to be given God-realization. But the preparedness itself is not easy

to achieve; it requires ages and ages of suffering and sacrifice, and connection with a realized Master.

God-realization means the absolute destruction of all sanskaras, an absolute stopped-state of mind, void of all thinking. This is very very difficult — for when mind tries to stop thinking it falls into sound sleep, that is, becomes unconscious. Even great yogis are unable to attain this stopped-state permanently; they can at best stop thought during meditations, concentrations and samadhi (and even these create new sanskaras) — but they no sooner come down again to ordinary consciousness than their minds begin to work again — and the huge store of undestroyed sanskaras is added to through this transitory-stopping of the mind. Hafiz likens one's body to a pot, and the water boiling in it is the soul, longing to escape, while the heavy stone on the lid of the pot is one's sanskaras. No matter how hard the water boils it cannot throw off the lid but must await someone to remove it. Similarly a caged bird cannot itself open its cage but must wait for someone outside to take pity on it and release it from its prison.

The Hindu New Year according to the new calendar was observed on the 3rd April. Baba distributed sweets in the morning, and then took the mandali to the city to Shahane's place for dinner.

When people in the adjoining houses heard that Baba was there, many, both women and men, came over to worship him. While waiting for the meal to be served Baba talked on the duties of a woman, and during the talk told about Babajan's early life, which was new to most of the mandali. But he was not so much giving the mandali some interesting information, he was really talking to the women, inspiring them to dedicate their lives to the search for spiritual realities and not be content with the humdrum lives they were leading. He was not suggesting that all girls should run away from home and seek a Guru in the wilderness, only that they must understand that marriage and the other festivities attendant upon the householder's life were destructible and ended in Nothing.

Then the real meal was served. Places were set

separately for untouchables, but Baba took his seat among them, until Kaka pleaded with him to come where his place had been set. Baba acceded to his fervent request but was displeased, and a gloom settled down over the party for awhile. Kaka was still a new man in the 'Way of Baba.' But the joyous atmosphere soon returned with the recitation of sacred couplets.

The Ramzan Id was observed on 4th April.

Baba now decided to promote Kaikhushru. First of all he called the school authorities together and complained about the loose management of the school affairs generally, and threatened to close the school; but after much talk back and forth said it could continue, but to secure the required discipline and good conduct of the place a supervisor was needed. Then he sent for Kaikhushru and abruptly asked him why he spent so much of his time with the boys — even breaking windows with them in their games of cricket. Baba nagged and nagged as only he could nag — then just as abruptly smiled and asked Kaikhushru if he would accept the post of supervisor of all the boys. Kaikhushru was very happy with this office, and he was named as such.

Now a new school for the village girls was proposed, discussed and agreed upon to be set up in the Arangaon police patil's compound. The Christian woman who had taught the few girls the previous year, again volunteered her services and was given the charge of the school. She was accommodated with the Bomanji family in the Post Office.

Baba pointed out a passage in Gandhi's autobiography in which he admitted that he was unworthy to serve his country and humanity, for he was powerless to stop even the butchering of sheep outside the Kali temple in Calcutta.

There was an article in the paper by a Madam Schophlochec, under the heading, 'Road to Salvation', in the course of which she said that Bahaiism was the only hope for India since Gandhi and Tagore had failed. Hearing this Baba commented that those who talked of sects and religions had not felt even the faintest breath of the Truth.

One evening Boman was relating the story of Sheriarji, Baba's father, and Baba said that Sheriarji was the only one in the Community who was worthy to be the father of the one who was to move the world.

Baily from Poona sent Baba a present of a pair of peacocks, and they were entrusted to Bomanji and his family, but a dog ate one of them. Whereupon Baba blamed everyone in the colony for the loss. When Bomanji had repented sufficiently Baba said, 'Why worry about a mere peacock when so many precious human lives are being lost in the war every day.'

It was reported that one of the boys had been caught in the act of masturbation. Baba had the boy summoned. There was a dead silence. Then Baba asked, 'Should the school be abolished?' No one could speak and answer. Finding no answer among the mandali Baba dismissed them all with a gesture which spoke like thunder. Within ten or fifteen minutes all were brought back and the usual arti was performed as if nothing had happened. Then Baba motioned them to sit down and Kaikhushru and Chanji were asked to tell stories.

The number of boys in the school was now seventy with fifteen boarders, but there had been no further discussion about the actual establishment of a school since the setting up on 1st March of the Hazrat Babajan High School in the Arangaon Cottage; and it was now 8th April.

In the evening Baba called together at the zhopdi selected members of the mandali and informed them that he had once and for all decided to establish another ashram at Meherabad. He wanted them to listen attentively and give their sincere opinion on the points he was going to give them — otherwise, he said, they would be reborn as frogs in their next life to be eaten as pickles by the Chinese in the great China War that is to take place, the like of which the world has never seen.

1. The new ashram would be known as Meher Ashram and, pending suitable accommodation being built, to be housed in the cottage on the outskirts of Arangaon which had been occupied by Kaka Shahane and his family the previous year.

2. The ashram inmates to have no connection whatever with anybody or anything outside the ashram; and not to seek contact even with the rest of the mandali except in pursuit of their studies and school duties — and that, too, only during school hours.

3. Behramji, assisted by Pendu, Chhagan and Sidhu, to be in charge of the management of the ashram and to carry out the working of the institution strictly according to the rules that may be laid down by Baba.

4. Rustomji to be a sort of vice-manager.

5. Baba changed Behram's name to Bua Saheb; Kaikhushru's to Rao Saheb; Rustom's to Bade Saheb; and Dhakephalkar's to Principal Saheb; and said that henceforth they should be known by these names.

After this, Baba assigned various duties to various ones, for as he said he did not like idle people around him. Accordingly, his brother Jal was made full-time orderly for a short while. (Ashram life with its discipline did not suit him and he never stayed for long at any one time.) Padri was asked to teach for three hours a day as well as doing his usual dispensary work, and Rustom was also asked to do three hours besides his management duties. Vishnu was appointed full-time teacher, and many minor jobs were found for others. Time-tables were worked out and rules framed. From hints he gave, Baba wanted the change-over to come into effect on 1st May.

Up to then the school was being conducted in one half of the old Mess Quarters, and the other half was the mandali's sleeping quarters. It was now decided to add three senior classes, and consequently to begin building again — first, a proper dormitory for the mandali, near the well, which site, it will be remembered, was selected long ago.

Chanji had been thinking of asking Baba's permission to go to Bombay and Navsari on the twentieth for ten days and be back 1st May for the opening ceremony of the ashram, but Baba himself gave permission without being asked.

Rama's birthday came round, and the day before was spent in preparations. This included stretching a man-

dap over an area out from the zhopdi. One of the mandali stepped on a loose tile on the roof and it broke. Baba became very angry and cancelled the program for the next day. The mandap was taken down and all other preparations ceased. The whole day's work was undone in almost a moment. But in the evening when they were all gathered round Baba by the dhuni and Ramjoo had told a good story, Baba's mood softened and he gave permission for the celebration if they could manage the arrangements in time. There was a great scramble and within a couple of hours all was in readiness again.

Naval had been on Baba's payroll for sometime, and then had gone to him for permission to leave the place for, he said, he did not like accepting money any longer from him, rather he would like to go out and get a good job and send money to him. Baba had told him it would be better for him to stay, but Naval insisted and Baba told him he could go. Now Baba received a letter from him saying that he had been unable to secure any work at all and would Baba send him some money and his blessings for a job.

During discussion about the new ashram, Baba asked Ramjoo (who was visiting the place) to try to get publicity for it in Urdu papers to attract Mohammedan boys; and Chanji was asked to concentrate on the Gujarati papers to induce Parsi and Gujarati-speaking Hindu boys to join the school. He was particularly asked to give attention to the Karachi press. Baba said he wanted boys of all classes and creeds to come.

Babu Cyclewala had come from Poona early that morning and was present during the talk. After giving the Poona news, he mentioned that Baily had received a letter from Karachi which said that there was now considerable interest regarding Baba in the Karachi press.

Baily also took advantage of Babu's visit to ask Baba some questions and receive instructions. Baba replied, 'Don't involve yourself in any worldly commitments; business and the householder's life are not for you. For you something else is meant. Stick only to the instructions I gave you when you were here on my last birthday

and so continue to stay in Poona. I will see to everything else.'

Babu read some verses by Baily in Baba's praise, and he after making some 'additions and omissions' asked Chanji to include them in a booklet on Baba's life which Chanji was working on.

Baba now asked Ramjoo to come and stay at the ashram twenty days every month, returning home for ten days. Baba suddenly turned to Babu and asked him was he willing also to come and stay with him, and Babu blurted out, 'I'm all right!' Meaning that he was all right where he was. Everyone laughed, and Baba himself smiled at the way Babu had avoided the 'net' — but said that if he turned the key of longing Babu would not only leave everything and come to him, but would not leave Baba's side even if he were thrown out. 'And so, also,' Baba said, 'would Sadashiv, although at present he does not even care to write me a few lines — being afraid that I might ask him to come here to stay. But the time will come when I will have to upturn the whole world.' He recalled Babajan saying the same thing once to the people around her, when, pointing to him, she declared that he would shake the world.

Then a new arti was sweetly chanted by the boys Baban and Duttoo and Baba distributed the sweets which Babu had brought, and all retired for the night.

Another evening the talk again turned around Gandhiji's 'Experiments with Truth' in which he admitted that he had been unable to bring about unity between Hindus and Mohammedans, and was leaving that work to some greater Power. Baba said it would be he himself who would bring about the unity of all classes and creeds — but Gandhi would be dead by then. He would either come and surrender to him or die before he, Baba, spoke. Then he said that Gandhi was not destined to come to him in this life — otherwise he would have thrown off his mantle of Office and left everybody and everything and come to him or gone to one of the realized Masters; but he did not yet have that courage and preparedness, and the people around him

would not let him go.

Dr. Ghani came from Lonavla to pay his respects to Baba. He was very welcome to the mandali, as usual, and his company put Baba in a very communicative mood, with the result there was discussion all round on many subjects.

It being a moonlight night Baba and the *few* went for a stroll up the road. Presently Adi came along from the city in his car. Baba asked him to turn about and take them to the tea-shop by the railway station where they refreshed themselves and talked about the new ashram. Baba explained that the kind of education given the boys would help effect the political salvation of India. Thus besides the spiritual advancement that the country would experience, it would also be benefited materially.

‘By the time,’ Baba said, ‘the boys have completed the course, they will no longer have any bias or prejudice towards the religion of others as people do now, causing so much strife and slaughter. Leaders such as Lala Lajpatrai who are great orators in the course of nationalism totally lack an inborn toleration. But our boys in whom the seeds of hatred and fanaticism will have been destroyed, and a real toleration created, will teach a Universal Religion for all.’

It was ten o’clock when Baba had Adi drive them back to the ashram and Adi was sent back to his father’s house where he was staying at that time.

Baba was now suffering from an almost total rigidity of the neck and head, and as well as the heavy, rough coat he was continuously wearing even in the summer heat, he kept his head and neck wrapped in a large woollen shawl. Despite the pain which the slightest head movement caused, Baba attended to routine correspondence and the drafts of letters and circulars to do with the new ashram, and permitted darshan and gave interviews to visitors.

A well-to-do Hindu family came to pay Baba their respects. It turned out that the daughter had been through a difficult confinement. At the height of her pains she had cried out to Baba and the pain imme-

diately ceased and the delivery was effected without further difficulty.

The head and neck condition continued, and Baba spent more of the time inside or just near the zhopdi. One evening he led a lively discussion on the cause of his strange illness, but he gave them no clue as to what it might be. Another time all the mandali sat with him in silence for two hours.

Four Parsi ladies came for Baba's darshan. He had just come out of the zhopdi and he graciously responded. They were asked did they have any questions, and they replied, no, they had come for darshan and they had got it, and that was all they wanted. Most of the people who came, came loaded with questions or embroiled in the problems of want from which they sought release; so Baba was happy to hear that these women only wanted to see him.

Kaka Shahane with his wife and children came one night at eight o'clock, on their way to Koldapur. Baba remarked on the lateness of the hour in view of the danger of robbers. Kaka replied that since they had come for Devache Darshan (sight of God as Master) they did not fear molestation. Some months earlier Baba had given the family an order not to drink tea outside their home. Mrs. Shahane now asked him whether under special circumstances such as visiting, one of them could have tea for all of them. Baba granted permission, but afterwards told Kaka privately that it had been a mistake on his wife's part to ask for a change of an order. An order once given remained until he himself changed or withdrew it of his own accord. His words must never be broken. If permission is asked to do something contrary to an order given, Baba will never refuse to give it — but the effect and value of the initial words would be gone, and the one concerned would necessarily suffer.

The new doctor who had taken Karkal's place in the ashram tried to treat Baba's new illness without, of course, any success — since all Baba's indispositions and illnesses were because of his *acceptance* of the pains of the world. However Baba remunerated him handsomely with a pearl pin, an electroplated feeding cup and the

promise of a son.

