



IN HIS TRUST





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CRAIG RUFF

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## DEDICATION

This booklet, **In His Trust** is dedicated to Mani S. Irani, Avatar Meher Baba's sister. Her beautiful love for Baba blessed the atmosphere of Meherazad, Meherabad and Meher Nazar with her near-perfect expressions of grace and charm, wit and wisdom. Her bountiful love for Baba poured tenderly into thousands of hearts blessing them with the sweet warmth of Love. I, like you, was one of these blessed hearts.

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## INTRODUCTION

No doubt all of us who serve Baba at Meherabad, Meherazad and Meher Nazar have, at some point, wondered what is going to happen here in the future without the presence of Beloved Baba's mandali. The phase we are in is not only transitional, it is also historically significant. The irreplaceable fragrance of Meher Baba's form carried by His close ones is slowly fading away, leaving us with our hearts' memories, the fact of His Advent and the truth of His formlessness.

The choices we will be making in the next few years individually, socially and organizationally will likely direct the rest of our lives. For years, in many cases for decades, we have been living in the unique atmosphere of the Household of the Lord. Now we face a world different from the one that attracted us in our youth. For the past several years, I have watched our world dissolve while thoughts of a questionable future played upon my mind. In conversations with many of you, I have also heard your imaginary scenarios of what may happen here. I have felt our apprehensions so deeply that it has motivated me to devote almost all my personal time and inner resources to envision a future that is worthy of our hearts' love for Meher Baba.

For over a year I have had an earnest yearning to speak to each of you about some of my reflections and feelings about the future of the individual, the Avatar Meher Baba Trust and our community here. Now in writing I make this presentation to you, for each one of you to read at your mind's leisure and with your heart's interest. In a large way, much of what I will be saying is not new, as we all are familiar with Baba's words. It is simply that sometimes the

obvious needs to be said; that sometimes what is in the hearts and minds of many needs to be put on paper to give it a more lasting reality than momentary conversation. Hopefully it will provide an avenue for creative dialogue among all of us, producing a united direction as we make our way into the 21st century.

On the following pages you will encounter these themes: the individual's service here to be regarded as "spiritual work"; reflections on the expression of authority by future trustees and the philosophy of the Avatar Meher Baba Trust in the absence of the mandali; and the creation of a genuine community life here based on the truth of inner oneness. Let me reassure you that what I will be presenting are not empty philosophical concepts separate from the daily realities of life here. In fact, my own experience of beginning to absorb spiritual ideals into daily life has led me to perceive the energizing possibilities in the future for the individual, the Trust and the community. Furthermore, each of these possibilities is firmly based on Avatar Meher Baba's words from the **Discourses**.

However, before turning to these subjects, I first want to share my own process of inner change that inspired me to make this presentation. It was the circumstance of Bhau's first hospitalization in Poona that forced me to reevaluate my life here. His absence created a vacuum where I keenly felt how much of my attention in Baba's service was still outwardly placed on Bhau and the other mandali and their service to Baba. I began to recognize that I lacked my own inner life with Baba. During this period, my own sentiments, definitions, cherished perspectives and not least of all, my own misunderstood and unfulfilled experiences and expectations — all these passed through a serious reexamination. This challenging phase of life led me to a



broader perspective. It had become apparent to me that it was time to change the emphasis of my actions. I felt that I needed to shift my focus in Meher Baba's service from "what I do" to "how I do what I do". In other words I needed to build upon efficiently done action for His Cause by adding to it qualities from the heart.

The following analogy symbolizing what I needed and wanted to express in my life came to mind. The foundation of a building is its most important part. It is the support upon which the construction stands. But a foundation is only part of a completed building. Since it is open and exposed to the elements, a bare foundation is cold and comfortless. Only when it has been built upon does it achieve completeness and becomes capable of sustaining warmth.

Likewise, it seemed to me, although efficiency is necessary for intelligent action and is the foundation of the action itself, it too needs accompanying warmth to make the action complete. So I found it was necessary for me to build the qualities of the heart upon the foundation of efficiency. Prompted by this awareness, my heart would be called into an activity by expressing throughout the course of an efficient action a moment of patience, followed by a moment of kindness, followed by a moment of dispassion, followed by a moment of self-control, etc. By doing this, I felt the separative ego would naturally be lessened and some faint glimmer of the hidden truth of the oneness of life would shine forth. This to me would complete the action.

As for my interactions, I reexamined them in this manner. Every place has its currency of exchange. In my own case, as I observed my daily life, I found that my currency was often reduced to a mere exchange of information with others and that I was neglecting the

possibility of basing my interactions on a life of inner oneness. I perceived that if I changed my currency to the expression of inner values which Meher Baba talks of, I might well be on the way to a realistic expression of the qualities that the New Humanity will be based upon. Not only would this new currency of exchange enable me better to express the many nuances of my heart, but more so it would allow me to appreciate others and be in tune with them as they expressed heart qualities. Out of this active appreciation for the heart of another, I could begin to sense the truth and, when possible, the joy of our inner oneness.

At last, it seemed to me, that with this new awareness of inner values, I could finally begin to build upon the foundation of years of service in Meher Baba's Cause — build upon the dedication of the service-oriented mind with the warmth of the spirit-glimpsing heart. By doing so, the balance between the mind and the heart would gradually be achieved and, as is done to a completed building, the inside is then adorned. In this case, the adornment is the genuine feeling of Meher Baba in everyone.

I will now present the striving for this feeling of oneness through the expressions of the individual, the Avatar Meher Baba Trust and the community here as our future direction.

## THE INDIVIDUAL

Some years ago, I re-read Baba's **Discourses**. I was relieved to find Baba addressing individual and social problems, disentangling their intricacies, and making their solution apparent. The **Discourses** no longer seemed intellectual; they had become a treasure of practical application for spiritual life. Prominent among these were the discourses, **The Task for Spiritual Workers** and **Work for the Spiritual Freedom of Humanity**. Previously they seemed meant for another time period, another place and certainly another person! But when I read them again, I was excited to find that they described an aspect of serving Baba's Cause in a way I'd never dreamt. As you can gauge from the titles, there is work to be done and a task to do, but their scope reaches beyond discharging duties for Him. Here Baba is calling us to serve the truth of the unity of all life.

