

Oneness in the World



Booklet I

The Relationship: Mastery in Servitude

Craig Ian Ruff

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Several people helped bring this booklet to its completion. I am well aware of the fact that each one added his vital contribution at important junctures. I want to bring their names before the readers' eyes, to let them know of their truly valuable and loving assistance:

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PREFACE

Oneness in the World is an elaboration on several ideas initially voiced in my book *In His Trust* (1996). Out of the vitality of those ideas have evolved seven distinctive themes that are worthy of penetrating exploration. Each of these themes, noted hereunder, will be the subject of a separate treatise and will be published as a series of booklets under the title *Oneness in the World*:

1. The Relationship – Mastery in Servitude;
2. The Transformation – The New Humanity;
3. The Service – Work for the Spiritual Freedom of Humanity;
4. The Awareness – Spiritual Understanding not Intellectual Information;
5. The Community – Living in the Truth of the Unity of All Life;
6. The Warnings – The Grace of God-Man's Guidance;
7. The Beginning – One Man's Self-Mastery through Servitude.

This serial publication allows me to share my thoughts sooner than if I waited to publish all seven chapters as a single book. However, because my first duty is with the Avatar Meher Baba Trust Office in Ahmednagar, India, the frequency at which I am able to write and print each booklet will depend on time available.

This first booklet, an exposition on several facets of Mastery in Servitude, is titled: *The Relationship — Mastery in Servitude*. It is written out of deep appreciation for Bhau Kalchuri's inspired book *Mastery in Servitude* that was written to help set the foundation for dedicated service at the Avatar Meher Baba Trust. Throughout the coming ages, volumes of pages will be written and endless words will be spoken in praise of the God-Man's Mastery in Servitude. His life, and the phrase that describes His life, will become like the Ocean itself, an inexhaustible resource. Mastery in Servitude will at one and the same time reflect the Truth and our own longing for the Truth.

INTRODUCTION

An overview of the first quarter century after the passing away of Meher Baba.

My generation of Baba-lovers from the West has its spiritual roots in the 1960's and 1970's, when we were catapulted out of a comfortable materialistic world to search for God. Our search was fortunate, in that from its very outset Meher Baba's Nazar was already on us. How could we have come to Him, if He had not come to us first? He chose us before we chose Him. Our hearts were *ready* for His Seed of Silence. He planted that seed and left us without our meeting Him physically. The seed of the Spirit, the silence of the Spirit, the truth of the Spirit is our divine heritage that Meher Baba has begun to awaken in us.

For many of us around the globe who did not meet Meher Baba, pilgrimage to His places of residence and to His people was so compelling a force in our lives that it was as necessary to us as breath itself. Pilgrimage enabled us to hear from those who lived with Meher Baba, heart-stirring portraits of what His presence was like. Our "spirituality" consisted in the imagining of the God-Man's company. So much of His presence was conveyed to us during these pilgrimages that all the thoughts and feelings in association with Him — His places and His people — built the stage for what was to follow in our lives. On this stage we have been enacting our individual life drama for decades.

MEET

This setting has given Baba-lovers, who did not, Meher Baba, unusual comfort. In this very cold world where life is often filled with rejection, we always had places and people who accepted us. Through our marriages and divorces, bankruptcies and betrayals, personal successes and tragedies, and times of celebration, warm acceptance has always awaited us. This warmth was our connection to the

human side of God – a continual gift that gave us a sense of His compassion. We did not meet The Man but we met His people. The Sun had set, but the evening was gloriously beautiful, painting the sky with an array of gentle colors called the Mandali that attracted our hearts. The light that came to us was gentle; it was not the strong blistering heat of the sun. We lived under the warmth and beauty of the Mandalis' surrenderance to Meher Baba. We ourselves had made no such surrenderance. Yet Baba's Mandali graciously allowed us to be sheltered underneath the huge tree of their dedicated lives and to be comforted by the refreshing breeze of stories of being in His company. We have been incubating in their warmth for decades, feeling strengthened by their acceptance of us into His home. During this period we have been the recipients of precious moments that have deepened into heart-memories that will have to carry us through the rest of our lives. This is the personal side of our being with the Mandali.