Baba had Ramakrishna's biography brought and opened at random — which was at the account of that Master's throat disease. Then Baba explained to the mandali that realized Masters had nothing of their own to suffer for since they were perfect in every sense. Their apparent sufferings were contracted from the physically diseased and morally debased whom they allowed to fall at their feet. Because of this, such Masters rarely took 'medical treatment,' and when they did it was hardly ever successful — they simply fulfilled the necessary duration of suffering which their own Law required.

Another school meeting was held, and Baba began another of his fault-finding sessions. First he attacked Chanji. Henceforth he was to drop all writing work and pay full-time attention to school matters. He complained of the untidiness in the schoolrooms, such as some waste paper and a draughtsboard and pieces lying about. He asked Dhake what was his opinion of this disorderliness, and Dhake said that he was very disappointed to find Baba so dissatisfied with his work for he had been doing it so very sincerely. Baba took this to mean that Dhake no longer wished to continue as Principal, and in turn invited Chanji, Vishnu, Padri and Nisal to take over the responsibility; but none was willing to shoulder it. Chanji said that the man on the spot, Dhake, was Baba's own selection and the best that could have been made; he didn't think that Dhake meant that he wanted to leave his post.

Baba was so displeased with these replies that he got up abruptly and left the meeting. After some time he sent for Chanji and Dhake and told them: either the school should be closed or it should be conducted without any connection with him. 'In which case,' Chanji replied, 'not only should the school be closed but all other activities should be stopped and the mandali sent back to their places,' But Baba said, 'I am not going to go back on my pledge to the mandali that they would stay with me whether there was a school or not. So let all stay even if there is no work for them.' Then the two asked him to grace the makan with his presence, for it

was many days since he had been to them. Baba went in the evening, and by that time all the mandali had been appraised of the second meeting and its conclusion and all were joyful again.

But a few days later the same situation recurred. It began first thing in the morning with Baba going over to the makan and questioning Chanji why Dhake and Nisal had not yet come from 'Nagar (where they went home every night); also had he, Chanji, personally supervised the morning sweeping and cleaning of the school premises or not? Baba went on repeating with variations these two questions to the point of exasperation. Then Dhake and Nisal arrived and Baba turned on them. It all boiled down to Baba's being dissatisfied with the way the work was being done, the lack of spirit behind it all — their mere 'pulling on' from day to day; and he did not like those with responsible positions going out of the ashram every now and then for one reason or another. He wanted to replace Dhake as Principal, but, as previously, he could find no one better who was willing to accept the responsibility.

Responsibility under Baba's eye was no joke; one could never satisfy him. No amount of hard work, ability and dedication could be sufficient once he began to find fault with one. How could imperfection ever satisfy Perfection? The mandali generally understood that Baba's fault-finding was necessary to provide a fresh stimulus to them — never because he thought they were deliberately slacking on the job. His harping and needling were nearly always followed by forgiveness for the mistake and appreciation of their worth — sometimes even almost on the same breath. This created for the mandali its own peculiar suffering.

This suffering, Baba said, should not be allowed to distract them from the path of their duties. On the contrary, it should encourage and enslave them more in those duties. 'If your conscience is satisfied,' he said, 'that you have done the duty properly, that is enough; it is the best judge. It is natural that mistakes are made; you should only do your best. Be on the spot in time,

look after and supervise the work personally. In short, do your work well; and if in spite of this a mistake occurs it will be overlooked or pardoned; but even if I speak harshly to you, do not take it to heart; it is sufficient that your conscience tells you that you have done the work as well as you could.'

Adi drove out at noon with water-melons and Baba distributed them to the mandali and the boys. Adi of late had become very free with his tongue, saying anything to anybody, and Baba said that maybe one day he would have to give him a good thrashing. 'Never mind,' he said, 'if I am reported to the police for assault — the most they could do would be to lock me up where I would be nice and quiet, and when I was let out I would take up the work here again.'

In the midst of a short discourse on the innocence of children and the sanskara-laden adults, Baba noticed that Pesu was dozing, and said that he was like Napoleon who used to actually sleep on horseback.

Baba posed the mandali two questions and then proceeded to answer them himself.

What is the greater, the world or God? Each is greater according to what one values. To one who wants wealth, fame and the like, the world is of greater consideration than God, the Unseen, Unknown and Unattainable, while those who want no material benefits but desire spiritual advancement naturally assert that God is the greater.

In short, a thing's greatness or smallness is dependent upon circumstances and beliefs. For example, normally if one were asked which was of the greater value, a diamond or a jug of water, one would consider it an absurd question but answer, a diamond. But if the same person found himself in a desert place dying of thirst and he was given the same choice, he would reach for the jug. Both things have their value and power of attraction at different times and under different circumstances, and hence it cannot be said definitely which is of greater value or preference until put to the test. Furthermore, both the world and God are interdependent. The world depends upon God and God depends

on the world. There is only ONE SUPREME POWER who is MASTER of both of these — God and the world — and that is the Sadguru. He is above both and has the powers of both. To him alone God is greater than the world — for to him the world does not even *exist*.

The second question was: *Why do people approach a Sadguru for material gains?* The person who goes before a Sadguru goes with expectations and fear. He knows that the Sadguru is the All-Supreme Power above everything else, that he can give and take away anything and everything at will. Thus, while approaching the Sadguru for material benefits he also fears that he may lose what he already has — that it may be his *time* to be cut off from the world which he desires more of, and put in the spiritual line, which is the Sadguru's real work — the work indeed, for which the Sadguru takes human form. Suppose, for example, you have a rupee and would like a lot more. Suppose also that you know of a millionaire who has whims of generosity during which he may shower rupees on one — but he also has the idea that all money, anybody's money, belongs to him and he might, if you go near him, snatch away the single rupee you have. Hence your expectation and fear. But eventually you take the risk and approach him. It is really all a huge jumble. 'It depends on His whim; at times He may give and at times He may take away,' as the poet sang.

These Sadgurus are very very shrewd, and their ways and work are most effective. They ensnare in marvellous and masterly ways those whose time has come to enter the spiritual path; and *once caught one can never escape*. It is said that Ramakrishna Paramhansa used to actually give money to a confirmed drunkard for his drink. To a casual observer this would seem most strange and even ridiculous, but what that Master was doing was giving him the inducement to come to him for his drink money and so be drawn away from his usual haunts into his company and gradually be brought closer and closer to him.

It has been marked that Babajan has allowed thieves

to steal her shawl or pick her pockets for small cash. It was thought that she had no consciousness of these things, but she was perfectly aware of them: indeed, it was she who gave them the idea to steal so that they would touch her and receive her blessing.

The ways and methods of the Masters at times seem ineffective and even awkward, but from the spiritual point of view they are always perfect and most efficient.

Preparations for the opening of the new ashram were now well advanced. The necessary changes, alterations and additions had mostly been effected, and the new makan or dormitory for the mandali had been begun. Baba asked Chanji to get a sign-board, 'Hazrat Babajan High School,' prepared, but a little later himself found a large sheet of tin in one of the sheds, and cancelling his order to Chanji, told Padri to fasten it to a frame. As had been noted by others, Baba could literally throw away thousands of rupees but was very economy-minded over small expenditures.

One of the boys, Ramaji, was reported for disobedience and Baba sent for him. He was silent and sulky, but after Baba had kindly and patiently questioned him the boy said he didn't want to stay any longer. So Baba told him to go. After some time Baba sent for the boy and asked him would he want to stay if he was allowed to live with the mandali and not with the other boys, he said yes. Later on again Baba was talking to some of the boys and Ramaji was present and Baba started praising him to the others saying that he was an excellent boy in all respects save for his pride. He said that they all should cultivate humility, courtesy and politeness which are the mark of the truly educated gentleman. He gave the example of Dadabhai Naoroji who as a student used to study under street lamps; and when he became a great man how marvellously humble he remained. In the same way the boys were asked to mark how humble Mohan and Gadekar and others of the mandali were before him in spite of their higher education.

It was noticed that from that time on there was a marked change in Ramaji.

A letter was received from Ramjoo saying that through Mr. D. V. Ambekar, the Associated Press correspondent in Poona, he had arranged to get articles and information about the ashram in the following papers: The Times of India, The Bombay Chronicle, The Indian Daily Mail, The National Herald, Jame-Jamshed, Bombay Samachar, Nava Kal, Dnyan Prakash, Sind Observer, Leader, Hindu, Basumati, Forward, Search-Light, Tribune and Deccan Herald, sixteen in all.

The new ashram and its school were almost the only subject of talk among the mandali. It was five months now since Baba had dissolved the previous ashram, dismantled most of the buildings and disposed of their materials; gone to Lonavla and Bombay for a month, returned to Meherabad; hinted at some new institution; made, altered and rejected plans for it; and had new plans drawn.

He had insisted on the mandali keeping themselves occupied, but had not provided jobs for most of them. Now with the prospect of a new ashram their boredom vanished and a new enthusiasm was injected into them.

On 1st May 1927 Meher Ashram was opened with ten selected boys, all Hindus: four Brahmins, three Marathas and three Mahars. There was a procession, led by the village band, from the zhopdi to the Arangaon cottage where the classes would be held temporarily. Arti was recited, sweets distributed and milk-tea served, and the school formally declared open. Then Baba returned to the zhopdi.

The foundation of a new concept in education had been laid — the concept of the love-need of the child and its fulfilment as the proper basis of its place in the world, both as the child now and as a man later on — in order to establish a real self-confidence from which the Hero-in-the-Child could pursue his ideal right through his life.

Some of the mandali were already envisaging a grand institute with permanent palatial buildings.

Gustadji was now confined to the tiny garden around the zhopdi. Ramjoo rejoined the mandali for his first twenty days' stay.

Baba accepted an invitation to a marriage in Sherri thirty-four miles away. Accompanied by Vishnu, Ramjoo and Jal, Baba went in an old car sent by their host. The way went through 'Nagar and so the party stopped at Kaka Shahane's. Suddenly something displeased Baba and he said he didn't feel like going any further and asked the three to go on and represent him. The road was full of pot-holes and the car very old, and the mandali were saying among themselves how clever it was of Baba to send them on in his place and so avoid the bone-shattering ride. They were well received, but the marriage parties and guests were disappointed that Baba had not come. Hindu marriages for all their pomp and show, provide very meagre wedding breakfasts, and this was keenly felt by the three hungry mandali; and when later on their host talked of having them stay the night and sending them back by public transport in the morning, they were too miserable to enjoy the 'festive' occasion.

Just as the ceremony was about to begin, Baba appeared in a new car to the great delight of everyone. At the conclusion of the ceremony he blessed the couple, and there was a great rush to take his darshan, and he left amidst ringing cheers. At 'Nagar he visited two more houses and arrived back at the ashram at ten o'clock.

Up till now visitors had been allowed to approach Baba whenever he was in the midst of whatever he was doing. Now he said that when people go to a saint for blessings they are always required to wait a while (in the case of Tajuddin Baba sometimes for days), so what harm would it be if people who came to see him should be asked to wait a little while? So Shankarnath was appointed to keep watch, especially to prevent any one trying to enter the school.

One night word was brought to Baba that a young girl in the village had been brutally beaten by her husband. Baba immediately sent Rustomji with some others to go and investigate. They found the girl lying in a heap outside a house with blood on her clothing. On being questioned she related in broken sentences that her husband in a fit of anger had tied her upside

down under a tree and beaten her until she was almost senseless. Fearing that her cries would attract the neighbours he had quickly untied her and run away.

A 'Panch' or vigilance committee of five men was formed immediately and in the presence of the police patil her statement was taken down. Then she was taken to Baba who gave her water and fed her and then told them to take her to the Civil Hospital in 'Nagar, and report the matter to the police there. This was late at night. In the morning some of the husband's relatives came to the ashram to try and hush up the matter, but Baba dismissed them.

During the evenings of most of Ramjoo's stay Baba had him recount Sexton Blake detective stories — the same stories he had enjoyed as a boy.

Many inquiries about the new school were now coming in from parents and guardians, and already there was talk about extending the premises; and soon after, some materials like corrugated iron sheets, bamboo poles and matting began arriving. During a private chat with Rustomji, Baba told him that he wanted to see this institution well established in some permanency before he started speaking again — for when he did that he would have many more important things to do, including the perfecting of the Circle. But this *perfecting* was, as he had said earlier, dependent on Babajan's passing. After these things he would go on tour. If they decided to erect a permanent building, the work would be entrusted to one of the well-known architects in Bombay.

Later in the day, meeting Dhake and Nisal, Baba abruptly asked them were they regularly observing his instructions about the two-hour meditation. They said they weren't and Baba passed on. Later he sent word to them through Vishnu to pack up and leave. But Dhake was still found to be present at the after-supper reading. When the story was finished, Baba left, but midway to the zhopdi he stopped and turned round and called Dhake forward and asked him why he had disregarded his order to leave. Dhake mumbled something about not taking it as a definite order, and Baba

accepted the explanation. He said there was no harm in any of them not carrying out his orders — except to themselves; and so he did not want them to break orders and suffer. It was better for them not to stay there with him than stay and break his orders. The consequences were very grave. If Dhake and Nisal didn't wish to meditate they should have said so and got freed from the order — as Padri and Pendu had already done. And with that, Baba continued to the zhopdi. Dhake hesitated a few moments and then ran after Baba and asked for freedom from the duty of meditation.