What Baba puts forward may perhaps sound both impossible and even presumptuous for us to attempt, yet in the discourse **Work for the Spiritual Freedom of Humanity** He states the following, "...there **IS** no gift greater than the gift of spiritual freedom, and there is no task more important than the task of helping others to achieve spiritual freedom. Those who have understood the supreme importance of spiritual freedom have not only to strive for it for themselves, but also to share the God-given duty of helping others to win it."

Previously I felt we had been doing this by dedicating our actions to provide facilities for the pilgrims who come for Baba's truth and love. But in re-reading these discourses, I was challenged to consider a more direct and intimate way of upholding Baba's directions of striving for spiritual

freedom, while at the same time reminding and helping others to do the same. It is this new course of action that I am presenting to you.

In the discourse, **The Task for Spiritual Workers**, Baba explains many beautiful and subtle aspects of what spiritual work is, who spiritual workers are, and how spiritual work is to be done. What I gather is that those who actively strive to establish the truth of inner oneness in their lives and try lovingly to instill that feeling under any and all circumstances, without being intrusive to others, are spiritual workers. Thus the idea of spiritual work can be a source of ready inspiration, immediately applicable in daily life to dissolve the many differences that arise between us. Because of its profound value, I have selected a few passages from this discourse and in turn express after each selection some of what it means to me.

“Because of its supreme importance for the true and final well-being of humanity, spiritual work has a natural and imperative claim on all who love humanity. It is therefore very necessary to be quite clear about its nature. The whole world is firmly established in the false idea of separateness; and being caught up in the illusion of duality, it is subject to all the complexities of duality. Spiritual workers have to redeem the world from the throes of imagined duality by bringing home to it the truth of the unity of all life.”

Baba explains that through spiritual work the world can be regenerated. I used to think “the world” referred to the material West. Now I see “the world” as each one of us and within each one of us.

“The task for spiritual workers is to help me in this universal dispensation of the Truth to suffering humanity.

You have not only to prepare humanity to receive this Truth, but also to get established in it yourself. It is extremely important to remember that you can help others to gain spiritual freedom and to come out of the illusion of duality only if you yourself do not forget this idea of unity while working for others — who are inclined to create divisions where they do not exist and who thus allow no respite to spiritual workers.”

This paragraph helps keep me alert to what my true purpose is. The task of spiritual workers is to express the truth of the inner oneness of life to suffering humanity. Who is “suffering humanity”? We are suffering humanity, as are all with whom we come in contact, when we are not attempting to uphold the Truth.

“It is by no means an easy task to persuade people to give up their selfishness and narrowness....When you launch upon your spiritual work you will be entering into a field of divisions that people desperately cling to, and that they accentuate and strive to perpetuate consciously or unconsciously. Mere condemnation of these divisions will not enable you to destroy them. The divisions are being nourished by separative thinking and feeling, which can yield only to the touch of love and understanding. You have to win people to the life of Truth; you can not coerce them into spirituality.”

In all the **Discourses**, this may be the best description of the deceptive nature of the ego continuously struggling to maintain separateness. Being aware of this deceptive quality of the mind and observing it in myself and others, allows me not to fight against the divisions but to try to dissolve them, as Baba says, with a touch of love and understanding.

“You will have to aim at providing, as spiritual workers, a complete and real solution for all the individual and social problems of life.”

Baba assures me that we can become capable of solving the problems that face us as individuals and as a community.

“Through the untiring activities of spiritual workers, humanity shall be initiated into a new life of abiding peace and dynamic harmony, unconquerable faith and unfading bliss, immortal sweetness and incorruptible purity, creative love and infinite understanding.”

Baba ended the discourse with these prophetic words. His words speak of things yet to come. They are like the distant horizon. One can not touch the horizon, but one can see it, and walk towards it, and thus be endowed with the valuable gift of direction. These words confirm the transforming ability of spiritual work and its future world-wide impact.

Inspiring as these discourses are, in the past they left me surprised. They are written in a tone I did not identify with Baba. Now I feel Baba may have dictated them as guidance for when Baba-lovers face a global challenge. Our challenge however is not global, but universal — our precious universe of Meherabad, Meherazad and Meher Nazar. When I relate these discourses to our world there is much, as I said before, that is immediately applicable: Baba’s clear and specific direction of how to proceed in upholding the truth of oneness in daily life and how not to create further divisions. To put this into action takes real work; it takes, as Baba puts it, “spiritual work”.

In this day and age, humanity is action-oriented. The emphasis is on work and its accomplishments. Even about

being on the spiritual path, Meher Baba has emphasized service. In serving Meher Baba's Cause here, we have directed our attention on the fulfillment of duties and responsibilities. But from what Baba tells us we can take ourselves further and deeper.

What appeals to me in these discourses, and what I so earnestly want to add to everyone's concern, is Baba's clear authoritative statement that the most important work, the most important freedom, the most important gift, the most important service are all one and the same: to bring home to oneself and to others the truth of the unity of all life. Whenever the heart makes this affirmation, no matter what work we are doing, that work becomes elevated to spiritual work. What was once ordinary and commonplace in the judgement of the ego, becomes an expression of the truth to the spirit and is freed of the ego's critical separative nature.

The sublimity of the truth of inner oneness is so appealing to me. It is appealing because there is always the possibility of upholding this truth in any circumstance during the day. Its immediate application may bring intimacy with another's heart or mutual understanding in a common problem. It will certainly lighten the burden of the ego and enhance one's inner life even if there is no response to the attempt. It is an action I would love to see all of us take more frequently. It is a direction that I would love to see all of us move towards.

