

**WHO IS
AVATAR MEHER BABA ?
A Biographical Sketch**

Whether men soar to outer space or dive to the bottom of the deepest ocean they will find themselves as they are, unchanged, because they will not have forgotten themselves nor remembered to exercise the charity of forgiveness.

--- *Meher Baba*

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Thousands of years ago, in rural India, a former cowherd boy declared, "Whenever the spiritual law has been lost sight of and materiality has become rampant, I come."

Today millions of people, even sophisticated city dwellers, still try to lead their lives in accordance with the message Krishna gave in the Bhagvad Gita.

Two thousand years ago, in what was considered a tiny backward outpost of the Roman Empire, a simple carpenter announced, "Before Abraham was, I am," and "I and My Father are One." The Roman Empire has long since crumbled into dust, but Jesus's teachings remain and are devoutly followed.

Again, fourteen hundred years, in an even more isolated desert region, an illiterate merchant said, "Come in under the shade of this tree for the Way is beset with dangers," and Mohammed set in motion a remarkable outpouring of spirituality which has touched every corner of the world.

So it has always been and so it always will be. All the world's great religions have this in common: They all were inspired by the life of a man who demonstrated such purity, wisdom and love that his words were recognized as being those of God. What is more, in each case, this man either promised that he would come again, or the tradition arose that he

would. Thus Jews await the Messiah, Buddhists the Maitreya, Christians the second coming, Hindus the Kalki Avatar, Muslims the Iman-Mehdi.

And now once again, during this century, during our own lifetime, one named Meher Baba, living in India in relative obscurity, has stated "Do not doubt, I am the Ancient One, the Avatar, the God-Man. I am not this body that you see. It is only a cloak I put on when I visit you. I am infinite Consciousness. I sit with you, laugh and play with you; but simultaneously I am working on all planes of existence."

Many find this hard to believe. Somehow it seems easier to accept that God manifested as Man in the distant past, but to imagine Him coming today, in this age of computers and jet planes and television, seems beyond the grasp of some.

On the other hand, this seems very natural to others because religions all teach that when people generally have given way to hatred, greed, and violence, when they become completely alienated from themselves, their fellow beings and their environment, when it becomes obvious that our world's problems will not be solved by politicians, national or even international conferences, social welfare groups or religious organizations or evangelists, God will send a Saviour.

Clearly our world is at such a point today, and so once more the God Man has come. Yet when He comes, contrary to some people's expectations, He does not solve all of the world's ills. He does not banish evil or establish a "perfect society" or destroy illusion. Rather, He comes to show those who have eyes to see and hearts that can recognize the truth, the path that each individual can take to escape the darkness and realize the light.

The Avatar may come as a king or as a carpenter, a prince or a shepherd, but whatever outward role He adopts, few recognize Him as the Avatar while He is amongst us. It is only after He is gone that humanity at large realizes the opportunity it has missed and, in an attempt to atone, makes a rigid dogma from the living truth He led. As Baba has said, "I am that Ancient One whose past is worshipped and remembered, whose present is ignored and forgotten and whose future is anticipated with great fervor and longing."

Although each religion claims exclusive status for its own founder, Meher Baba assures us that the "Avatar is always one and the same, because God is always one and the same." He comes "in different cycles, adopting different names and different human forms, in different places, to reveal Truth in

different garbs and different languages." The God-Man is the sole spiritual authority of the age, "the only one infinitely capable of leading others to Self-realisation" and of bringing to the whole creation "a new release of power, a new awakening of consciousness, a new experience of life." The God-Man is like a gauge against which we can measure what we are and what we may become. He "trues" the standard of human values by interpreting them in terms of divinely human life.

Because we cannot follow the spirit of the Avatar's teachings, we make a rigid cannon of His words. Because we do not have His love which was always spontaneous and flexible in each situation, we develop dogmas and rituals. Yet the essence of His teaching each time is the same—our ills stem from our own misguided attempts at self aggrandizement. Thus the Avatar teaches us that: "the cause of suffering is desire ... to abolish suffering one must annihilate desire"; that "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul ... and thy neighbour as thyself"; that "true believers are those only who believe in God ... and contend with their substance and their person on the path of God." Or, as Meher Baba has put it, "To get nearer and nearer to God you have to get further and further from 'I,' 'my,' 'me' and 'mine.'"