Baba granted the request, and then with a humorous gesture asked Ramjoo would he like to take up the duty, but he declined the offer. Whereupon Baba ordered him, Dhake and Padri to retell each evening in turn a Sexton Blake story.

A steam-roller with its crew stopped for the night near the well, and at daybreak the driver began filling his big water-cart. One of the mandali tried to stop him, telling him that that well was reserved for drinking and cooking purposes only. But the driver, being used to treating illiterate villagers roughly on account of his being a government servant and in charge of such an imposing thing as a steam-roller, paid no heed to his protests, so he went and got Rustom. But even he failed to persuade the driver to desist. Suddenly the steam-rollerwala found himself bundled into the makan where the others were in various stages of dragging themselves out of the arms of sleep to embrace the eternal Beloved in meditation. In a few words Rustomji told them of the situation, and they all put on a great show of calling the police and charging him with trespass. But above the noise the driver could be heard shouting, 'Saab boiler phut jayega!' (Sir, the boiler will burst!) in more and more agitated tones until real distress was written on his face. So they let him out, and with one bound he was beside his engine letting off steam. Only then did the mandali realize the meaning of 'Sir, the boiler will burst!' Rustom pointed out to the driver where he could fill his cart, and he left. Baba was highly amused when he was told of the incident later.

The city sub-inspector came out in connection with the girl who had been beaten. The respect he showed to Rustom and his statement so impressed the villagers that many of them tried to fall down at his feet and implore his help; but Baba had instructed him to let the law take its course.

In the evening Baba, with many of the mandali, attended a marriage ceremony in the village.

The new swami who had been allowed to stay in the colony was reported to be disturbing others in their work. Baba threatened to send him away, but then gave him some new clothes and advised him to stay quietly in his room.

So far the school had been conducted in the two halls without partitions of classes. Now some wooden screens arrived from Bombay and Baba directed their placing.

There was some talk between Chanji and Baba about compiling his biography, and Baba said he could begin on the following Monday.

Baba accepted the invitation to another marriage in the village and went in procession from the bridegroom's house to the bride's.

Word was sent to Adi to pick up Dastur Kaikhushru, the Parsi High Priest of Navsari, from the train. He was taken straight to Baba who gave him tea and talked with him privately. The Dastur expressed his spiritual inspirations both for himself and his community, and spoke of the various difficulties he had to meet from the people. After this, some of the mandali were called in and Baba gave absorbing explanations on the divine subjects of the four states of God: God, Sanskaras, Maya and Realization, and on the four kinds of Yakin (faith or conviction). Dasturji was so impressed by what Baba told him that he said he would like to speak publicly on these things.

At this, Baba told him that if he would follow his instructions to the letter and in the right spirit, he would not only come to understand the true aspects of Truth intellectually but also to experience and actually see certain things which would enable him to speak with authority. The Dastur seemed willing to obey Baba and

follow his orders, and Baba said that from then on he should not worry about anything as Baba would look to all his difficulties.

He was then taken over to Masaji's quarters in the old post office where arrangements for his overnight stay were made. In the evening he came out and joined the mandali, mixing freely with everyone; also taking part in the arti very fervently. There was no Sexton Blake that evening, only general discussion till nine-thirty, when the Dastur was asked to have a good sleep and to see Baba again in the morning.

When he had left, Baba called Chanji and talked with him and Gustadji about their guest for some time. He told them that his devotion was genuine.

In the morning, as promised, Baba gave the high priest a lot more explanations, and under his directions Rustom drew several diagrams. He was then taken to 'Nagar by Chanji and put on afternoon train. When the train passed through the colony Dasturji gave his final salute to Baba and waved to the mandali who had lined up to bid him goodbye.

Peelamai and Khorshedbanoo from Karachi came bringing some boys for the school.

It was Dhake's turn to tell the story after supper, but he pleaded that he had not come prepared for it. At this Baba said, 'All right. Then there shall from now on be no reading of any sort, books or papers, by the mandali excepting that which is necessary for the school, since they couldn't carry out this simple task of reading a story and repeating it, and that too by turn between three of them, so there was plenty of time to prepare it.' But Rustomji, although not one of the three tale spinners, thinking to placate Baba asked permission to tell a story, and he did it so well that Baba was pleased to cancel the order.

Five-thirty a.m. was fixed as the time for rising during the summer months.

At a meeting of teachers and workers the following matters were decided after prolonged discussion:

In view of the different language groups already in the ashram, it is advisable to have a common language

as the medium of instruction in the school; and so after 4th grade English, the language is to be the common one.

Only Persian and Sanskrit are to be taught as second languages.

For the 'optional' in the School Leaving Examination all students must take 'English General'.

In the classes below the 4th English the medium of instruction is to be Gujerati, Marathi and Urdu vernaculars.

Baba with a party of seven went to the marriage of the brother of one of his devotees in Rahuri some thirty miles away. They went in a motor-lorry which Adi brought out from the city. Baba was restive. First he reclined with the side curtains open, then lay full length on the floor with them closed, stifling the occupants all under the mid-May sun, and finally finished up next to the driver. When they reached the village they were guided by boys who swarmed about the lorry, and they soon found the house. The host came out to meet them and with all respect and devotion took Baba to the special seat arranged for him. Arti was recited, and light refreshments served. The host seemed to be overwhelmed to find that baba had come all that way to grace his house with his presence.

Dhake mentioned that the local doctor was his brother-in-law and Baba told him to go and ask him to arrange supper for the party. Presently the man came back with Dhake and formally invited Baba to his house. The stars were beginning to come out from behind the clouds, and Baba told them that although each star appeared to be but a sparkling dot it was a mighty sun with its own planets in orbit, and in many respects each planet was like our earth.

Presently the bridal procession arrived amidst the din of musical instruments. After the ceremony Baba blessed the couple and was taken to the doctor's house. This good man and his wife and relatives had not been idle for the last hour. Hot water was ready for washing their hands and faces. A pressure lamp blazed merrily flooding the dining-room with white light. Many tasty dishes

were set before the guests — the doctor and the ladies of the house personally serving them with great devotion and joyful humility. They arrived back at Meherabad at eleven o'clock in the night, and waving the mandali to bed Baba went and inspected the cooking arrangement for the public feast the next day in honour of Upasni Maharaj's birthday. Having satisfied himself that all was in order, Baba passed on giving signs of encouragement to the two night-watchmen, and retired to the zhopdi.

Despite their late night, the mandali were up and about at five o'clock the next morning. After baths and tea they began preparing Baba's ceremonial bath in a decorated temporary bathroom near the dhuni. On the site of the previous Sai Durbar had been raised a grand pavilion made of bamboo and matting with the poles wound with bunting and laced with leaves. Soon the people from the villages began to arrive, each group with its own band announcing the joyous occasion; and soon those from the city and out stations began coming in. At eight o'clock Baba entered the bathroom. The women were the first to wash his feet, then followed the ashram boys, then the mandali, and lastly visitors. After this he took his normal bath by himself, but still allowed the mandali to be present and to assist him.

When all this was finished and Baba was dressed, Rustomji picked him up bodily and amidst deafening cheers carried him to the special seat in the pavilion that had been placed for him, and arti-puja was performed with great devotion and enthusiasm. The garlands were cascades of flowers that nearly hid his rosy face.

At midday the mandali and the boys took their meal and then the public feeding began and continued till mid-afternoon. Under Behram's supervision many of the leading men of Arangaon took part in the serving. The untouchables were served separately but all had the same food: rice and dal and sweet balls. Four thousand were fed.

Into this happy feast a dirty, ragged and half-starved young boy came. One of the mandali spotted him and took him to Baba. He looked every inch a Mohammedan

beggar but when Baba asked him his name, he said it was Burjor Sarkari, and he was a Parsi. He said that he had been badly treated by his relatives and had run away. But it was noticed that he was not wearing the sadra and kusti, which all Parsis wear, and it was clear that he was not being quite frank in his replies to Baba's questions and was hiding something. However, after a time he admitted he had been in Poona lately, and Baba sent for Babu Cyclewala who had come from there, and asked him did he know anything about the boy. Babu at once recognised him as the boy that Sailor, taking pity on him, had placed in the service of a Parsi gentleman, but he had not worked well. This took the boy off his guard and he admitted having stolen thirteen rupees from the cash-box of his employer. His pitiable condition touched Baba and at first he advised him to go to his employer, make a clean breast of his theft and get his pardon, and come back to Meherabad where he would be given shelter.

At this the boy began to weep and sob saying that if he went back to the employer, instead of pardon he would surely be turned over to the police. Baba let him cry for some time and clear his heart of the suppressed emotions of fear and repentance, and then gave him some figs to eat and told him to take a bath, put on new clothes that would be given to him, and eat to his satisfaction. Within a short time a new boy stood before them. Baba again asked him whether he wanted to stay or go to Poona and secure his employer's pardon. This time the boy was quite calm and composed and replied that he would do whatever Baba told him to do. Baba let him stay, but told Babu that when he went back to Poona to go with Sailor to see the man and obtain his pardon for the boy, and to find out whether there was anything serious against, him.

From four o'clock till five-thirty there were bhajans led by Bhau Saheb. For the next hour Baba moved about among the guests talking with them, smiling, giving them some hint of his splendour. Then he was conducted to the pavilion where Pleader gave a talk on the Puranas, interweaving special features of Maharaj's life.

Exactly at seven o'clock the Birth ceremony was performed by swinging a decorated cradle while the people chanted arti amidst showers of flower-petals. There was a great rush forward to touch Baba, but Rustomji again lifted him up and took him and seated him in a decorated palanquin and they went in procession to the hill accompanied by a great din of devotion. It was nearly nine o'clock when they returned, and all the visitors dispersed. Then the mandali and the boys had their supper. There was still one more item — a dramatic performance by a few of the mandali. Baba had entrusted the 'production' of it to Dhake, but when he now mentioned it to him Dhake said there had been no time to prepare it — they had all been too busy. This was the third time in a few days that he had not obeyed Baba's order and had made excuses. Baba told him to cancel the drama, and in its place tell a nice long story himself. Padri thereupon let out a remark loud enough to reach Baba's ears that on such occasions a round of nice milk-tea would not be amiss. And Baba picked up the hint.

Baily arrived by the night train in response to a telegram from Baba.

The next afternoon while sitting with Mr. Sattha and some of his relations who had come from some distant place, Baba sent for the mandali to receive the sweets which the visitors had brought. Chanji and Dhake were late in answering the call. To their explanations for this Baba said that such explanations that the mandali gave every now and then for breaking orders would not do. This present call (which was the same thing as an order — an order to come to receive the sweets) was disregarded by two of them, and so all must go back empty-handed as they had just come. However, they were quickly recalled and given liberal fistfuls of the sweets.

A new set of the printer's proofs of the application forms for the new school was received from the press. Baba said there was no proper indication where the applicant should put his signature, in spite of three or four of the mandali having read them. Chanji tried to argue that there was no need for such indication; but he had

to give in as the majority agreed with Baba that the word ‘signature’ ought to be added in brackets; and he was ordered to type the addition on all the one thousand forms. Chanji went off to begin his task, but within a few minutes was back with the suggestion that the words ‘Yours faithfully’ should also be typed in. To this Baba agreed.

Now Baba happened to look at one of the forms which Vishnu had in his hand and was smeared with the marks of the sweets and he angrily told Vishnu to be very careful in all he did, adding that the forms cost money and the mandali should be ashamed to waste anything. Thus rebuking one he rebuked them all for their wasteful habits.

It was nearly dusk when Chanji finished typing the last ‘Yours faithfully,’ but instead of getting some appreciation for his work he got abuse. It happened this way. Just as he finished he heard Padri calling his name. Taking it to be a preliminary call for the ‘night club’ story-telling, he did not obey it immediately but went to have his supper. Hardly had he taken a mouthful when there was a second call and he ran at once to Baba thinking that Baba intended praising him for a job well done. But it was a thunderbolt that struck him. ‘Why didn’t you come at the first call?’ Chanji started to explain, but Baba cut him short. ‘We’ve already had a “no-explanation” session this afternoon,’ he said. ‘Now it is time for punishment. For one month you don’t take my darshan and don’t look at me intentionally.’ The blood rushed from Chanji’s face, and his tongue was a ball of glue in his mouth. But Baba did not keep him for long in his petrified agony. Suddenly he smiled, and Chanji in one bound reached his feet.