I wish to state that I am not trying to introduce what may be the less heard phrases of "spiritual worker", "spiritual freedom", "the unity of all life" and other phrases as new catch-words, as if the more familiar phrases that describe our life like "selfless service", "awakened heart" or

“dedicated life” have lost their meaning. Only when my efforts turned towards perceiving my service here as spiritual work did I finally begin to sense our inner oneness.

Certainly it is worthwhile to be cautious of all catchwords. In fact Baba has given us a clear warning about the use and misuse of words in the discourse, **Violence and Non-Violence**. Baba says, “Man has a tendency to cling to catchwords and to allow his actions to be determined by them almost mechanically without bringing his actions into direct relation with the living perception that these words embody....Action, therefore, should not be governed by means of any slogans (however high-sounding)....It should be a spontaneous outcome of divine love, which is above duality and of spiritual understanding, which is above rules.” I presume that when action reaches this level of maturity, one’s actions flow as simple, uncomplicated expressions of loving God and loving Him in everyone and everything as “the Being of all beings.” All past momentary efforts to uphold the truth of inner oneness through spiritual work then blossom into the “realization of the unity of life.” This realization is waiting for all of us. It is only a few steps away. But these steps are not ordinary steps; they require real effort.

Until recently I ignored the words and thoughts in the **Discourses** connected to the realization of the unity of all life, thinking that Baba was talking about God-Realization. But as I mentioned earlier, some years ago when I painstakingly re-read the **Discourses**, seeking to clear my misunderstandings, it finally dawned upon me that Baba is referring to realizing, not Infinite Spirit, but life as one spirit. If He was referring to God-Realization, it would make much of what He is saying about the spiritual life futile. It seems that a large part of Baba’s work was to bring to humanity a spiritual life that naturally embraced all the aspects of



normal human experience, so that the ordinary notion of *one's life* expands into the *One life*. My understanding is that the realization of the unity of all life is within the reach of everyone because it comes to the heart in love with Meher Baba as Beloved, as the One residing in every heart. I have not yet realized the truth of our inner oneness, nor do I feel it as an abiding glow in my heart. But with faith and understanding in it, I have found that this truth is a sweet reference point for all my activity. For the heart, it gives the patient and warm understanding necessary for fellow-feeling. And for the mind, it gives the practical inspiration necessary to confront problems creatively by basing solutions on internal oneness and not on external differences.

Like many of you, I lived through the cataclysmic days of the 1960's and 1970's when "oneness" was a revolutionary, counter-cultural slogan in the U.S.A., representing all sorts of ideas and ideals. I dropped this idealistic, youthful fantasy of oneness after coming to Baba, replacing it with His personal remembrance. Now after many years, I have come across the word "oneness" again but in a different context: not as the idealism of the world but as the truth of the spirit. Many Baba-lovers who I have talked with are as unfamiliar as I am with putting this truth into action. Many of us approached Baba with independent hearts filled with personal adoration for Him. I know for me that His Universal Message was very powerful and attractive. In it He said, "When I break my Silence, the impact of my Love will be universal and all life in creation will know, feel and receive it. It will help every individual to break himself free from his bondage in his own way. I am the Divine Beloved who loves you more than you can ever love yourself." His words attracted my nature for independent search for the Truth and deeply attracted my heart with His

declaration of being the Divine Beloved. But I feel there is a prevailing thirst amongst many for fresh inspiration that would take us beyond our separate quests. When I have quoted Baba's words on the unity of all life as a way to share the love that He has given us, the general response has been enthusiastic, but was accompanied by doubts about its practicality, and an occasional reproof for my naivete.

Let me ask each of you, "Do you think it is practical or possible to uphold the truth of inner oneness here? Or do you think it is an utopian ideal that can never really be put into action, our present egotism being what it is?" In the discourse, **The Travail of the New World Order**, Baba answers the question for us. Baba says, "To perceive the spiritual value of oneness is to promote real unity and cooperation. Brotherhood then becomes a spontaneous outcome of true perception. The new life that is based upon spiritual understanding is an affirmation of the Truth. It is not something which belongs to utopia, but is completely practical." Here then is the assurance by Baba that what He is asking each of us to uphold is not utopian or unrealistic or wishful thinking but in all respects from top to bottom totally practical, because it is based upon what is true.

May Meherabad, Meherazad and Meher Nazar be alive with hearts that are ever more receptive to the Truth of inner oneness. May the heart-sweetening atmosphere of Avatar Meher Baba's Presence be in such hearts to permeate each and every activity that is offered to Him. May these hearts be graced to carry the responsibility of maintaining and sharing the spiritual atmosphere bestowed at Meherabad, Meherazad and Meher Nazar by Avatar Meher Baba for the benefit of the generations to come. May these hearts be our hearts.

## THE TRUST

But what of the future of the Avatar Meher Baba Trust? Though Baba has done the Work and Bhau and the other mandali have done the groundwork for the Trust, the foundation is being given to us to build upon. No doubt all of us have thoughts and feelings about the future of the Trust. In the following pages I express some of mine. I touch upon only a few subjects amongst many that will require thoughtful consideration as time goes by.

We have lived under matchless circumstances. We have lived during the time when the mandali of Avatar Meher Baba were Trustees of His Trust. Into our hearts and hands the mandali generously poured the ways of pleasing Baba, so that we could continue to serve Him in a pattern not too unfamiliar to the one He created for them. Is there anything more priceless than this legacy given to us all?