Yet there is another aspect to this special love that we have received from them. In our deep desire to love and be loved, we sometimes overlook where the Mandalis' love springs from. They have surrendered their separate narrow lives and live in the truth of their being only One life that includes everyone and everything. That is why their love is so special and precious. Our own search for love may sometimes have ended in betrayal, but real love never betrays us; it will annihilate the false, not perpetuate it.

I assume that during the initial attractions of pilgrimage, the first sweet sense of feelings in the heart, or intoxicating thoughts of God-realization, most of us anticipated a spirituality quite different from what in fact came our way. God knows that these past decades have not been at all what I, at least, expected. Life and Love's irrationalities are very difficult, if not impossible, to digest, when lived from the ego-centered standpoint. Time and experience have shown us it is not an easy matter to love Meher Baba above everything and everyone.

Those of us in our middle years have left aside the idealism of youthful inexperience for the apparent realism of life-experience. We have put aside the fantasy of what plane we may be veiled on or have quit anticipating the next hit of bliss from some Baba-spot or Baba-person. We understand that the prospect of spiritual experiences in our youth was an attraction used to lure us from other things. Even the desire to be in the Mandalis' radiant company was helpful in deflecting our attention away from worldly desires.

Admittedly, attraction and reward are important human motivations. Consider: what better way to attract mankind in the 20th century, with the ego so inflated through intellectual achievement, than through Meher Baba's proclamation that every person's ultimate goal is God-realization? But, there is one problem in this business of God-realization: no one gets it! God-realization is only God realizing Himself infinitely, because there is no one and nothing but God. But the limited mind "thinks" it is going to become God. The bait of God-realization is indeed a very attractive device to claim the attention of man for the next millennium. In Muhammad's time, "paradise" was the lure and in Jesus's time it was "heaven." But we live in an age of mental sophistication; and so our lure is "God-realization." However, whatever age it may be, the lure that He creates is to induce humanity at least toward thoughts of God and eventually toward loving Him for love's sake because He is love.

By the time we entered mid-life we had eliminated many delusions about the spiritual life. Even some of our personal pre-conceived notions of spirituality had been firmly pummeled by life itself. In this process, however, our idealism may have been pruned back too far. Some of us may have discarded the possibilities of a realistic spiritual life. I have personally heard several people say that since we are not of the Mandalis' caliber, a spiritual life is not possible for us: indeed, one may be deluding oneself merely in aspiring for such a thing.

After all, these people continued, we struggled to attain a spiritual life in our youth but to no avail. Further attempts are futile. Personally, I can understand these feelings; this belongs to what I call the middle-age spiritual dilemma. Yet spiritual idealism surely is meant to mature into spiritual realism. The bare reality of the spiritual struggle is not as empty as we think it is.

While this dilemma that I have described may be an experience shared among many of my generation of Baba-lovers, each generation has its own set of problems. Most of the men and women of my parents' generation went through an economic depression and a world war. Under the impetus of that experience, they built a solid material world that gave their children material security. However, in doing so, they may have neglected the inner realities of life. Some of my generation, reacting against the perceived materialism of their parents, tried to build upon that material security with a spirituality that may have been too idealistic. Perhaps those of the next Baba-generation will more realistically incorporate spirituality with the materialistic world.

No matter which generation we are from, however, all Baba-lovers share a combined common legacy: Avatar Meher Baba's name, His photographs, His books and messages, stories of His life, and precious places of pilgrimage. Perhaps more than anything else in our lives, we have been blessed by the company of Meher Baba's Mandali. They have shown us what it is really like to be human. Their free and clear expressions of love have warmed our hearts toward loving God. Infinite God may seem far away, and God-Man is gone from the physical world, but the company He gave humanity remains. That company has slowed the force of desire in our lives just enough to make God present for us, though He is no longer in human form.

Certainly I have had my own delusions and pre-conceived notions about what it means to live a spiritual life. Before

coming to Meher Baba at the age of 22, I had studied the mystics of various religions. I was ardently inspired to pursue their way, and in doing so, I thought I had signed up for the "experiences" that they had. Well, the experience that I was given in India was the "lack of spiritual experiences." After my first ten years in India, it became apparent that I was not the mystic I thought I was. I was forced to look at the human dilemma of separateness. Although I might wish to feel a sense of oneness with others, the compulsion of the ego-mind made it impossible.