Baily, it transpired, had come to discuss a biography of Baba that he was writing. Baba told him he would give him further facts about his early life. He could also include some of Baba’s divine explanations. The book was to be dedicated to his parents. Baily left in the evening, and it appeared from his talk before he left that he did not like the way Baba was rushing the book. Vishnu’s friend, Vinayak Neelkanth, mentioned earlier,

had come to the Birthday celebration to have Baba's darshan. Now Baba gave him some time and the topic turned to that festivity. After awhile Vinayak was emboldened to mention how deeply impressed he was with the great energy and enthusiasm of the mandali, especially in the feeding of four thousand people. He asked from whence the energy came. To his amazement Baba said, 'Internally given.'

The husband who had beaten his young wife nearly into insensibility came with some relations to Baba and appealed to him to have the case compounded. But Baba told them first to approach the girl and her parents with persuasion and sincere apologies and a substantial cash recompense, and win their pardon, and then come to him. Baba would not only get them free of a legal tangle but also provide the accused, with a paying job, and if the girl was still willing for them to come together again, they could live there at Meherabad. Failing this they would be helped to get the marriage annulled. The deputation strongly protested against this settlement, but eventually gave in and agreed to approach the girl and parents. Then they went away.

Now Baba received a letter from Abdulla on his inquiry into the character of the Parsi boy, Burjor, and Baba called a meeting of selected mandali to hear it and decide what to do with the boy. It seemed that a certain Mr. Ardeshir of Ardeshir and Sons Mineral Water Works in Poona had found the boy wandering about homeless, and taking pity on him had given him board and lodging and clothes and a job at the very decent pay of twenty-five rupees. For some time he worked hard and pleased the firm so well that they had put him in sole charge of one of their retail shops in the city. Then one evening he took thirty-five rupees from the cash-box, locked up and left. And so when Abdulla approached Ardeshir he found a very irate gentleman — for not only had the boy taken the money but had been so inconsiderate as to also take away the keys, thus keeping the shop closed for a whole day. Forgive him? If they ever found him they would teach him a good lesson.

After some discussion the mandali agreed with Baba that at most the boy was a silly fool and should be given a chance to stay there at the ashram. Had he been really cunning with criminal tendencies he would have gone off with all the day's takings or taken small amounts every day, which he could easily have done without detection, and not risked losing such a comfortable and respectable service and chancing possible police pursuit for a mere thirty-five rupees.

So it was decided to let the boy remain. But at the same time Baba sent for him and threatened him with police custody unless he made a clean breast of all his past. This he did, though hesitatingly and with many tears, and his confession tallied with Abdulla's letter. At the end of it he made a pathetic appeal to Baba to save him and keep him with him. Baba said he could stay, but warned him never to think of any mischief — even while dreaming. 'You may manage elsewhere,' he told him, 'to escape detection of a crime, but not here. I will find you even if you hide in the depths of the earth; there is nowhere my eyes do not reach. If you do anything wrong here, you will instantly become a cripple.'

Baba then told him that if he behaved well and obeyed him properly he would be looked after and would have a bright future, otherwise he would be doomed. Then he told the mandali to take the boy into their fold and look after him. When he had gone, Baba jokingly remarked, 'Either he will prove an excellent addition to the mandali or become a criminal of the worst kind — he will go to one extreme or the other.'

In the evening Baba went over to the post office where a number of women including Shirinmai and Mrs. Bomanji were staying, and was met with a scene of extreme violence; bad names and wild abuse were being shouted back and forth. One of the women was screaming that she would throw herself in the well, another was struggling with a huge stone to throw at someone.

Baba waited for the violence to spend itself, playing in the meantime with Peelamai's small son, just as

though he had stopped for a moment on an evening walk — and in no time peace and tranquillity returned.

After supper when all the mandali were seated round Baba listening to the Sexton Blake re-telling, some visitors were announced: the District Deputy Collector who used to come out on and off to see Baba, and three companions who were prominent citizens of Pandharpur. Of these, two were Hindus and the third was an old Bohri gentleman who was president of the Pandharpur Municipality. The story-telling was stopped and Baba talked very freely with the visitors. They were much delighted with their visit and expressed great appreciation of the Meher Ashram project. Before leaving they very eagerly inquired if there was a living saint at Pandharpur. Baba replied that there was one Sat-Purush there. This set the visitors guessing who it might be but Baba gave them no clue beyond saying that he was dressed in rags and appeared to be unconscious of his body and that if they were keen to see him they should keep on looking and they would surely come across him one day.

Vinayak Neelkanth, Vishnu's friend, who was still at the ashram, went to Chanji's office and filled in the details of his meeting Baba on the Bombay-Poona Express on 27th December — when Baba was all the time there at Meherabad. He, Vinayak, was sitting quietly in a third class compartment when suddenly he saw Baba standing in the corridor. At first he did not believe his eyes and hesitated to go towards him, but after further scrutiny got up and went to him and they talked together for some time. Among other things, Baba lamented the then recent demise of Arjun. He said that he was on his way to Meherabad, but after some stations he got down and walked up and down, and three Parsi ladies paid their respects to him; after which he waved to Vinayak and disappeared in the crowd. Vinayak insisted that it was not a dream or imagination, but an actual experience with his eyes open — so much so that he mentioned it to his friends as a lucky coincidence that he had seen and talked with Baba. It was not till

later that he came to know that Baba was at Meherabad at that time.

Baba and most of the mandali went to the home of Mr. Jessawala in 'Nagar for the Navjote ceremony for his two daughters.

On their return Baba spent some hours arranging the library which now had some two hundred volumes. In the midst of this a great pot of ice-cream arrived from the family just visited.

A note was sent to Adi to purchase three black-boards and other necessities, and to try to bring them the same evening. He brought them, and his father Khan Saheb Kaikhushru came with him bringing a huge cone of ice-cream. Baba talked freely and at length especially with Khan Saheb about the new ashram. Then they left and Baba shared out the ice-cream among the mandali.

It seemed that the monsoon would fail again that year. Water restrictions were imposed in the city, and many there and in the villages solicited Baba's blessings for rain. Baba said that if a hundred Brahmins would come and offer him prayers he would bring any quantity they wanted, but the mandali did not appreciate the subtlety of the proposed bargain, and thought it would look like a publicity stunt. Baba explained that his only object in wishing a hundred Brahmins to come to him was that he would be able to create divine love in them and fill them with longing to take the spiritual path. When once they were convinced that a Saint had control over Nature itself a natural respect for all spiritual personalities would be born in them; and they would thus be induced to enjoy the company of the saints. But Padri, the practical, wanted rain there and then to put an end to the abnormal heat and dust storms. So he said, 'Let us break up Baba's dhuni and build a new one, since it has always been found that when the dhuni is lighted afresh good rains immediately follow.'

Baba enjoyed this love-threat and said, 'All right, without Brahmins coming and praying to me the monsoon will begin on the 8th June.' Padri said, 'No! it is too hot and the dust is unbearable — it must begin on the 1st June.' 'Then,' Baba said, 'by all means break the

dhuni if the rain does not begin by the 1st June. Let us see now what happens.’ It was then the 24th May.

Baba wanted a rest for a day, and a picnic to Shendi was suggested and met with the approval of all. But there was some difficulty in choosing his companions for the day: those who were the least needed to look after things at the ashram were old and the least gifted to entertain him on such a trip: while those who had the gift were most needed in the school; but Baba overcame this by giving the school a holiday.

Shendi is a garden, a market garden — a tiny green island in a brown sea of thorns and stones and broken earth, five to six miles out from ‘Nagar on the road to Aurangabad and a little way before the turn-off to Happy Valley.

Baba was escorted to the patil’s house, but no sooner had he graced the seat prepared for him than villagers began flocking in for darshan — the last thing that Baba wanted, and he rose to leave. To his host’s protests he said, ‘I have touched your soil, visited your place; some day I will come again.’ But they prevailed upon him to stay, promising there would be no further disturbance, and immediately served tea. For the rest of the morning they played cards. After dinner of bhakri-bread, hot dal and mangoes Baba played marbles with Dhake and Manekar, while many of the young ones enjoyed climbing up and down the big Peepal tree under which the bus had stopped.

During some further games of cards Baba said, ‘Life and existence throughout its course until Realization is but a game of cards. When you play cards you become pleased or disappointed over winning or losing, become excited and concerned at critical stages of the game; but the moment you again take up your ordinary affairs you forget all about it. To the God-realized the very life and existence of the world is a mere game of cards. Worldly success and loss, pleasure and pain are no more permanent, or significant than what you feel about a game of cards.’

At five o’clock the party prepared to leave, and now Baba gave darshan freely, and at one man’s earnest

request sat in his hut for a little, while he gave Baba some water-melon for his refreshment. Then they left, and arrived back at the ashram a half hour later.

At the after-supper session someone said that the Arangaon people generally spoke ill of Maroti Patil who lived with the mandali, taunting and jeering at him for eating food cooked by a non-Hindu. Baba reassured Patil and told him not to worry about these people with their prejudices and fanaticism. 'One day,' he said, 'I will make these very people eat food prepared by those they call untouchables.'

Sometime after they had all gone to bed Baba called to Masaji (who was on watch), and asked him who had passed by along the outer compound. Masaji replied that as far as he knew, no one had. Baba asked him to look around. He did, and found Padri, Jal and Vishnu on a mango-stealing raid.

On the evening of 28th May the sky suddenly darkened, and a strong wind arose and a smattering of fat harbinger raindrops plomped in the dust and disappeared. Then the rain which Baba had promised set in steadily.

A parcel of Persian books arrived from Bombay, and Baba sorted them out. Rustomji was appointed to teach Persian grammar for three hours a week, and Rao Saheb to teach Persian literature for one hour every day.

Baba with the mandali went to the village for the marriage of Valobai's daughter. The village band was sent to conduct them there. The mandali had been asked to bring their own plates and glasses and could not resist adding their small chatter of them to the boisterous rhythms of the drums. Valobai's house, with only one door and window to the room in which the ceremony was conducted, was insufferably hot; one of the mandali called it the Black Hole of Calcutta, but there were some novel dishes such as macaroni in mango juice which compensated for the 'ordeal by sweat', as another called the ceremony. Just before they left, Baba remarked, 'It was only Valobai's devotion that brought me here today.'

The Sattha family came out to see Baba and stayed

three hours. During talk on one thing and another Baba said that Babajan had lost two of her fingers by allowing insect bites to become infected and refusing any treatment. He said that he himself had a deep wound in his mouth which sometimes pained him much, but he didn't mind. He said saints were always happy even when suffering acutely. This information seemed to be specially given to Mr. Jessawala who had come with them.

On the 1st June it rained again in the night, further gladdening Padri's heart and the surrounding countryside; but there was some anxiety that the strong winds might sweep away the temporary structures.

Dhakephalkar went on leave to be married in Malegaon on the 6th June. His duties were taken over by a Mr. Phaolkay, a science graduate teacher.

There was a general discussion on education in the Principal's office. Some were against it on the grounds that it had spoiled the Indian way of hereditary trades and family traditions, thus bringing about great misery among the masses. But the others contended that education helps one to keep up one's trade and the traditions in a better spirit. 'Even a street-sweeper,' they said, 'would sweep better if he were educated.' Winding up the debate Baba said, 'Education, however faulty and incompetent, is always better than ignorance; if not always beneficial financially, it brings about a lot of good to one mentally. It is a step further in human advancement, betterment and progress. Under all circumstances and in any place I would declare and repeat that education is good and does good. A system may be defective, even bad; yet you must not blame the one for the other — the education for the system.'

After sunset the 400 candle-power pressure-lamp was lighted for the first time amidst loud cheering by the boys and mandali, and coconuts were broken and the kernels distributed. Baba warned Rao Saheb to look well after the new lamp; if any accident happened to it he would leave the place in such a way that no one would know where he had gone.

Rustomji paid a visit to the District Superintendent

of the Police over the ease of the beaten girl, but soon the talk turned to spiritual things and he showed great interest in Baba's activities and wanted to know could he get a copy of any of his discourses, both for himself and a friend who was the son of Matthew Arnold and had come to India to study Buddhism.

A flying visit to Aurangabad was proposed, and those to accompany Baba discussed. Suddenly Baba asked Adi to go outside and call loudly to the clouds, 'Come, rain, come!' Adi did so, but in a low tone. Baba told him to repeat it loudly. This time Adi shouted the words and a strong wind began to blow and clouds gathered, and soon it began to rain heavily again. Nothing was decided about the trip except that they would go in the morning.

Baba roused them all out at five o'clock. It was a wet, cool morning. Baba selected his companions for the trip and at seven o'clock they went to Khushru Quarters for breakfast. They had a clear run to Aurangabad and stopped at the Government Inspection Bungalow. While some of them went into the city to buy food, the others played cards with Baba. The meal finished, they rested awhile and then went to Kailas temple at Ellora. There are thirty-two caves there cut by men into the hillside for meditation and worship, but Kailas was their Crown — hewn out of a single great block of mountain.

On the way back to Aurangabad Baba agreed to stopping in the village of Khuldabad and having tea with a friend of Ramjoo's. This village is a great place of pilgrimage for the Mohammedans of the Deccan. It is said that 1,400 saints have lived thereabouts, but Baba said that among them all only one was a Sadguru — their (the mandali's) spiritual Great Grandfather, Zar Zari Baksh. This was the first time that any of them knew who was Sai Baba's Guru.