For the past decades, Meher Baba's mandali were so closely associated with the Trust that most people gave little thought about the Trust being separate from the mandali. The mandali-trustees gave the Trust a multitude of divine qualities: dear Mani's remarkable cheerfulness, that filled the atmosphere with extraordinary light; Bhau's perseverance, that managed the growth of the Trust; Padri's dispassion, that kept everything focussed on the Master at Meherabad; Adi's conviction, that added his strong spirit to any occasion; Pendu's all-out service to Baba for His Sahavas programs, which became the spirit for managing Amartithi; Rano's meticulous care, that everything she did had a certain perfection; and, although not a trustee, Eruch's loving ways that inspired harmony in every circumstance. These and many other beautiful qualities, born from a life-

time's surrenderance to their Lord, created a charismatic atmosphere, not only around Trust activities, but also in which thousands longed to have an embrace from them, a moment with them, and were willing to do anything in His Cause to have their companionship. Their personalities were the hub of inner strength that invited the confidence of the hearts of everyone to keep the work-wheel of the Trust in motion. As trustees, they based their authority not on their titles, but on their lives' efforts to please their Beloved. The mandali themselves were the spirit of the Trust. But as this precious picture fades, major questions arise: On what will future trustees base their authority besides the Trust Deed and how will they exercise it? And what will be the spirit of the Trust in the absence of the mandali?

Because Meher Baba's mandali took on the administrative burden of trusteeship, it is understandable that we may have come to identify that function with spiritual capacity. But the trusteeship of the mandali is irreplaceable. It is a sight never to be witnessed again and a presence never to be felt again. Those who will become chief functionaries of the Trust in the future may be doubly blessed but also doubly burdened. They may be doubly blessed because they will seek to fulfill the Lord's wish, as all individual lovers do and additionally will endeavor to serve His Will jointly as trustees of His Trust. They may be doubly burdened because the lessons that come from being in the beguiling position of authority will be added to the assaults on the ego that all lovers must bear.

One day at Meherazad, Eruch said the following to me regarding authority, "Authority comes about naturally through the lessening of the ego. But if the authority is *purchased* (as is done in the world through power, influence and money), then the person in authority has the

responsibility to win people over. If that is not achieved, then you have a situation in which someone's position becomes an imposition on the person who is not an office-bearer." There is no other way to truly win the hearts of others except through a feeling of oneness. The real respect that one should offer another is based on that truth, and not on the aggressive needs of the ego for a feeling of superiority through false authority. To put it another way, as Padri was fond of saying, "You have to command respect, not demand respect."

It would certainly encourage others to participate in Trust activities if future trustees choose to express their authority through an active sense of upholding the truth of inner oneness. This would affect the administrative pattern; and the administrative pattern would in turn affect pilgrim and community life, each upon the other by fostering interactions that are lovingly based on the truth of inner oneness. To help make this occur, when the trustees choose their colleagues, they need to consider whether the nominee's character is infused with some divine qualities that are pleasing to Meher Baba, in addition to their credentials for fulfilling practical duties. Baba begins the discourse, **Some Divine Qualities** by saying, "If the inner life of an aspirant is to be harmonious and enlightened, he has to develop and express many divine qualities while he is engaged in his daily duties." While no one expects or wants future trustees to imitate the mandali, it seems understandable that Baba-lovers would be surprised if the trustees did not try to emulate the mandalis' example of loving and serving Baba.

Though briefly expressed, nonetheless stated here is the concern with the manner in which future trustees will exercise their authority. However, even if their intentions

reach towards selflessness, another question is this: Without the purity of purpose of the mandali, what kind of spiritual stand can the Trust take and how can the Trust make it a living reality on the Trust Estate?

Baba provides a direction in the discourse, **Readiness To Serve**, in which He categorically defines how different kinds of societies interpret service according to what they value. Baba says, "...in a society dominated by merely material conceptions of life, service is interpreted in terms of providing for bread or clothes or other physical amenities of existence. In a society responsive to the value of intellectual culture, service is interpreted in terms of spreading learning in different forms. In a society that has developed taste for beauty, service is interpreted in terms of organizing the production and distribution of works of art. In a society responsive to the ineffable values of the heart, service is interpreted in terms of constructing those channels which will facilitate the culture and expression of the heart."

Baba concludes this concise survey by pronouncing the kind of society that imparts the highest type of service. "In a society alive to the supreme importance of the spirit, service is interpreted in terms of imparting spiritual understanding. Of these different types of service, the service that is concerned with spiritual understanding is the highest, because spiritual understanding includes the right perspective to all human problems and promotes their solution."

The Avatar Meher Baba Trust came into existence through God's own human hand. Therefore what service could the Trust be destined to offer other than that which Avatar Meher Baba declares as the highest type of service? How else could the Trust interpret service other than

creating ways and means, avenues and approaches for imparting spiritual truths? Interestingly enough, this provision has already been made in the Trust Deed of 5th April 1959 and in the Deed of Declaration regarding Spiritual Training dated 9th November 1974. In the Trust Deed one of the objects given is, "Facilities for training Baba-lovers in living a life towards spiritual enlightenment according to instructions which the Settlor [Baba] may give to the Trustees from time to time."

The Deed of Declaration is the record of the instructions given by Baba and are to be treated as part and parcel of the Trust Deed. In the Deed of Declaration for Spiritual Training, there are 10 objects and purposes. The first object states, "For training of persons according to the life, particularly what was called 'The New Life', lived by Avatar Meher Baba and His Companions exemplifying and practicing at all times renunciation, and detachment in the midst of the ordinary worldly activities that is, 'To be in the world and yet be not of it.' The list of objects continues with the pursuit of various creative expressions of remembrance of Avatar Meher Baba and ends with this very important statement: "...and the advancement of all objects of general public utility in a selfless and altruistic spirit and particularly to promote a sense of oneness of humanity, tolerance, good will among humanity in consonance with the example of Divine Limitless Compassion and Love of which Avatar Meher Baba was unquestionably acknowledged and recognized all the world over as the embodiment and personification."

As the Trust attracts the world's eye through its expression of the highest service it will have to explain this over-all purpose in addition to its other various activities. The Trust can already point to its responses to the material,

intellectual, aesthetic and cultural needs of men and women that commonly are fulfilled by a public charitable organization. However, the Trust can also put forward its uniqueness by maintaining that these needs are served from the viewpoint of spiritual understanding, explaining that “spiritual understanding includes the right perspective to all human problems and promotes their solution.”