Out of Meher Baba's Remembrance came a surprisingly, unexpected unfoldment. Spiritual experiences were not at all necessary! What was essential was the expression of divine qualities in my life, for such expression upholds the truth of the oneness of the spirit. Out of this activity, a real inner spiritual life would develop, one that frees itself from delusion and strives to remember Meher Baba in and through Illusion. By slowly giving value to His Remembrance as the companion to as many of my actions as possible, I found that I began to develop some clear understanding of myself for the first time, which, even as it increases my understanding of and empathy for others, blossomed into a natural remembrance of Meher Baba in my life.

This series of seven booklets entitled *Oneness in the World*, then, explores my thoughts on what it is to have a genuine spiritual life in Avatar Meher Baba's Remembrance without entering the planes, numbering among the mandali, running after spiritual experiences, fleeing from the world, or avoiding the challenge of effacing one's own ego. I feel it is possible to cultivate a spiritual life that naturally leads toward the Truth that the soul really is infinite and eternal. The thoughts expressed herein are based on my understanding of Avatar Meher Baba's writings and on my own digested and undigested experience of living with the Mandali for twenty years. However, although I lived and worked with the Mandali, when it came to facing my own ignorance and battling with it, I did

that alone. Initially, even to look *toward* the darkness that was within me was enough to make me shudder in every part of my being.

In the final analysis, what is presented in this book is not based on bare theory — words that we are all accustomed to hearing or reading. This exposition is based rather on a living faith that has grown into experiencing the same ideas in the midst of life. Theory deepening into practice is the difference between mind and heart!

SERVITUDE BEFORE THE MASTERY

Meher Baba tells us that one becomes responsible for one's actions from the age of seven. For my part, it was at that age that I was introduced to the notion of "servitude." Young as I was, my moment of initiation was filled with breathless reverence. Before me was a first-time occurrence, charged with uncommon mysterious phenomena. To begin with, the lights gradually were lowered until the room was dark! Then I heard the voice of God!! The voice resounded with authority; I felt goose bumps all over. Of course, I knew it was not really God, but it was convincing enough for me. Surrounded by a cinemascope screen, I sat absorbed watching "God" create the world and then tell Himself that it was good. The movie "The Ten Commandments" had begun!

Almost everyone saw "The Ten Commandments." Even people living with the God-Man saw it! As a boy of 7, I watched spellbound, as God took Pharaoh's favored stepson, a likely candidate to be the next Pharaoh, and turned him into a slave, then into the great, powerful, "miracle-working Moses" — the one who would see and hear God and receive His Ten Commandments. The name of Moses still resounds throughout

the Western world after thousands of years. Why? Because so much of God's authority is associated with it.

However, before Moses was given the authority, he experienced slavery. He preferred slavery, as the story goes, once he found out that his people were enslaved. He toiled in the inglorious mud pits as they did, becoming a forgotten man. He had basked in the brightness of palace life. He had wielded power and luxuriated in surroundings that were unimaginable to his people. But Moses left it all, enslaving himself, because his people were enslaved. He turned away from what few people experience and attuned himself to that which still fewer experience: the voluntary change from majesty to slavery, from material heights to unapparent soul-depths.

I was pretty impressed with Moses. Why would he put himself into servitude simply because "his people" were in servitude? An extraordinary shift was going on in his heart that I could not imagine as a boy. That heart would carry the cry of an enslaved people to Mount Sinai. First he would have to cross the desert. The desert, rather than Egypt, became his kingdom. The desert, since it is empty of everything, has long symbolized the process of becoming emptied of every trace of selfhood. Moses was one of those who truly "entered the desert" in this sense. He enslaved himself, and The Lord accepted his genuine slavery, giving him the authority to master the might of Egypt. Since he was the Lord's slave, the mastery he demonstrated was due to the will of His Lord.