Ramjoo's friend was one of the attendants at Zar-Zari Baksh's tomb. In spite of the hut-like place full of buzzing flies to which he was taken, Baba sat there for some time. He was in an excellent mood and explained many points about the subtle universe and heaven and hell. On the way back they called in again at Khushru Quarters and had supper there, getting back to the

ashram at eight o'clock.

Once again Baba had a whim for rain-making. This time he asked Vishnu and Waman the Tailor to call loudly to the clouds, and there was a good fall — clearing off again in time for Baba to attend another marriage. When they returned Baba had tea made for all, and in the drift of talk a certain Kalidas was mentioned.

One day Kalidas had suddenly felt an impulse to surrender himself to Maharaj and give him everything he had. Maharaj held his hand over him in blessing, and the fellow went crazy. This reminded them all about an old Parsi gentleman, a relative of Sattha. He had met Baba at the Navjote ceremony for the Jessawala girls in Sattha's house and had become so attached to Baba that he began getting up at four o'clock in the morning and walking out to the ashram. Some nights, it was reported, he didn't sleep. Then he came to Baba bringing all his personal things to give to him as a sign of his complete surrender. Just as Maharaj had done to Kalidas, Baba placed his hand on the old man's head and blessed him. From that time Nusserwanji had been acting like a madman, being indifferent to all establishments even to the extent of going naked at times and showing great hostility to those who attempted to pacify him.

Baba said to the mandali, 'It is not good to express one's feelings in such violent manner: feelings and the overflow of emotions must be checked and controlled and gradually turned into submission. This alone will enable one to set out on the Path. Without the control and submission to the Master one cannot even find the Path; on the contrary he will become a laughing stock of the world, and may go mad really and finish up in a lunatic asylum. True, those who get these outbursts of feeling have a loving nature and a bent towards Truth, but these feelings must be controlled if they are to be any benefit and not become an empty experience — as happened with Waman Subnis and Keshav. Both of these had outbursts of feelings they were unable to check, and put on a show of love and asceticism, and once again became involved in household affairs.'

Baba had Nusserwanji called, and explained these things to him. He said, 'Although the way you have been conducting yourself has nothing to do with Truth, you are sincere and long for it and I will see to your spiritual advancement. Remember to control your feelings: otherwise you make others unhappy — and to make others happy is the chief teaching of all great Masters like Zoroaster himself, your own Prophet.' The man was greatly composed at this and promised to be silent and remain quiet in his room.

While going to the zhopdi Baba casually remarked to Jal that he would come out when the rain stopped. This puzzled Jal, as the sun was shining brilliantly and there was not the least sign of rain. However, a few minutes later clouds gathered and rain set in. It rained for an hour and stopped at three o'clock, Baba's usual time then of coming out of the zhopdi.

Now for some time at night the mandali with Baba played atya-patya sometimes as late as eleven o'clock on moonlight nights, and on other nights by the light of the pressure lamp.

Dhake returned from his marriage leave and resumed his duties as Principal. Nusserwanji's reform was only temporary so Baba decided to keep the old man near him for awhile.

A certain Sir H. D. Aderwalia, it was reported, said that he would be willing to come to Baba if Baba would cure his daughter of some malady. Baba showed no interest in the matter, only remarking that many prominent people, leaders and celebrities would come in the course of time — and without bargaining. 'Anybody, whether a somebody or a nobody who comes of his or her own accord,' he said, 'is welcome here.'

There was a discussion over an article in 'Jame-Jamshed' about a German lady who was disappointed over Gandhi. Believing him to be spiritually advanced, she had gone to him at a great sacrifice and was soon disappointed. During the course of discussion Baba said that publicity and fame were not the proper standards by which to judge the really great ones. Mere political and social workers become so famous that they are

looked upon by the world as great men, while thousands of real workers and silent sufferers are more wonderful and greater than a thousand Gandhis or Petits put together, and remain unknown. They can cheerfully fast for long periods, but if a Petit or Gandhi fasts five days, a sensation is caused all over the country and screaming headlines appear in the press. It was because of this sensational publicity that the poor lady became misguided. Had she gone to Maharaj she would have gained much. But disappointments do much good — they lessen much thinking. In the end, the mind has to be shattered. Unknowingly and steadily one is led into the right channel which ultimately brings one to The Perfect Guide.

Baba was now spending a lot of time actively in the ashram with Bua Saheb and Pendu helping. After one stretch of eight hours they both were so exhausted that they threw up their hands and wanted to pack off. But just as easily as Baba can dispirit one, so he can make one all smiles, and presently the pair came round to their old selves again.

There was heavy rain such as had not been seen for years. The monsoon had set in well. Half a dozen sheep were drowned, and others, helpless against the wind, fell in the mud and lay there until rescued. One flock rushed on to the school veranda where old Nusserwanji was quietly sitting, nearly burying him, but he wasn't injured.

The Arangaon people were now keeping pretty much to themselves; there was not much movement between the village and Meherabad; but at the same time if there was a dispute among the villagers they ran straight to Baba for his intervention and settlement.

Baba now made his first move in the spiritualization of education by having the boys each morning recite: 'Hari, Paramatman, Allah, Ahurmazd, God, Yezdan-Hu.'

Baba took a day off from his ashram work, and taking Ghani (who had arrived the night before), Ramjoo and a few more, spent the day on the hill playing various indoor games, especially table-tennis. A dinner of delicious dishes was sent up at noon and in the evening

in the evening with afternoon tea at four o'clock.

During the day Baba outlined, a novel plan for increasing the size of Meher Ashram to accommodate the many boys expected to join the school. Instead of spending a large sum on new buildings they would cut openings in the huge stone water tank which the British had built to supply a military camp during the First World War, and near which Baba and the mandali were then picnicking. This would make an ideal *permanent* structure, around which could be grouped buildings of more temporary materials and less durable workmanship until such time that they could be made permanent.

During talk, Baba said that there would be another war that would eclipse in all its horrors and devastation the last war; so colossal that the dead would remain unburied. It would be then that he would manifest himself as Avatar.

Baba wanted that fish Dr. Ghani around him for awhile, so he had baited a hook with those excellent meals of delicious dishes. In his gastronomical delight (food-joy) Ghani blurted out, 'If we got food like this always, I would want to stay with Baba.' Baba instantly agreed to supply him with such food everyday for fifteen days each month.

Ghani squirmed, as fishes do, longing for the freedom of the sansaric sea, but Baba held him to his word.

The next day Baba, with all the mandali that could be spared from their regular duties, marched up the hill, and while some played games others set to, to breach the wall of the tank at one end. Two labourers were hired also. But after struggling all day with crow-bars, only two stones were dislodged — so well did the British do what they did. Again they had fine meals.

On the second day they not only managed to make an opening large enough for a doorway, but made a second one at the opposite end.

There was discussion on the reported detention by the Persian authorities at Bandar Bushire on the Persian Gulf of fourteen boys whom Baidul was bringing to Meherabad. Baba duly instructed the ashram authorities on the matter.

Comparing the powers of a yogi with those of a wali, or real saint, Baba said that the former was like a child playing with its toys, but the saints are the pets of God, and at times the impossible is made possible by God through their blessings. And so nothing but benefit can come from saluting and offering one's respects to them. But one should think twice before following one of them or accepting his instructions.

One of the usual Thursday visitors was a Parsi very peculiar to look at and extremely funny to talk to. He said he had been a locomotive fireman, but had renounced the world and was now in search of a Guru. At nearly every sentence he would pipe out a peculiar 'ji' the polite form of 'yes' in Gujarati. Baba told him that renunciation was not such an easy thing to do. He asked him to go and see Upasni Maharaj, Narayan Maharaj, Babajan and Dhuniwala Baba, and if he still didn't settle down, to come back there.

Dhake and Chanji were severely taken to task by Baba for some trifling neglect in their work. He warned them not to allow the slightest indifference to creep into what they did — even to changing the date in the calendar.

Nusserwanji began to look and act normally and asked Baba's permission to visit his brother and sister. Baba gave him leave, but once again enjoined on him to live peacefully at home.

Rustom's birthday was celebrated with sweets and milk-tea for breakfast.

Additions were made to the tank premises, a deep veranda running the length of the tank on the west side was built, and a number of temporary bamboo and tatta rooms and huts were erected. The stores and kitchen were brought up. In the evening Baba played a brilliant game of cricket. Later he played draughts or checkers with the mandali.

Baba felt much concern for the detained Persian boys.

The removal of the rest of the ashram to the hill was celebrated with games of atya-patya in the morning and cricket in the afternoon, when sweets were distributed,

tea served and bhajans sung.

Arrangements had been completed to give secondary education according to the Bombay University curriculum, and the school was named Hazrat Babajan High School.

Boys who had been staying in the makan with the mandali, but who, for one reason or another, were not admitted into the ashram, would attend the school classes and be lodged in the recently vacated Arangaon bungalow under Rao Saheb's care and would eat with the mandali. They would live according to fixed rules and time-table much the same as those in the ashram proper.

The round of house visits and weddings continued. One was to Nanabai, a little old Hindu lady who cooked them a meal of many dishes. Another was to an old and devoted Brahmin family. Then they went on to the houses of Chintamanrao and Laxmanrao, at each of which they were pressed to partake of food. They were told that the mandali had just dined sumptuously, and so, great was their joy when Baba ate a few morsels, thus blessing their places.

Quite unexpectedly Baidul arrived at Meherabad on the morning of 3rd July with the fourteen Persian boys and two gentlemen who came with them. Two of the boys were Mohammedans and the rest Zoroastrians.

Baba embraced all of them, inquired about their journey and then had breakfast served them.

On the 4th, two local Moguls, the first, brought boys for admission to the ashram. On the 5th, Kaka Shahane and his family moved back to Meherabad and Baba resumed the Thursday tea-parties. A pleasant surprise was an application from a Bohri Mohammedan in Bombay for admission to the ashram of a boy of his own community and relationship. In a letter accompanying the application the man spoke very highly of the possibilities and plan of training young boys in spirituality.

This sudden influx caused Baba to suggest the possibility of the building of permanent premises to the tune of twenty-five thousand rupees to be commenced in

October. A tennis-court was proposed, also a better cricket pitch with coir matting so that outside teams could be invited to play matches.

Baba said that he would have to fast on water for six months and that when he had done so he would speak. He said that there would be an outburst of spirituality at the place. 'Many sages,' he said, 'already know about it.'

A young sadhu from the durbar of Dhuniwala at Sai Khed came to Meherabad dreaming behind his eyes and curly hair and greeted Baba with great respect. He said that he had already been to Babajan and Narayan Maharaj and was on his way to Sakori. Baba gave him a photo of himself and a locket and ordered a meal to be given to him. The young man didn't seem much interested in the food but kept on glancing at the photo. When asked why he had left Dhuniwala Baba and begun pilgrimage, he replied that that Master gave him a hint, 'Go and look at the Rivers that have become the Sea.'

'How did you know which particular Rivers to go to,' he was asked. 'Were any definite names suggested to you?' 'No,' the young sadhu replied, 'I was not asked or told to see particular places and personalities — I have followed my intuition.' A little while later he was asked to leave for Sakori accompanied to 'Nagar station by Ramjoo, who was to purchase his ticket. Seated in the train he told Ramjoo, 'You have taken your position on the river-bank; do not leave it; one can never tell when the river will flood.' Saying this, he rested his head, against the window-frame and was quiet for a few moments. Then lifting his head and with beaming eyes said that he had just felt a message flashed from Meherabad to Sakori. When, later, this was repeated to Baba, he merely said, 'He is in the line.'

On 7th July a Persian section of the school was opened.

It turned out with the young sadhu that after he had been at Sakori a few days Maharaj told him to return to Ahmednagar instead of returning to Sai-Khed as he had intended. Baba in turn ordered him to go back

to Babajan and stay with her till the 11th, when he should return to Meherabad with Babu Cyclewala and party who would be coming then. But he should be silent the whole time and not under any circumstances speak to anyone.

The Parsi ex-locomotive fireman returned from his roundabout of the Masters — still piping ‘ji.’ He was persuaded to leave, by foot — much to Adi’s annoyance, for he seized every opportunity to drive his father’s new car.

Mr. K. J. Dastur whom Baba had, some little while earlier invited to join the school as a teacher, came and had a long talk with Baba. The outcome was that he agreed to work for six months for one thousand rupees, two hundred of which was to be paid in advance. He went back to Bombay promising to return and take up his duties the following Monday.

Referring to a communal riot in Calcutta as reported in the ‘Times,’ Baba said, ‘It is simply madness and foolishness on the part of the Hindus and Moslems to break one another’s heads and insult one another’s religion. That religion is not worth its name that allows violating the sacred sentiments of another’s religion. The work of conversion, turning a Hindu into a Moslem, and vice versa is equally senseless. An increase in the number of followers of a particular religion is no indication of its greatness or value or credit, or prestige. The struggle for religious supremacy is nothing but rank irreligion. Many actions and customs originating through social, economic or political considerations on the spur of the moment and preached and practised by prominent people, in the long run become part and parcel of a religious creed. There is no truth in the alleged rumours that the government purposely brings the two communities at loggerheads through direct or indirect means; though when the clashes occur, the government does take advantage of the situation.’