The question certainly will arise as to what spiritual understanding is. Baba has blessed humanity through the medium of various books and messages, with the intellectual knowledge that all souls are one soul and that One Soul is infinite, eternal existence. This understanding, when put into action, can creatively solve the problems arising from maintaining the false divisions in that One Soul that ordinarily confront humanity.

The Trust can state that all service expressed in meeting the needs of those who seek medical, educational and other types of help from the Trust and all work specifically done on the Trust Estate are performed from the viewpoint of spiritual understanding and thus has the quality of being spiritual work — work done in a way that upholds the truth of the inner oneness of the One Soul. Therefore the entire activity of the Trust is a channel for the expression of this truth. Baba indicates the enrichment this activity brings to humanity in the discourse, **The Life of the Spirit**. Baba says, “The life of the spirit does not consist in turning away from worldly spheres of existence but in reclaiming them for the divine purpose — which is to bring love, peace, happiness, beauty, and spiritual Perfection within the reach of everyone.” By the Trust imparting the highest service, it offers humanity these sublime intangibles that are the essence of human life. The worthwhile benefit of the expressions of spiritual oneness will need to be



communicated in the future to a world ignorant of its valuable nature.

However, it is one thing for the Trust to explain itself to the world and another thing for the Trust to uphold its own explanation! How can the Trust uphold its own explanation? It can do so by shouldering the greatest responsibility for an organization, which is to actively support and inspire the type of action that is directed towards the Truth. The Trust must be uncompromising in maintaining that this is its major responsibility, as it responds to and fulfills its daily duties.

Avatar Meher Baba has elaborated on two of the more principle characteristics of humanity: the need to serve and love of freedom. The Trust can direct its activities towards the highest expression of these two fundamental motivations of human behavior. It can promote the highest service though actively encouraging an atmosphere of spiritual understanding on the Trust Estate, where the expression of the truth of inner oneness is valued by the Trust as more important than any other consideration. The Trust can also promote the highest freedom by encouraging each individual to strive for spiritual freedom, as Baba states.

I feel strongly that the Trust must bear in mind what the highest service is. If not, then as time passes, the individual who serves the Trust may end up being lost in activities rather than being lost in what leads toward the Truth. Furthermore, I feel just as strongly that if the Trust does not continue to view the individual's search for inner truth as vital and highly personal, then as the decades pass there will be the risk that the Trust could subtly impose, under the guise of necessity, conventional attitudes that everyone must conform to.

In a very real sense then, the Trust is the guardian of the avataric atmosphere on the Trust Estate for the benefit of humanity in general and for the individual lover of Beloved Baba in particular. The definite spiritual atmosphere where Avatar Meher Baba lived and worked inspires the individual lover to mold his life as a dedicated act towards the Truth. Therefore the Trust is responsible to make this atmosphere accessible so that the individual heart may soften and become ever more receptive to loving God and serving Him in others. Because of Baba's grace, the Trust can boldly accept these responsibilities, and also because of His grace the Trust can humbly discharge them.

Several years ago in his own searching for a greater vision for Meherabad, Bhau was inspired to recognize Meher Baba's own words, "Mastery In Servitude" as setting the theme and tone for Trust work. The Board of Trustees of the Trust passed a resolution in the 90th Board Meeting dated 24-10-1993 stating, "It is appropriate for the Trust to choose the same words (Mastery In Servitude) to describe that atmosphere of dedication which needs to prevail over the whole Trust Estate in order to please our Beloved Lord and Master Avatar Meher Baba. Therefore those who choose to work on the Trust Estate, whether they be Trustees, Spiritual Trainees, Employees, Laborers or Volunteers should attempt in one way or another to uphold the spiritual atmosphere on the Trust Estate."

Accordingly, it is for all who serve on the Trust Estate to share in the privilege and responsibility to maintain the outer atmosphere of Meher Baba's Remembrance. Naturally this can only be done while striving for the inner atmosphere of His Presence. This collective responsibility answers the question, "Who is the Trust?", that some might have. The Trustees are responsible for the management of

the Trust: the properties, funds, daily concerns and policy matters. But the more important responsibility for the maintenance of the spiritual atmosphere is not left to a handful of people alone but is in the hands of everyone who serves here. Everyone who serves here is a guardian of the avataric atmosphere: for those who visit here, it is an atmosphere of inspiration to love Avatar Meher Baba, and it is an atmosphere of dedication as portrayed by Baba's "Mastery In Servitude" for those who serve here.

Prior to the Board passing the above resolution and subsequent resolutions on the theme of Mastery In Servitude, Bhau began to express his understanding of its significance. From hearing that I set off on my own course of inner reflection with the following being some of my thoughts.

Baba, by offering the words Mastery In Servitude to be inscribed over the doorway of His Tomb-Shrine, is disclosing to humanity what His life is as man and at the same time clarifying for humanity the direction to Him. In other words, the final authority of the universe, the Avatar, enslaves Himself in order for humanity to master itself through slavery to the Truth. This slavery is a matter of free choice: He chooses to bind Himself with the limitations of man so that we may inevitably choose to bind ourselves to Him, who is absolute freedom. We choose to lose our own will and become the expression of the Master's Will. Thus the inscription above the doorway is in fact a doorway to Him.

Meher Baba has so arranged it, that whenever we bow down at the threshold of His Tomb-Shrine, offering (knowing or unknowingly) our limitations to Unlimited God, we are bowing underneath the words, "Mastery In Servitude". It is the Avatar's eternal service to humanity

which makes the sublime act of obeisance possible. Otherwise how would we ever begin to be free of the numberless limitations imprisoning our own true state of infinite consciousness. God bows down to man, enabling man to bow down to God. This may well describe a truth about the words, "Mastery In Servitude".

I am sure that many of us have heard Eruch say over the years, "I exercised my freedom to become His slave." It should be no surprise then, that his statement about surrenderance to Baba may very well exemplify for us Mastery In Servitude — serving the Master out of a freedom that extends beyond service and culminates in slavery. Here again is the relationship between the highest freedom and the highest service. Where the highest freedom and the highest service meet is in the freedom to serve the Truth through Mastery In Servitude.