I was wondrously absorbed in this fantastic drama of God and man displayed before me on a gigantic screen. In the last scene of the movie, Moses blesses Joshua, then turns his back on him to journey alone and ultimately to die in an unmarked place. As with all good stories, I did not want "The Ten Commandments" to end. Thirteen years would have to pass before I would be moved again to consider the relationship between God and man.

In the meantime, I continued with the servitude of childhood in which I found myself at the mercy of the adult world. I looked from afar on the possibilities of adulthood, which I saw as a state of freedom from the shackles of early bedtime. When I become an adult, I thought to myself, then I could stay up past those mysterious hours I knew nothing about and watch whatever I wanted on the television. I would be free from rules. Then, I could do as I wish!

Since I was still just a child, the items I desired were very elementary. The choice was based on immediate gratification. Of course, my childhood picture of "freedom" was far from the reality. The purpose of life did not revolve around watching television, eating candy and drinking Coca-Cola any time I wanted. As I write this, I recall a line from Francis Brabazon: "Love is not a candy bar." It seems that, like myself, young Francis must have thought it was.

"Freedom" is not free; it bears its cost. As a child I could never have imagined the price of freedom as the renunciation of desire: the giving away of my ego one bit at a time. A child may think he can be free by simply living enough years to make him a grown-up. Then, free of childhood restrictions, he may roam the streets tantalized by the shop windows that display the objects of adult gratification and choose whatever he craves: mate, children, career, residence, etc. Though now as a grown-up, he thinks he is freely choosing among objects that will bring fulfillment, instead he just bought bondage to a bottomless payment schedule called desire.

Whether the payment schedule is based on ego-gratification or ego-annihilation, both have their bondage. The first is bondage to desire, and the second is bondage to desirelessness. Although the bondage differs, both exact a price: the first "we buy into," while the second is "a giveaway." Yet both payment plans have the quality of surprise: neither one is what we thought it was! There is no bargain basement shopping

with either of these plans. We find ourselves in quick sand before we realize it. After all, if you jump into quick sand, you can't get out by yourself: someone has to lend you a hand. That is what I learned from the jungle movies I saw as a kid.

When we have had enough of the paying into the gratification schedule, we stop buying gratification's wares. Then we perform one the strangest things one can do in this world. We change payment schedules. We join the ego-annihilation "giveaway" plan and start with giving away everything that has been gathering dust in the attic or garage. Eventually, way down the line of lifetimes, we see that dust has settled everywhere in the house, and what began as freeing oneself of extraneous things ends with walking away from the house entirely. Now we are back on the streets where we were years ago playing as children. Moses gave away everything, but he did not retire to the streets as so many lovers of God do; he had a desert to cross. That desert is within us, and to get to the Promised Land, like Moses we are all going to have to cross it.

In short, at the age of 20 I filed bankruptcy. I had not earned any money yet, but I wanted to get an early start on life. Why wait for what might happen a few decades later, I told myself. I felt I didn't need to buy anything. So I found myself on the streets. With that part of my life over, I could begin to search for the Truth. I had no encumbrances. I was too poor to pay the price of obstacles. I had not the bravery to enter the desert, so I begged on the small, indistinguishable alleyways and lanes inside my heart for the Lord's guidance. I was no slave. I begged and walked all day long for months until I walked right into the name Meher Baba. It was love at first sight. For me there was no romance or honeymoon, only the immediate bonds of relationship.

Two years later, I found myself walking up a small, undistinguished country pathway in a drought-stricken area in India. Although I must have seen the words "Mastery In

Servitude" on the stone structure above the entrance, I gave them no particular attention. Something else had drawn me here. Crossing the threshold, I walked underneath the words to the marble slab where Avatar Meher Baba's body lay and bowed down to Him. Unknowingly I was acknowledging the seed of divine love that He had sown within me. During the years that followed, as I would approach Meher Baba's Tomb, I occasionally wondered about the words "Mastery in Servitude" before dropping this inquisitiveness in exchange for the atmosphere that was beckoning me inside His Tomb-Shrine.