Coming to the question of the real reason behind these quarrels and fights, Baba continued, ‘It is said that the chief complaint of the Hindus is the Moslems’ killing of cows. It is wrong for the Hindus to do so. If

they protest on economic and humanitarian grounds against cow-killing, then why do they restrict themselves only to cows? Why don't they feel equal mercy for other animals that are being slaughtered? But the real question is not one of mercy, for an animal gets evolutionary advancement when it is killed — it is that the progress of the one who kills gets retarded and he has to suffer much. It is the man who kills the animal who is to be pitied not the animal that is killed.

‘But the real reason underlying these communal riots as well as the general restlessness all over the world, is the near approach of the spiritual outburst that occurs at long intervals. It will all end in unity and peace. One feels great disturbance and pain in the abdomen before having an unusually satisfactory motion. It is just like that. These very disturbances are the indication of the coming peace. The combination of Islam, Hinduism and Zoroastrianism in my person is not a coincidence, it has great significance.’

One of the mandali, Gulabshah, was found to be on a hunger-strike for the last three days in protest against Ardeshir's high-handed and haughty manner in the kitchen and dining-room. Baba had a special meal prepared for him and asked him to break his fast. He said, ‘Self-suffering is very good, but not obeying my instructions and orders is very bad.’ Turning to some others round about he said, ‘Gulabshah did well not to retaliate, and tried to bear it silently; but he also violated my order of taking food at regular hours.’

Dhake's mind was still disturbed, and Baba advised him, ‘Don't break the promise. I would lose nothing, but you would suffer terribly.’

A few days later, finding Gulabshah still averse to eating regularly, Baba pacified and encouraged him, ‘Don't take it to heart when you are annoyed by others, and eat and drink regularly. Ramakrishna once shampooed the feet of someone who had kicked him. Don't fall down like a weak tree in a passing gale.’

Many Hindus who came for Baba's darshan referred to the recent Hindu-Moslem riots and complained bitterly about the Moslems' aggressive methods. Baba said,

‘Don’t get angry and excited. No religion allows speaking ill of others. If you really feel wronged by the Moslems, my only advice is to pray to God to correct them.’

The first cricket match was played against an outside team. The visitors were superior.

Dr. Ghani was appointed one of the teachers in the Persian classes.

In stray talk about all the various activities now going on, Baba said, ‘It is like digging different canals and getting as many people as possible to wait on the banks so that when the flood comes down they will receive the precious water.’

A second lot of school furniture arrived. The varnishing and polishing of the first lot was almost finished, being done by two tradesmen from the city and helped by school staff.

Baba spent a lot of time on the hill inspecting the various departments of the ashram, correcting small faults here and there and supervising the making of a cricket pitch separate from the Meherabad one.

At tea at Kaka’s, Baba said that his work for the Circle was almost completed. When that was over, he said he would go to Europe and America where he would attract the masses with great miracles.

A poor-looking Hindu, a tailor by caste, came and said he had been out of a job for a long time and wanted work. Baba sent him off to roll the new pitch, but after awhile it was found that he had gone away. The furnishing of the school was completed.

Baba played chess with Ghani, and listened to a song each by Jamshedkhan, Burjor and Ardeshir.

They played another match with an outside team and Baba put up the highest score of the day.

A Persian bread oven was built and a new kind of bread was baked for the colony.

At yet another marriage, without any particular reference, Baba said, ‘The Sadguru can interfere in the Creator’s working, but he rarely does so; for the most part he leaves the Creator and the creation to manage their own affairs.’

Baba again referred to the Circle. 'I intend,' he said, 'to finish the work with the Circle within a year, and speak again. All the various sufferings that I am undergoing are for the sake of my Circle. Great miracles like raising the dead are nothing in comparison with the work I am doing for the Circle. Before I begin to speak I want to see all the affairs of the ashram in order.' Then they played a six-handed chess: he, Kaka, Dhake, Doctor, Chanji and Ramjoo, while the rest, looked on.

Thus through games, discussion and story-telling Baba kept the mandali in his company through the evenings.

Shirinmai, accompanied by Baba's brother Adi and sister Mani who was nine years old then, came for the day. Something upset Shirinmai and she stood up and said, she was going. Pointing his finger at his mother Baba said, 'Go!' Shirin said she was going and would take her daughter with her. Mani started crying and Baba told her to go along with her mother. They left, and all along the road the child was crying and asked her mother why were they going — she wanted to stay with her brother. They covered a couple of miles and Shirinmai sat down under a tree. The child kept on crying and whimpering. At last Shirin said, 'if you want to go back, go.' Mani started to walk back. Presently she saw what seemed to be a vision — of a man robed in flowing white floating towards her. Then she saw that it was her brother, and with a cry ran into his arms. He took her hand and walked back to his mother. She was quickly mollified and glad to return to the ashram.

Baba told the young sadhu to repeat in a low tone continuously, except for taking food and sleeping, the word 'Om.' He told him, 'If you follow this instruction to the letter for five or six months the repetition will become automatic and without any effort on your part your body will begin to vibrate.'

Some of the mandali objected to the Marathi arti and wanted one in mixed languages.

A qwaal from Poona came of his own accord to sing to Baba. Baba enjoyed his art and gave him twenty-five rupees.

A well-known Persian educationist in Bombay brought his two sons to the ashram. Baba had him read the rules and regulations and made him aware of the aim and purpose and general standard of the place — especially emphasizing that the pupils would be required to stay for the full course. After a personal inspection of the place the man accepted all the conditions. Then he departed. But a few days later he came and wanted to provide a special diet for the boys, saying that that served at the ashram was inadequate. Baba reminded him that he had read the conditions, of which food was a part, and he could take his boys away. Later he told the mandali that he would not accept any more sons of Moguls — they were word-breakers.

The school hours were fixed at 7.15 a.m. to 12 noon. All the boys were divided into different cricket teams according to age and ability. The playing area was large enough to accommodate all the teams at the same hour. There was a complaint that there were still many thorns about. Baba ordered a dozen labourers to be hired to clear the ground and also complete some filling in uneven places.

Chess had become a regular thing at night.

One of the subjects discussed by Baba was the performing of the Navjote ceremony for the Zoroastrian boys from Persia by Khan Saheb.

In response to an advertisement for a doctor for the ashram there were scores of applications.

Kishan rejoined the mandali and he and his family were housed in separate quarters.

Someone asked Baba would it not be advisable to send his notes and explanations and lectures to someone to edit and put in good shape for people's reading? 'No,' Baba replied, 'it would not be advisable to send them to anyone outside — such a writer would have to be here in order to ensure correctness. "K" here, the other day, took notes of some of my explanations, but when he put them into his own language he made a mess of it all. My explanations and lectures may be recomposed in forceful and stylish language, but the spirit and meaning must remain unchanged. Such a

writer will come in the due course of time.

A cricket match was played between the Meherabad and ashram teams. Baba scored fifty-four in splendid style. Play was interrupted by passing showers. A Parsi and a Mohammedan came for Baba's darshan; Baba gave them an interview on the pitch, heard their grievances and blessed them.

The young sadhu in addition to his 'Om' repetitions was put on bread and water once every twenty-four hours and continued to remain aloof from everyone. 'If you break the order,' Baba said, 'I will drive you out branded so that you will not get shelter anywhere else.'

Aspandiar, one of the boys from Persia, asked Baba to exempt him from studies because he thought of Baba most of the time and could not do his lessons properly. At times he saw Baba with open eyes when he was absent. The teachers said that the boy was often seen crying for no particular reason. Baba asked him to do his best and go on with his studies in school hours and think of him in his spare time.

The Kadmi New Year was a holiday, and games of atya-patya and cricket were played all day; Baba played a brilliant and faultless game scoring 65 not out. Among stray remarks, Baba said that Vivekananda had a Circle and Ram Tirtha didn't.

Baba again mentioned Gandhi, saying that he would suffer terribly in his next life because of his present activities and movements which had caused many people to suffer. The sanskaras of those who follow him now and suffer through doing so will be the cause of his suffering next time. But he is very fortunate — for he is doing it all with good intentions and so he will realize God in his third life after this.

Ramjoo was given ten days' leave to go home because his wife was ill. This was over and above the regular ten days a month.

Dr. Ghani, Abdulla and Babu Cyclewala came out from Poona. They said that there was a new cause of petty violence in the city: Mohammedans were saying that Shivaji was born of Mogul blood. Baba said that it was an expression of malice. But it was absolutely

ridiculous for the Hindus to make such a song and dance about it, when they have been talking and writing scurrilous nonsense about the Prophet of Islam for so long. It was false to say that Shivaji had Mogul blood in him; but it was true that Shivaji was now born of Persian blood! This was a play on Baba's once telling the mandali that he had been Shivaji.

Baba said, 'Preparations for a terrible war are going on all over the world. Persia will become a second Belgium. Britain will also suffer. The Russians will have the upper hand.'

The Zoroastrian holiday Khordad Sal came round again, and bugles and drums, whistles, mouth-organs and tin cans made the dawn flee, and the sun pour its gold into the cup of the morning.

As soon as the Meherabad mandali were all out of bed they decided to march up the hill and demand of Baba milk-tea on this auspicious day. To their great surprise Baba greeted them with, 'Come on, hurry up for the milk-tea that has been ordered.' When it came he served each in turn with his own hands.

The six Zoroastrian boys from Persia were taken into 'Nagar and their Thread Ceremony was performed. Sweets were distributed.

There was a joint prayer recited by the boys in the morning for a few minutes before entering their classrooms. One morning Baba was listening and stopped them and said it didn't sound harmonious — it had no sweetness in it. The boys who did not belong to the ashram were asked to step back a few paces, and the ashramites were ordered to begin again and say the lines as sweetly as they could. When they had done so Baba told them that that was how they should be recited.

Ghani was allowed to go to Lonavla for two to three days on urgent business.

Krishna's birthday came round and was celebrated enthusiastically with sweets and milk-tea, games, bhajans and the Breaking of the Curd-Chatti ceremony. In the afternoon Baba went house-visiting in the city with some of the mandali.

The tennis-court being made at Meherabad was com-

pleted and a few practice games played.

Ramjoo wrote asking for five days' extension of leave. It was granted, but it was of no use to him because he too fell ill. He asked for another five days and ran into business difficulties because of sudden communal disputes in Talegaon where his business was.

Baba with all the mandali was invited by Babu Javai to his place for tea. Tasty bhajyas were served and Baba advised them all to eat as much as they could, for there wouldn't be any supper when they got home. Baba stayed a long time, talking, teaching, discussing, translating Hafiz and leaving the mandali spellbound. At the end of it, when he rose to leave, he said to his host, 'You will have a son.' The party returned at 9.30, and after some chess with Ghani, Baba retired.

At last the young sadhu who had been given Name-repetitions and fasting, quit, and went to Baba for his permission to leave. Baba tried to persuade him to stay, but it was clear that the young man had had enough of the Path for then, so Baba gave him permission to go, and as a parting gift advised him to go straight back to Dhuni Baba's durbar. Tears were rolling down his cheeks as he left. Of all those who came to Meherabad with the definite purpose of spiritual advancement, he had stayed the longest and carried out Baba's instructions comparatively faithfully.

In the match between Meherabad and Meher Ashram, Baba, playing for Meherabad, was responsible for the dismissal of the other side for only thirty runs; and in another match Meherabad had lost seven wickets for ten runs when Baba saved the day. His wicket-keeping was also very fine to see — stumping three batsmen in quick succession.

After that Baba played a few games of tennis on the new court.

Before retiring that night Baba told the watchmen to be particularly watchful for the next three to four nights. In the dead of the night Baba opened his window and inquired of Gustadji if all was well. Receiving an affirmative reply Baba closed the window. Within minutes the air was rent by the whistle from

the watchman at the women's quarters and was answered by Baba's watchman. Everyone tumbled out with their stout sticks and started running all over the compound.

The next day Baba warned the watchmen to be especially alert and to cry out to each other every fifteen minutes, 'All well!' throughout the night.

After spending the afternoon in the ashram (Meher Ashram) and all except Chanji had gone home, Baba suddenly said, 'I don't like coming up here any more. I wish to wind up the whole affair as I did with Meherabad earlier.'

Slamson, Gustadji's brother-in-law, and one of the original mandali, came to see Baba and Baba talked with him for some time.

When the mandali were all gathered round one evening, Baba said, 'The yogi sees Truth through coloured glasses, but the Sadguru has no glasses, he sees clearly. The powers of the yogi are borrowed and are used with effort, while the powers of the Realized One are his own. The miracles of the Master are selfless and are part of his giving a universal push to the whole creation. Miracles, whether manifested by Masters or yogis, are mere illusion, having no more substance than the shadows of a dream. The resurrection of the dead by a yogi is a miracle both to the worldly man and for the yogi himself; it is no miracle for the Sadguru: he would rather try to impress upon the world the fact that what they consider to be death is no death at all. Whom to bring back to life when none ever dies?'