And the easiest way to slough off the shackles of self-interest is through love. That is why the God-Man comes time and time again—not to give a new message, since the message is essentially the same each time—but to establish a loving relationship with every individual who is willing to open their heart to His all embracing love.

As Meher Baba said, "I have descended to your level for the one purpose of bestowing my love on you so that you may love God and become God." "I bring the greatest treasure it is possible ... to receive. Be ready to receive it."

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Meher Baba was born in Poona, India, in 1894. His parents were Zoroastrians, and His father, in his early years, had undergone great austerities in an effort to realize God until a voice in his sleep said to him, "You are not destined for that which you seek, but one who will be born to you will achieve it."

On February 25, this prophecy was fulfilled with the birth of his son, Merwan Sheriar Irani. He lived a quite normal childhood, liked marbles, kite-flying and cricket, enjoyed poetry, and was a good student at school.

In 1913 while still in college, a momentous event occurred in his life—the meeting with Hazrat Babajan, an ancient Muslim woman and one of the five Perfect Masters of the Age (as John the Baptist was one of the five at the time of Jesus). Babajan gave Him God-realisation and made Him aware of Himself as God in human form.

Disciples began being drawn to His magnetic personality, and it was they who gave Him the name Meher Baba (“Meher” means compassionate and “Baba” means father.)

In 1921, after spending time with another Perfect Master, Upasni Maharaj, Baba began His Avataric work. At first He seemed to concentrate on training His disciples for an arduous life of selfless service grounded in spiritual knowledge, moral discipline, and, most importantly, love for God.

Then He established a colony called Meherabad, near Ahmednagar, India. Here His work embraced a free school for boys where the “assimilation of spiritual values into life”

was stressed; a free hospital and dispensaries; and shelters for the migrant poor. "Mastery in servitude" was the motto for one and all.

Baba said that spiritual understanding was of little value if it were not expressed in everyday life, and at Meherabad His growing number of both Eastern and Western disciples were given plenty of opportunity to learn how to serve selflessly and lovingly. No distinction was made between individuals on the basis of caste or creed or social status; all mingled in fellowship through their common devotion to Meher Baba.

One day Meher Baba told His disciples that from 10th July 1925 He would observe silence and, despite the intense suffering He was to undergo, He remained completely silent for the rest of His life. And yet during those 44 years of silence He was intensely active, and communicated almost constantly with individuals or immense crowds. His messages were dictated on an English alphabet board or through unique hand gestures which were interpreted by His disciples.

He made no attempt to explain His silence, but said: "If my silence does not speak, of what avail are words?" He also said: "In reality I am never silent. I am the voice that eternally speaks deep within each heart."

Meher Baba travelled extensively throughout India, contacting many advanced spiritual pilgrims who were completely intoxicated with love for God. His work during these journeys, often to the most remote areas of India, and covering perhaps 20,000 miles a year by train, bus, bullock cart and on foot, included also the bathing of lepers, washing the feet of thousands of poor, and giving them grain, cloth or money. This work with the poor, lepers and advanced spiritual-pilgrims was done almost entirely incognito—His disciples referring to Him as their “elder brother.”

At certain periods during His life He permitted hundreds of thousands to come to Him for His darshan yet told them “To garland me, to bow down to me and to sing my praises are comparatively the three most unimportant things.” “To have my real darshan is to ... find your abode in me ... to love me.”

On another occasion, He suddenly declared, “Why are you bringing me these garlands, fruits, offerings? Why doesn’t someone bring me what I need?”

Someone in the crowd said, “What do you need, Baba?” and Baba replied, “God is Perfection. God-Man is perfection personified. What I need are your imperfections.”

Baba travelled many times to the Western world, visiting a number of countries. His first visit to the West was in 1931 and His last, the thirteenth, was in 1958 when He again journeyed to America and Australia. He went to the U.S.A. six times and to Australia twice. His visits to Australia were typical of many of these tours. He came quietly, stayed a few days on each occasion and departed quietly. He sought no publicity. He said: "I have come to sow the seed of love in your hearts so that in spite of all superficial diversity which you in your life in illusion must experience and endure, the feeling of oneness through love is brought about amongst all nations, creeds, sects and castes of the world."