Meher Baba has said the following about servitude to the Master in the discourse, **True Discipleship**, "To serve the Master is to serve one's own Self in every other self. The Master dwells in universal consciousness and wills universal spiritual well-being. To serve the Master is therefore to participate in his cause, which is to serve all life....The service that the disciple can offer the Master is not only linked with the universal cause of humanity but is one of the most potent means of bringing the disciple nearer his spiritual goal. When the disciple's service is spontaneous, whole-hearted, selfless, and unconditional, it brings him more spiritual benefit than can ever come by any other means. Serving the Master is a joy for the disciple, even when it means an ordeal that tries his body or mind. Service offered under conditions of discomfort or inconvenience is a test of the disciple's devotion. The more trying such service becomes, the more welcome it is for the disciple. And as he

voluntarily accepts physical and mental suffering in his devoted service to the Master, he experiences the bliss of spiritual fulfillment."

This passage is quoted at length because it is the Master's own explanation of the quality of service a true disciple offers. It contains exemplary statements about the disciple's role in Mastery In Servitude, and his struggles to serve the Master at the cost of his own self. As you read the passage, were you reminded of anyone? When I reflected upon Baba's words, I was reminded of the efforts of everyone here.

Perhaps without being conscious of it, we already are following Meher Baba through Mastery In Servitude. Inwardly we do try to express the highest freedom by striving to free the spirit from the delusion of desire. The way in which we pursue this may not be crystal-clear to us, but surely when we are tossed and turned upside-down and around inside ourselves and still hang on to Him, I suspect we are being freed from desire. And outwardly we do try to express the highest service by striving to uphold the feeling of spiritual oneness. These might not be the words we choose to express the many accommodations we try to make towards each other during the day. But regardless of the choice of words, our actions are directed towards the purpose of spiritual harmony.

So without realizing it or the mandali naming it as such, the mandali and we have been following the direction that the Avatar has already established for all of humanity through His Mastery In Servitude. Furthermore, now that the Trust has recognized "Mastery In Servitude", the future direction for the individual serving here is spiritually safe, because of the Avatar's authority. Mastery In Servitude sets the theme and tone for maintaining the atmosphere of

dedication to Beloved Baba on the Trust Estate — the theme being to strive to be the willing slave of the Master; the tone being the willingness to attempt ego effacement. This is perfectly expressed when one finally does exercise his freedom to become His slave. Mastery In Servitude is our legacy of Truth from Avatar Meher Baba; our heart-inspiring examples in the mandali, and our own personal direction that unfolds as we move forward. Here also is where the Trust takes its spiritual stand without the presence of the mandali. Thus, the Avatar's Truth continues to be an open doorway to His Presence.

However the challenge remains for the Trust to explain and to express. Much can and will be explained, as the decades pass, to a world unfamiliar with Avatar Meher Baba and His Trust. This responsibility can keep us and the generation to come genuinely occupied for the duration of our lives. But the task for the Trust, without the presence of the mandali, is to dare to turn the world's values upside-down by maintaining that the expression of the truth of inner oneness in and through one's responsibilities is the real accomplishment that takes place on the Trust Estate. The Trust's nobility of purpose can be a vital substitute for the purity of purpose expressed by the mandali.

Although the Trust can express this highest type of service, nothing can replace the mandali's personal service of trying to please their Beloved. Beloved Baba has expressed that to seek and win His pleasure has a specialness beyond even God-Realization. In the **Twelve Ways of Realizing Me**, Baba said about Love, "If you have that love for Me which St. Francis had for Jesus, then not only will you realize Me but you will please Me." Baba's dear sister Mani so loved these words that she had her personal stationery inscribed with them.

His pleasure will continue to be sought after and lived for by the individual heart. On the Trust Estate it is an individual responsibility to uphold the spiritual atmosphere so that it remains vital and visible. Our hearts uphold the atmosphere so that the atmosphere can serve the awakening pilgrim heart by feeling Avatar Meher Baba's Love. It is a responsibility beyond Trusteeship; it is a highly personal responsibility of the heart to the Divine Beloved.

Time and again Meher Baba would lovingly remind those gathered around Him "to be true to the trust I repose in you". Now that He is no longer physically present, His reminder becomes a privilege and a pledge for those who serve Him. The trust that Avatar Meher Baba reposes in us is the privilege of intimacy with Him, and the pledge we make to Him is to be true to the trust He reposes in us by upholding His truth in our lives. Our doing this will naturally help maintain the spiritual atmosphere that He bequeathed to humanity.

As a postscript Bhau's inspiration leads him to feel that one day Mastery In Servitude will spread over the globe with its message of relationship with the ever-living Master Avatar Meher Baba. I imagine that as the world of humanity enters through the doorway of Avatar Meher Baba's Tomb-Shrine, the presence of His Mastery In Servitude will be felt. And when people have the daring to inscribe the same words over the doorway of their hearts, and courageously confront the awesome illusion of the limited self through slavery to the Master, He will enter the doorway of their Mastery In Servitude with His presence. Thus, His presence will shine in hearts everywhere.

## THE COMMUNITY

Although much has already been stated or implied regarding community life in the sections on the individual and the Trust, a few thoughts remain to be said.

In the world there often is an estrangement between the individual and the organization because their needs are different. The individual has his own personal life and the organization has its own business life. Each wants something from the other. The most basic agreement between the two is the exchange of money for work; money to sustain the individual's personal life is exchanged for work to sustain the organization's life. Because the contract between the two is negotiated under pressure of divergent needs, alienation often is followed by hostility.

Bearing this in mind, our challenge is to unite the interests of the individual and the Trust so that a common life is created, a community life. If the interests are not blended and balanced, then we may be provoking this consequence: one's personal inner life kept separate from duties performed under the auspices of the Trust, and the Trust being merely interested that we fulfill our duties and responsibilities. This would be a tragic outcome for a place that we have held dear for so many years. Before considering this further, I want to compare the definitions of organism and organization (organize, for purposes of clarity), and note how close they are in meaning.