Baba continued, 'Majzubs enjoy the Paramananda state permanently, that is, they experience Infinite Knowledge, Bliss and Power for ever. The Sadguru also experiences these things continuously but he "returns" to the world and then has super-consciousness *and* gross consciousness.'

Shankarnath and his relatives and friends, who form the Meher Bhajan Mandali, invited Baba to their house in 'Nagar, and he was greeted with great cheers. After bhajans Baba told them, 'If you people band yourselves together and help one another toward social and moral

upliftment and keep certain fixed rules, such as strictly avoiding intoxicants and animal food, with the firm intention to abide by them, I will help you in every way, including with money, as I want to give you people a push forward.’ All the families gathered were surprised and gladdened at hearing such generosity.

36. *The School of Love*

THE next couple of months were spent settling in. By November there was a marked change in the atmosphere of the place.

Baba now passed an order that the boys must not speak to anyone except among themselves and with the ashram authorities. Even the teachers were not to talk to them outside classes.

On 10th November Baba began a fast on one pint of milk-coffee a day. (The order had been for one pint, but the boy detailed to take it drank half of it each time.) The fast was to continue for five and a half months.

Presently, perhaps a week after he began the fast, Baba started hinting about the importance of love and concentration and meditation.

Two Mogul gentlemen brought their two sons from Bombay for admission to the school, but Baba refused them. He had good reasons for doing so, for back in July he had, among others, admitted the two sons of a well-known Persian educationist who had agreed to all the conditions and rules but soon went back on his word, and Baba had said, 'These Moguls are word-breakers and are not to be trusted.' One of the gentlemen, Syed Haji Mohammed, pressed for his son Ali's admission but three times Baba refused him. Then the boy himself, as though he was inwardly drawn, spoke up on his own behalf. This so touched Afseri, the Superintendent, that he began pleading for him, and Baba admitted both the boys after telling their fathers in detail the purpose of the school and its rules and conditions, and requiring a signed contract that the boys would not leave before the five-year course of studies was completed. All this was agreed to.

On November 23rd Baba began a series of talks on

spiritual subjects which enthralled both boys and mandali. He made the Creation with its suns and planets, skies and planes, mineral, vegetable, animal and human kingdoms, birth and death, heaven and hell, subtle and mental worlds sound like a fantastic tale. He told them about saints and the Prophets.

He also told the boys that he had thought of taking them gradually along the Way of Realization, but the time of the great outburst and overflow of spirituality all over the world which takes place at long intervals was near at hand, so he had changed the schedule. 'I intend soon,' he said, 'to advance a few of you who make yourselves ready with love to receive love. Strive, but do not strain your brains. It is more a matter of not obstructing love's coming than trying to force it to awake in you: joyous enthusiasm and boyish glee would do more to open your hearts than forced thinking about it.'

The talks were given in an exhilarating atmosphere with the Teacher walking up and down twirling at times his alphabet board between the sentences spelled out on it, and embracing and patting the pupils in encouragement. Out of school hours the boys began to prefer solitary corners to one another's company and became adverse to playing, eating and sleeping. By his very presence Baba was talking to them in their hearts, so his words were rocked in the cradles of their ears: 'Love me, and you will find me. I am ready to make any of you a Vivekanand, a Ram Tirtha, an Ali or an Arjun — and the only price is your love. But there is no price: I offer spirituality to you to loot — and he who has a lion's heart will get the lion's share!'

Some months back Baba had had a curious building erected. Over a pit 6' x 4' x 4' with its walls faced with stone, and covered with some boards in which was a hole large enough to admit a man, a hut of bamboo and iron sheeting of somewhat larger dimensions than the covered pit was raised. On one end was a door, and each of the other walls had a window. One of the windows looked out to five adjoining meditation cells.

The mandali had wondered what the building was

for. Now, on 20th December, the forty-first day of his fast, Baba confined himself in this hut, occupying the room during the day and retiring usually into the 'crypt' at night. On the same day that he commenced this confinement he issued another order that the boys must not be touched by anyone including the teachers and ashram authorities. During the next week the school compound during out-of-school hours, and even during short recess, presented a picture of huddled figures engrossed in meditation and tears; while being deprived of even the sight of the Master during periods was almost too much for the boys to bear.

New Year's Day, the twelfth day of confinement and the fifty-second of fasting, witnessed a great outburst of emotion throughout the whole place. Every boy, of whatever creed or caste, began weeping and wailing as though his nearest and dearest had been reported dead. Their shrieks and cries were heard at lower Meherabad. The ashram staff tried to pacify the boys, but they were deaf to all words except the Master's Name. This went on between seven and eight in the evening by which time the staff managed to get them all over to Baba's seat, and at sight of him each immediately fell silent. The following day a similar scene was witnessed during 20-minute recess, but at the sound of the bell it ended. In a day or two this collective crying ceased, but many individually would go apart and offer the pearls of their tears to their Beloved.

Ali, who, after his father Syed Haji Mohammed had failed to get him enrolled in the school, had pleaded his own case for admission, had by now become a 'leader' on the field of love and Baba began to pay him special attention: the attention of presence-promising and instant absence, of taunts and needling. He would, for instance, send for the boy and when he came, instead of the expected pat or embrace, he would be dismissed with a curt 'Yes, what is it?' One evening this went on for a dozen times.

But at the end of the month Baba declared that but for a final touch Ali was ready to leave the domain of the *bound* and be taken to the region of the *free*. And

this is how that touch was given.

One evening Baba again began needling his lover, saying to the others, 'He is very keen about his studies lately, and is always thinking about his father, but has no thoughts of me.' For the first time the boy lost control of himself; great sobs shook his body, and with a leap he burst out of the assembly and ran at random about the compound as fast as he could. Baba signed to Afseri to bring him back.

His face was terrible to look at. Baba gathered him up in his arms, kissed him on the forehead and put his head on the boy's chest for some minutes. The sobbing stopped, and there was an utter calm. Ali seemed to be sound asleep. Baba had one of the mandali ask him several questions, but no reply came. Then he was asked, 'How are you, Aga Ali?' and there came a faint reply, 'Khush' (happy). 'What do you see?' 'Baba.' 'Where?' 'Everywhere.'

After three days Baba brought Ali down to normal consciousness and he resumed classes.

Rumours began now to be circulated that some of the boys had gone mad, some had been forcibly converted to the Zoroastrian faith, and all were made to bow down to the Master's feet. The rumours reached as far as Bombay, and Ali's father came in haste demanding back his son. Afseri talked quietly to him for a long time, and the Haji became pacified and left. But other parents and guardians quickly came and took away their boys: eight Hindus and one Mohammedan. Baba called for fresh stamped Agreements from the parents or guardians that the boys should remain undisturbed for five years.

Rustomiji was told to prepare for a visit to England and the Continent to invite the youth of the West to participate in the Meher Ashram experiment.

A copy of the Agreement, was sent to Ali's father and he replied, 'The boy is yours. . . . I entrusted him to you . . . train him as best you think.' Syed Haji's faith was short-lived. The letter was written on 29th January (the day of Ali's breakthrough into Bliss). On 20th February, Naoroji Talati from Bombay wired that Ali's father wanted him back.

The staff was shocked and fell into groups of discussion. Baba said, 'If Ali goes, everything goes. I will come out of confinement and break the ashram to pieces.'

On the 25th Ali's father presented himself at the ashram at seven o'clock in the morning. He was given some refreshment and shown round the place and then, in view of the all-night train journey, invited to rest for awhile. After a two or three hours' sleep he was given a meal and he and Afseri sat down to talk. The talk went on, with a tea break, till near sunset and ended with the man getting what he had come for.

When this result was given to Baba he said: 'I have become very weak. I will end this confinement and come out and resume eating. Ali is not in loss in the least, but I am. The purpose has not been achieved — it will have to be done afresh. Then Baba gave the order that no one should touch him under any circumstances unless specifically told to.

A gloom settled down over the ashram which the dawn did not dispel. Two of the mandali offered to go to Bombay and try to win the boy back. Baba consented. But they found that they not only had to contend with Haji Mohammed but a solid wall of relatives and influential friends, and they returned defeated and dejected. Baba asked one of them to go straight back to Bombay and try once more.

Baba now initiated one of his 'classical' confusions among the mandali: giving an order to some and then giving an opposite order to others.

As if nothing unusual had occurred, Baba continued to issue instructions to the school authorities, even sanctioning costly alterations and additions, while he told others to prepare for the closure of the whole ashram. This state lasted for five days.

It was evening when Baba stepped out of his room after one hundred and seven days of self-imprisonment. The boys quickly decorated the rickshaw and took him down to Meherabad proper. The dhuni witnessed his passing by flaring up for a moment. He went here and here about the place greeting the mandali who were there and inquiring about their health, and then came

back and sat down by the dhuni. He remained there some time and then told the others that the dhuni had given him a message, that he should continue with the work. He said he would do so if Ali returned within seven days. Otherwise he would have the whole place demolished.

Baba was indisposed the next day and towards evening became very restless. He would go down into the 'crypt' and after a few minutes come up again. Standing, sitting, reclining, he changed his position continually, and signed that he was dying. By sunset, there was a peculiar vacancy in his eyes, and his hands and feet were cold and lifeless.

On the third day he was in a playful mood and allowed his little lovers to dress him up as Krishna.

On the fourth day he received a telegram from the companion who had gone to Bombay: Have seen Syed. Starting tomorrow night. Ali not coming.

The fifth day brought a letter addressed to Mr. Kaikhushru Afseri. It was written in Persian:

O Meher Baba! In the service of Aga Kaikhushru Aspandiar I beg to tell you that since the day when they carried me away I am in a sad mood, dejected and desolate. On the night they brought me here I was seeing Baba in a halo of lustre — and that was a great comfort to me when I felt like weeping. They carried me to a bath and applied henna to my hands. Since then I cannot eat or sleep till after midnight. By God! if I could get hold of two rupees I would at least come to Poona to be nearer Baba.

Please read these lines to Baba:

The apex of the highest heaven is Your abode;
The home of Truth is Your resting place;
The world is illumined by Your divine light;
Your erect and graceful figure is like the garden
cypress;
With the touch of Your hand the dead have been
restored to life.

From the heat of Your love
I am ever boiling like a pot of water.
Even if my bones dissolve
Your love will never be effaced from my soul.

Ali ignored all pleas and threats. His father became blind with rage and forcibly made him swallow an egg — thus, he thought, breaking the boy's vow of vegetarianism. The same night Ali had a dream in which Baba appeared to him and said, 'Don't you know that the "Madras Mail" leaves at ten o'clock?'

On the last night of the period of grace, Baba before retiring went over to the school and sat at Ali's desk for some time.

Ali had got the message of the dream, and pocketing some cash from the till of his father's shop made his way to Victoria Terminus and took the Madras Mail to Ahmednagar. That was on 3rd March.

There was relief and rejoicing throughout the colony when he arrived there until it was learnt that the return was not due to Haji Mohammed's change of mind or his honouring of his pledge that his son should remain at the ashram for the full term of five years. Baba said, 'If Ali remains, all remain; if he goes, everything goes.'

Baba then gave Ali a hero's welcome. First, he draped a costly shawl over his shoulders, then garlanded him and took him round the ashram. At dinner Baba served him with the choicest morsels by his own hand.

In the midst of the feasting, a telegram was handed to Baba. It was from the mandali who had been asked to go to Bombay once more. It read: Ali's father willing to sign. (Meaning sign a fresh agreement to let Ali remain at the ashram.) Joy was unbounded.

The next day Baba dressed Ali in expensive brocades and led him around the playground praising him to all.

Rustom's visit to the West came up for discussion and it was concluded that he should finalize arrangements and go. He left on 10th March 1928.

The next day Baba suffered a series of terrible shocks to his body. The longest was for some three quarters of an hour when it seemed that the human

frame could stand no more.

At night when all had retired, Syed Haji Mohammed turned up again (at lower Meherabad) saying that he had changed his mind. He wanted Ali back. His main complaint was that the trick Ali had played on him and run away was a measure of what this 'fine school' had to impart to its pupils. Afseri talked all night with him, but in the finish he became so exasperated with the wooden-headedness of the man that he exploded, 'For God's sake take your son away. Neither the Master of the place, nor any of us workers are out to gain anything by his continued stay here,' and he started to walk up the hill. For a few minutes Syed Haji seemed torn by conflicting emotions and then blurted out, 'I believe there's nothing wrong here — I believe you mean well — but you don't know the taunts I have had to endure from those people' (meaning the Bombay Moguls). Afseri retorted, 'Do you have to listen to a lot of busybodies talking a lot of nonsense? Have you forgotten to use your own common sense?'