For a period of two years, beginning in 1949, Meher Baba, with a few companions, demonstrated a life of complete dependence on God, wandering through India and begging for their food. Baba once said about this "New Life" that it "is endless, and ... will be kept alive by those who live the life of complete renunciation of falsehood, lies, hatred, anger, greed and lust ... by those who rely wholly and solely on God, and who love God purely for the sake of loving."

Meher Baba lived a simple life, did not marry, ate little and spent long periods in seclusion, often fasting or partially fasting for

months on end. However, He laid down no rules in these matters for others, telling them that outer renunciation had little value—what counted on the path to God was honesty and the inner and real renunciation of all forms of selfishness. He owned no property and never handled money except to give to the poor and sick. He was plainly indifferent to ceremony and ritual, emphasizing that the only prayer God hears is the inner prayer of the heart.

He moved and mixed freely with one and all, enjoying their games and sports, their jokes and stories. Over and over Baba demonstrated that true spirituality is all-inclusive; it does not turn away from life, but embraces it with a love which reveals the inner significance inherent in all things. Consequently He attracted to Him followers of all types and descriptions, married and unmarried, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, Eastern and Western. People, irrespective of their belief in Him, were drawn by His simplicity, joyfulness, and the loving kindness that flowed so naturally and spontaneously from Him.

His love dissolved all barriers, and He told crowds who came to worship Him, "I am nearer to you than your own breath. Remember Me, and I am with you and My Love will guide you." He frequently reiterated, "I have only one Message to give and I repeat

it age after age to one and all: Love God." To individuals, Baba would counsel, "Try your best, don't worry, be happy, I will help you internally." And people found that Baba's contact, whether internal or external, did indeed open up new vistas of selfless love with them.

Despite increasing physical ailments, brought on in part by the two car accidents that Meher Baba suffered (one in America in 1952, one in India in 1956), He brought together thousands from East and West at a gathering in Poona in 1962. To these thousands He stated: "All religions of the world proclaim that there is but one God, the Father of all creation. I am that Father. I have come to remind all people that they should live on earth as the children of the One Father until my Grace awakens them to the realisation that they are all one without a second, and that all divisions and conflicts and hatreds are but a shadow play of their own ignorance."

After this East-West Gathering in 1962, Meher Baba spent longer and longer periods in complete seclusion. One time some lovers who were trying to spread His message found that they couldn't answer the question, "Who is Meher Baba?" They replied, "He is God in human form," "He is the Avatar," "He is the

highest of the high," but none of these answers satisfied their questioners. They asked Baba what they should say, and Baba replied, "Tell them that I am the One who provokes the question within them—the Being of all beings."

In 1968 Meher Baba stated: "My work has been completed 100 per cent."

On January 31, 1969, Meher Baba dropped his physical body.

Since that time thousands upon thousands have journeyed in pilgrimage to his Tomb-shrine at Meherabad near Ahmednagar, India. Increasing numbers of people from all over the world acknowledge him as their Divine Beloved, their Saviour, and find in him the abiding Reality that they seek in the midst of everyday life. They recall his words: "Believe that I am the Ancient One. Do not doubt that for a moment. There is no possibility of My being anyone else. When I drop my body, I will remain in all who love Me. I can never die. Love Me, obey Me, and you will find Me."

Books By Avatar Meher Baba

Beams from Meher Baba on the Spiritual Panorama. Walnut Creek, CA: Sufism Reoriented, 1958.

Discourses. 7th Revised edition. Myrtle Beach, SC : Sheriar Press, 1987.

God Speaks. 2nd edition. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1973.

The Everything And The Nothing. Myrtle Beach, S.C.: Sheriar Press, 1989.

Life At Its Best. New York: Harper & Row, 1972.

*Words that proceed
from the source of Truth
have real meaning.
But when Men
speak these words
as their own,
the words become
meaningless.*

-- ***Meher Baba.***

For literature about Meher Baba in :

English

Meher Nazar Books,
King's Rd., Post Bag 31
Ahmednagar, M.S. 414 001.

Meher Baba Foundation Australia
Avatar's Abode,
Meher Road, Woombye
P.O. Box 22,
Qld. 4559, Australia

Hindi

Meher Pukar,
Meher Pukar Press
Hamirpur UP. 210 301.

Marathi

Avatar Meher Baba Centre Pune
411/1 Somwar Peth,
Pune M.S. 411 001.

Telugu

Avatar Meher Baba Andhra Centre
Meher House 16-5-22,
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