**Organism:** An individual constituted to carry on the activities of life by means of organs separate in function but mutually dependent.

**Organize:** To arrange or form into a coherent unity or functioning whole.



The individual depends on many mutually dependent organs to live, and the organization depends upon the unity of individuals to thrive. The theme of life is the theme of unity.

So how do we bring the individual and the organization together, really together to create a community life? My perspective is that if the individual looks upon his service here as spiritual work and the Trust recognizes the imparting of spiritual understanding as the highest service, then naturally a community life will develop and flourish because the interests are the same. The spiritual work done by the individual and the spiritual understanding maintained by the Trust will help to create the spiritual oneness of our community. The individual takes personal responsibility and the Trust takes administrative responsibility that actions are knowingly based, not on expedient remedies, but on the loving expression of the truth of our inner oneness.

We are being challenged to enter the New Humanity. But being part of it does not simply mean being a "Baba-lover". Baba has dictated some beautiful statements about the New Humanity. When they are applied to our community, their meaning and direction are greatly intensified. Baba says, "Through divine love the New Humanity will learn the art of cooperative and harmonious life." And, "In the light of the truth of the unity of all life, cooperative and harmonious action becomes natural and inevitable." These quotes of Baba's provide comfort and encouragement when faced with unyielding separation amongst us, because Baba declares not merely the possibility but the inevitability of cooperative and harmonious living when we live in the truth of the oneness of all life.

Personally this means for me to try to express the understanding of that truth through a tolerance and

acceptance of others that grows into genuine kindness of heart. In my attempt to do this I am not seeking friendship (nor for that matter, am I suggesting that we all become friends.) Nor am I equating it with the exchange of social niceties to keep the environment pleasant. Neither is this a diplomatic technique of the mind. But the aim is to direct my actions towards what is the truth and the truth is that we are spiritually one. I attempt to uphold this within myself regardless of being understood or not. When my intentions are towards the truth of the soul, I am sustained from within my own being, even when I am misunderstood.

Is it in the nature of things to be misunderstood? It seems that a majority of the time we are. I try to comfort myself with the honest thought that if I don't understand myself, then I can't expect others to understand me. So instead of reacting to judgements made of me by others with impatience or anger, I experiment with remembering that inwardly we are one, and that oneness always remains regardless of passing emotions. When misunderstandings arise that cause distance, instead of letting my pride get the better of me, I try to overcome my pettiness by opening my heart, in a sense exercising it. Ordinarily, each of us is waiting for the other person to make a gesture of reconciliation first. But such a stance amounts to asking the other person to physically exercise for me, when I need to do it for myself. It is futile. In this case what needs to be exerted is the spiritual heart. The open heart which feels the unity of life silently asserts this truth by swallowing differences out of its love for what is real. Through this kind of exercise the heart becomes bigger and stronger.

It is common that people limit the expression of their love to circumstances where the heart can not be hurt. But all of us have our inner communion and personal

connection with Baba. As we gradually feel free enough to release this inner luster into our daily life, the spiritual oneness of that love will be revealed to ourselves, and made visible in our surroundings. Then the inevitable, as Meher Baba calls it, will occur — cooperative action based on harmonious living. No doubt, it is hard work to consistently affirm the truth of spiritual oneness, but as we do a community environment will be created. Although Baba has created for each of us a wholly individualized pattern of change and growth, I do envision that when the spiritual oneness of life is maintained by us all, a community life will evolve, innovatively reorganizing the entire structure of our daily living. It will evoke a genuine spiritual direction establishing the art and culture of cooperative and harmonious living. Individually it will be perfected with artistic delicacy in our communications with one another and collectively it will be a shining cultural achievement. In such a creative and spiritually alive environment, the obvious and less obvious forms of competition, conflict and rivalry will be perceived and felt, time and again, to be obsolete expressions of human personality, simply because they restrict the flow of harmonious love which will be rightly valued as all-important. This pattern of living will produce irresistible charm elevating the actions, reactions and interactions of community members towards the Truth — a truth that one can face and see. As Baba says in the discourse, **The New Humanity**, "To face the truth is to realize that life is one, in and through its manifold manifestations. To have this understanding is to forget the limiting self in the realization of the unity of life." For me this is the next phase of life here.

However before I can live the truth of the oneness of life, I will need to feel it, and before that happens I will need to

have faith in it, and prior to that I will need to understand it as Baba states. At this point in my journey to this truth, applying the understanding and having faith in it are essential ingredients in the development of individual and community life. In the discourse, **Qualifications of the Aspirant** on faith, Baba says, "It is because of faith that cooperative and social life becomes possible. It is faith in each other that facilitates a free give-and-take of love, a free sharing of work and its results." I believe that as faith deepens to intuit the truth of our inner oneness, all activities that have deviated from this truth will be realigned towards it.

The understanding of inner oneness is hampered by mistakenly identifying equality with unity. Because we live in an age when the idea of equality is upheld with religious fervor, I had felt that equality meant the same thing as unity. Now I feel that there never can be equality in the world because of the nature of human experience. Every person ignorantly binds himself with limitations, and inevitably has to experience their falseness. Therefore how can there be equality amongst things that are false? There can not be equality, but there can be unity, because unity is based on the truth of the spirit. In the past when I professed the idealism of equality, it may have been my own unconscious desire for the truth of oneness trying to speak through me. With this understanding, the noble aspiration for equality is superseded by the quiet attempt to uphold the truth of the hidden spiritual unity in a world of numberless differences. By doing so, one is trying to share love with all because all are undeniably one spirit.