It was now five o'clock, and the ashram was beginning to stir when Syed Haji Mohammed signed a stamped bond agreeing to leave Ali in Meher Ashram under any circumstances for one year.

Afseri went up the hill to report, and found that Baba had not retired to the 'crypt' that night but had sat up in the room. The good news was given to Ali, but it took some time to persuade him to see his father. When he did, his father spoke brusquely to him, covering up. Ali simply said, 'Father, I like to stay here.'

With Syed Haji's departure, a grand picnic to Happy Valley was arranged for the next day for the whole ashram.

They were taken out in buses to that delightful spot where Rama and Sita and brother had refreshed themselves on their wanderings and, arrived there, were left free to play and roam about as they wished. Baba took the older boys on a long ramble, leaping ahead of them like one born in the hills; and then back to a special dinner. In the afternoon they went on another ramble down through the heart of the valley. But here, suddenly, Baba fell ill and had to be carried

all the way back to the dak bungalow; and it was near sunset that he was well enough to travel back to the ashram.

Tears are a net in which to capture a divine moment. The boys had had their divine moments: now they had to return to the humdrum and discipline of regular classes. The flame had not been extinguished, only covered — as one banks a fire at night to be re-enlivened in the morning. A natural reaction of discontent and disobedience set in. A sixteen-year-old, Lobhji, demanded that his Sight of his Beloved be restored to him. Baba patted him and explained that that would take a little time yet. Lobhji, with all his breath said emphatically, ‘No!’ Baba said, ‘All right, I will give it to you next week.’ The boy violently shook his head. ‘Well, since you are so keen I will give it to you tomorrow. Rest assured. I will give it to you then.’ Lobhji said, ‘I want the Sight today — now — at this moment.’ Even the hero Ali at times joined in the discontent, but at night would drench his pillow with tears of repentance.

Baba separated the naturally devotional and contemplative from the others and kept them close to him. They were exempt from certain classes, but were required to play games; and on special occasions they walked with the Master in the evening.

This new section was called the Prem Ashram or the Abode of Love. This was round about 25th March. By the end of a month the general reaction had become so strong that Baba threatened to dissolve the Abode and remerge it with the Meher Ashram proper — and a wave of remorse passed over the place.

Round about this time also it was reported by one of the disciples in Poona that Babajan was often mentioning ‘her child’ Merwan, and that one day perhaps she would visit his place. This was received generally as some distant possible event, not as one that would occur in a week’s time. Babajan came to Meherabad at 11.30 a.m. on 1st April and had her car stopped by the Hazrat Babajan High School. When Baba began his imprisonment he instituted the practice of having visitors fill in a slip at lower Meherabad giving name and address, purpose and proposed length of visit. The slip

was then sent up the hill to Baba. Babajan asked Padri (who was acting superintendent) to 'send a slip to my Child.' Padri, his sense of humour tickled, wrote 'Hazrat Babajan from Poona' and sent it up.

It had been noticed that at half past eight that morning Baba had taken off his sandals — a thing he had never done before. This coincided pretty exactly with Babajan's leaving Poona. As soon as Baba received the visitor's slip he had the boys mustered and went off down the hill at a smart pace, and stopped just short of the railway line, which separated Meher Ashram and Meherabad proper, and sent all his boys forward to take his Master's darshan. He remained standing the whole time until she left. Baba said afterwards, 'This is the most eventful day of my life.' The next day he paid a 'return visit' to Babajan in Poona at her seat at Bund Gardens.

Shortly after this Baba began dropping hints that if a certain number of people would fast for a certain period he would, take food again. Pressed to be specific, he said two hundred for twenty-four hours. The fast ended on 25th April, after five months and fifteen days, but still he would not partake of the lovingly prepared food until he had with his own hands fed each one.

Baba's statement after Ali's father had taken him away that it would all have to be done afresh, did indicate to the mandali that they were due for some drastic change; but not to the extent of uprooting a colony of four hundred and transplanting it fifty miles away. Yet this impossible thing actually happened.

In the first week of May one of the visitors, Abdulla Haroon Jaffer, furniture maker and estate agent from Poona, mentioned that in a certain locality in Poona there was a fine site for an ashram. Baba said he would like a change of place, and preparations were immediately begun for him to inspect the area.

Driven by Rustomji (whose mission to England having failed, had been recalled) Baba set out from Meherabad at 4.30 a.m. on 8th May. A little later on the same day, while Baba was in Poona, Babajan went to Meherabad and blessed the boys with pats and caresses, especially

the love-lorn who were like fish out of water with the Master's brief absence. On the return journeys — Babajan to Poona and Baba to Meherabad — the two Masters crossed exactly half way.

The Poona site did not appeal to Baba; but, he said, shifting the ashram was imperative now after this second meeting with the Old Man (Babajan). Navsari in Gujerat, Daman in Portuguese India, and Shivaji's great fort near Poona were discussed as possible places.

Early in the morning of 15th May, Baba with some of the mandali left for the fort. Its present owner Khan Bahadur Padamji placed it at Baba's entire disposal, but as much as he liked it — 'It is an ideal site — my old place' — he said he had to consider its very heavy rain-fall and the long, steep climb for parents and guardians who would visit their boys.

From there they drove to Bombay to catch the Gujerat Mail, but they arrived three hours late. Baba said, 'We won't go any further now. Let Chanji go on in the morning and report; we will return.' They left at noon the following day and after a breakdown on the ghats caused by sheer bad driving, and crashing into a tree fallen across the road in the night, they arrived at Meherabad at daybreak. Still Baba could not rest until he had obtained the place he needed; and there was talk of hardly anything else. Someone mentioned Toka, which is about fifty miles from Meherabad at the confluence of the Godavari and Pravara Rivers; and it was almost as though just the sound of the name was sufficient, for without hardly any discussion Baba went to Toka in the evening, and after a cursory glance at the place approved it and asked the Meherabad ashram authorities to make the necessary land purchases to accommodate the entire colony, so that they could move there before the monsoon set in.

The work of pulling down the old Meherabad and re-erecting a new Meherabad went on day and night, and in fifteen days, on the 3rd of June, it was completed.

Ten days after the transfer had been effected Baba started hinting about reimprisoning himself and beginning another fast.

On the 1st July (thereabouts) the refanning of the flame of love began. On the 5th, Baba spent the day and night in the Box by the dhuni. On the following morning he came out again and took the usual meals — much to the consternation among the boys who now felt certain of quick Realization if only Baba would remain in confinement for some time. He told them, ‘Don’t, be impatient. You would not yet be able to digest it. I will certainly make you the envy of all.’ On the 7th July Ali’s father Haji Mohammed suddenly popped up. He had heard that the Master had absconded and that the ashram boys had all gone raving mad. But after seeing for himself the order of the place — albeit an order still in progress — and that his son was sane and sound, he returned to Bombay.

From this time on, Baba again became absorbed with the school — and this not exclusively with the young abiders. The whole school was being impressed spiritually. By the beginning of August, as well as the boys with whom contemplation had almost become a craze, many of the staff were voluntarily getting up hours before the morning bell and sitting for meditation, without in any way impairing the efficiency of their work.

A *divine insomnia* seemed to have possessed both the Meher Ashram and the Abode of Love; but unlike the violence of the outburst at Meherabad, this absorption was silent. But the boys were none the less attentive in classes and cheerful and active out of school.

Ali’s father came again, threatening court action if his son was not handed over to him. The ashram authorities said they would counter-claim school fees and board and lodging costs. He left, still threatening. Baba and the mandali concerned discussed the matter for a full two hours; some advocating that the law should take its course, and some that the boy should be handed over immediately. Baba, to the surprise of many, agreed with the second view. Consequently this was done on the Haji’s next visit. Several other Moguls came with him and took away their sons also.

After they had gone Baba said, ‘Ali is the best of those

given up today. He will suffer much for my sake; but this suffering will bring him nearer to me. If he goes mad they (Ali's father and relatives) will bring him back to me; and if he should die he will come to me. He has love — and very intense love — and none can rob him of that.' Baba did not show the same concern over Ali as he had the first time he was taken away, and he made no effort to get him back; yet he made it clear that Ali was a 'leader' amongst the others.

Baba now suspended all the rules of Meher Ashram. None of the boys near him at any particular time were to be called away, and none restricted from going to him whenever they wished. Consequently it was like Christmas-time, and Baba was the Tree loaded with gifts of his beauty for his little lovers; his lustrous fathomless eyes, his rose-petalled lips parted in a loving smile revealing the pearls that were his teeth, and his shining golden hair that hung down on his shoulders like a curtain of sunlight, maddened the boys so that they snatched at and tore his clothes hoping to grasp the Eternal which was covered by them. So ardent were their expressions of love that often he would hide at their approach and they would go seeking him in all the corners of the place. One day Baba turned to one of the youngest boys named Pundit and said, 'Tell me what you want: God, freedom, paradise, a motor-car, anything. This is the right moment. Ask, and it will be given to you.' The child, without a moment's hesitation replied, 'I want your suffering to cease.'

For some time now there had been a great scarcity of rain in the district, and the Hindu villagers and farmers had performed the rain ceremonies to no effect.

One day Behram was talking to the village police patil and asked him had he thought of approaching Baba for his blessing for rain. He hadn't. A few days later, in the company of some of the chief villagers he came to the ashram and humbly asked for a good shower of rain. Baba told him that it would rain soon; and within an hour clouds gathered and rain fell. But the 'good shower' turned into a week of solid rain. Many of the buildings were temporary and their

roofs leaked, and others were blown down. Baba told the mandali to build levees against the encroaching waters. On one of his visits to the women he found that the water had broken through at one place. Taking a fistful of mud he blocked the leak, and the waters began to subside; but the weather remained showery.

The new premises for Meher Ashram and the Abode of Love were ready to move into, and the 'Occupation Ceremony' had been performed earlier, but now, much to the consternation of the boys who saw it as another postponement of Realization, Baba said that they would not move in until the rain stopped. Finally he said that if it did not rain between dawn and two o'clock in the afternoon the following day they would move in. 'So,' he said, 'if you all feel so keenly about it pray with heart and soul, and it won't rain tomorrow.' And that was exactly what happened: the boys prayed, and the rain ceased. That was on 23rd September 1928.

In the centre of the new premises, which were constructed of the usual bamboo poles and matting, was a new seat for Baba called 'Meher Manzil.' It was built in lime and bricks seven feet by seven and had a domed roof. There was a dhuni beside it. There were thirty-two meditation cells for the boys. Outside there was an open-air meeting place and playground.

On the 3rd October Baba drove to 'Nagar to Sattha's house where he had tea and stayed for some time, and left, he said, for Nasik. Presently he passed a car in which Babajan was. He returned immediately to Toka. Two days later he again went to Sattha's place, and after sitting down on a seat placed for him, got up and went into the little garden in front of the house and sat there. Babajan again came along, stopped for a moment and drove on. Baba said, 'Babajan has come again, and now I have become free.'

On the 6th Ali returned again, but to no ecstatic jubilation — he just took his place with the others.

Baba now shut himself off from everything outside the Abode. From dawn till evening save the hours of 12 noon to 2 p.m., when the boys had their meal which he himself served, and all through the night he worked

with them. He gave discourses on love, on God and on the spiritual path for hours at a stretch, and guided each boy in his particular meditations. He took them down to the river every morning and had those who could swim teach those who could not. He delighted in their games. One meal a day and three hours' sleep was sufficient for them: they were pictures of fitness.

In November the weather changed and many of the boys and mandali got colds. Baba began to complain about the climate of Toka, and hinted at some change. On the 10th November he announced that they would remove the ashram back to Meherabad. For the third time Ali's father came and took him away.

Arrangements were begun to send all the boys except the Abiders home on vacation, pending the completion of the transfer, when they could rejoin the school. At this time there were one hundred and two boys on the Roll:

HINDUS: 11 Brahmins, 1 Jain Marwadi, 1	
Sonar, 15 Marathas, 2 Shimpis, 1	
Purdeshi, 15 Mahar-Mangs, 3 Chamars	
	Total 49.

MOHAMMEDANS: 5 Deccanis, 6 Moguls,	
2 Bohris, 2 Cutchhis, 5 Foreigners	Total 20.
ZOROASTRIANS: 6 Parsis, 26 Iranis.	Total 32.
CHRISTIANS: 1 Indian.	Total 1.

By 10th December the change-over had been effected — 'as if by magic,' one of the mandali said; and Toka resumed its song of two waters. The stay had been for six months. The boys started to come back accompanied by their guardians or with written consents from them. They were eager to be home again.

Baba moved freely about the colony and was available to all; but the best part of his time was with the boys. He again started cleaning the latrines and permitted only his brother Jal to help him in that work.

In the beginning of the New Year 1929 Baba started dropping hints about closing the ashram down for a

period and going on a walking tour. On the 12th January arrangements were completed to send the boys to their homes, including those who had come from Persia. On his return from the tour the Abode of Love was reopened with eighteen selected boys.

Register of Editorial Alterations in the Online Edition of
The Silent Word: Being Some Chapters of the
Life and Time of Avatar Meher Baba

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