About this mistaken notion of identifying equality with unity, I came across a very direct statement from Baba in the discourse, **The Nature of the Ego and its**

**Termination - Part III**, that clarifies the difference between the two. Baba says, "Although the sense of equality is made the basis of many social and political ideals, the real conditions of rich cooperative life are fulfilled only when the bare idea of equality is replaced by the realization of the unity of all life." To my thinking Baba's explanation can relieve many social issues as they arise and direct the energy that is created through our misunderstandings toward the truth.

Repeatedly, Baba brings a discourse back to the theme of the realization of the unity of all life. I only recently became aware of how often Baba affirms this truth and applies it to every aspect of human life. He makes it very clear that the development of the individual and the community depends upon whether this truth is put into action. This comes about naturally through the balance of the two phases of spiritual life: inner communion and outer community. One's personal connection with Baba is magnified through its expression. Baba's inner belovedness is communicated as outer harmony. Furthermore, as we create our community life, it cannot be isolated from the Trust, nor can the Trust create an atmosphere separate from the heart of the individual. It will depend upon both, with the understanding that each has its role to play.

However it may come about, our community life will unfold according to the results of the divine work of Beloved Avatar Meher Baba for His new humanity. In the discourse, **The New Humanity**, Baba describes the uncompromising transformation we will undergo. "Humanity will attain to a new mode of being and life through the free and unhampered interplay of pure love from heart to heart. When it is recognized that there are no claims greater than the claims of the universal Divine Life — which, without

exception, includes everyone and everything — love will not only establish peace, harmony, and happiness in social, national and international spheres but it will shine in its own purity and beauty.”

May we all recognize that the greatest claim in our life is the claim of universal divine life. As we express this claim in our lives, it will dissolve all other claims, revealing the unity of all life. Then nothing will impede divine love from flowing into our hearts, establishing the community of Avatar Meher Baba.

## CONCLUSION

In the discourse, **The Infinity of the Truth**, Meher Baba has dictated clear, descriptive statements regarding ordinary individual and social life in the world, spiritually attuned life and civilization based on the truth of inner oneness. I conclude with these words of Meher Baba. They hold the past, the present and the future: the way we were, the way we are and the way we will be.

Regarding ordinary individual and social life Baba says, "Where there are many, there is necessarily comparison between them. There is a smaller and a greater, a hierarchy of claims, privileges and rights; and all valuation gets twisted by the recognition of gradations of different types. From the spiritual point of view all these are forms of false consciousness, because the same Truth vibrates in everyone." When manyness is our individual viewpoint, there is unending personal confusion and when this common perspective runs rampant amongst us all, it is the source of social chaos.

When an individual's life is attuned to the truth of inner oneness, Baba says, "In spiritual infinity all comparison is out of place. There is no smaller or greater, or hierarchy of claims, privileges, and rights; and valuation remains unclouded because of the unmarred perception of the One in each and all. Since everyone in creation is not only in spiritual infinity, but is that indivisible spiritual infinity, then everyone is first importance and no one is second." The only way to get out of the maze of manyness is to begin to remove all the barriers in the maze by invisibly dismantling them through the belief in our spiritual oneness. May Baba bless our hearts with this truth, for then the suffering we

ordinarily give to ourselves and to others by differentiating will disappear, leaving us with "the unmarred perception of the One in each and all."

When social life is based on spiritual oneness, Baba says, "In social life the recognition of the spiritual infinity of the Truth will mean a challenge to individualism as well as to collectivism. It initiates a new way of thinking in terms of an indivisible totality, and it discards all the relative values of comparison in favor of the recognition of the intrinsic worth of everything." May Baba also bless our hearts with this truth, for when everything has inner meaning then everything leads to God's All-Abiding Presence. When this is socially recognized and accepted, social comparisons disappear and social life is based on the larger perspective of the truth of the unity of all life.

Baba ends the discourse with a shining description of a civilization totally unlike any today. Baba says, "In a civilization based upon a true idea of the spiritual infinity of the Truth, there will therefore be no problems of majority and minority, of rivalry and competition, and of those comparisons and laborious assessments that so often become a shelter for pride and separative ego. Life then will be infinitely simple and integral, because the illusions that create rifts and complexities will all have disappeared." May Baba bless all of us to pioneer the atmosphere on the Trust Estate, using His model of a true civilization as our own inner reality and outer goal.

It has been our great fortune to have had decades of intimate moments with Beloved Baba's mandali. In the forthcoming years, the few precious ones who remain will be making their final surrenderance to Him. They will be taking with them the intimate interiors of our hearts; much



of what we know and feel for Beloved Baba comes from their gracious company. Undoubtedly it will take a personal toll on our lives and will be an irreparable loss to our hearts. It has been said that time heals all wounds; but the one who made this statement never met Baba's mandali. Does love's wound ever heal?

But Baba's grace and work will continue in our lives by giving us the challenging responsibility to develop the Trust Estate. Like any living thing, growth occurs both outwardly and inwardly, on the surface and beneath the surface. Consequently, how we develop the Trust Estate outwardly will depend on how we deepen inwardly. We have been given the opportunity to cultivate a spiritual garden of inner possibility. The beautiful flowers of "Mastery In Servitude", "Spiritual Understanding", "Spiritual Work", "Divine Love", "Preserving the Atmosphere", "Mandali Connection" and an endless array of other delicate, subtle and personal expressions all are in our care. These beautiful fragrances of intimacy with Beloved Avatar Meher Baba, are for us to share with each other and with the world whose heart will be captivated and mind charmed when drawn to visit. It is a privilege that is incomparable in the world today. It is our privilege and it is Baba's pleasure, because it is His own voice that is whispering in our hearts. How blessed we are! This is the grace that is being given to each of us as we move into the 21st century. Baba is with us.

## POSTSCRIPT

Now I have expressed some of the things that have been weighing on my heart for a long time. This weight is now shared with you. If it be in His will, we will carry the weight together. I plan to write at greater length on what I have presented to you, along with other aspects on living with Meher Baba. The book will be called **Oneness In The World**. Jai Meher Baba!

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*Be true to the trust I repose in you.*

Meher Baba