Now after all these decades filled with an abundance of pilgrimages and darshans comes the little thought-of, generally neglected question: what is Mastery in Servitude? I walk around thinking about the words "Mastery in Servitude" like a Zen Koan — a paradox meant to transcend the reasoning mind. Or, as Adi K. Irani was fond of saying: "contradictions denounced by logic are embraced by love." Is Mastery in Servitude such a paradox to break the reasoning mind? It is so curious a phrase that I initially wondered if this was so. To help the Baba-world understand its importance, our dear Bhau Kalchuri has written a book on this theme and entitled it *Mastery In Servitude*. After many conversations with him about the book, I set off on my own course of inner reflection and expressed some of my thoughts on Mastery in Servitude in my booklet *In His Trust*. However, for the remarkable self-chosen epitaph of the Avatar these first books are only the beginning.

EPITAPH, SYMBOL & MOTTO

In the first quarter of a century since God's human eyes closed, thousands of us have travelled to Meherabad and Meherazad. Keenly independent, we early pilgrims were wary of anything that might infringe on the freedom of loving Meher

Baba in "our own way." Our fears were based on religious history, which we understood in the light of Meher Baba's clear message that the God-Man never comes to form a religion. We focussed our attention on His Tomb-Shrine, His people, and His Home. We did not focus on the words over the doorway of His Tomb. We sought to hear His voice in our hearts as we bowed down. But the words "Mastery in Servitude" are beginning to announce their presence in the midst of His Presence. These are the words posterity, presumably, will venerate. Generation after generation will come to His darshan-door, His threshold, making their silent surrenderance, honoring the words "Mastery in Servitude" in their heart. But though mankind may revere these words, will the significance of the God-Man choosing His own epitaph be understood?

An epitaph, as defined by Webster's, is a "brief statement epitomizing a *deceased* person." Meher Baba did not leave it to mankind to make an imaginary approximation. Instead, He chose the words Himself that best express His life as God-Man. He never elaborated on their meaning. He lived them instead.

Although it is not possible for us to understand the total meaning of Mastery in Servitude — only The Avatar and the Perfect Masters have that knowledge — Meher Baba has deliberately chosen these words to establish a link of communication with man. And what is readily understandable to man is what is comprehensible to his intellect.

"Mastery in Servitude" conveys to me "an understanding," an understanding through which Meher Baba bestows the knowledge to humanity of God-Man's eternal relationship and responsibility with Creation. This understanding will nourish a greater intimacy in man's relationship with God and will inspire, in those who embrace Meher Baba, the integrity of selfless service.

Although the idea of Mastery in Servitude is conveyed in words, the question may be asked, can it be a symbol? The dictionary gives many definitions to the word symbol. Among the first is that it comes from the Greek "symbolon" and means "token of identity." "Token" is a synonym for the words: reminder, manifestation, and symbol. Consequently, the phrase Mastery in Servitude may be "a reminder of identity," "a manifestation of identity," "a symbol of identity" that applies both to Meher Baba's life and to our own lives as we move closer to Him.

It is striking that in the Advent of Meher Baba's Silence, He did not choose the silence of a wordless symbol, an icon, to communicate to humanity. Nor is Mastery in Servitude a *written* icon, as in the Arabic "Allah" for Muslims. Rather, He employed words, the sounds of the intellect. I would have thought that since wordless symbols bypass the intellect He would have adopted an icon to touch the heart of posterity. Yet He has not done that. Instead, He has utilized words that symbolize His identity, give evidence of His manifestation, and remind us of His relationship with us and responsibility toward us.

While Mastery in Servitude is not a wordless symbol, but a symbol in words, is it also fitting to characterize it as a "motto"? "Motto" does not seem to be an impressive enough word, though, and I personally don't like it. Organizations, clubs and even armies have mottos. However, the dictionary defines motto as "a sentence, phrase, or word inscribed on something as appropriate to or indicative of its character or use." Admittedly, Mastery in Servitude does succinctly illuminate the God-Man's character and even His purpose. So even though the word "motto" may not carry with it a certain dignity, surprisingly the word is accurate.

Meher Baba's epitaph and motto "Mastery in Servitude" have inspired the creation of an emblem. Baba did not personally create the emblem, but it is now commonly seen and

used. The dictionary defines the word "emblem" as "a picture with a motto." This man-made emblem is exactly that — containing the symbols of the major world religions that represent previous Advents, and the motto that is the glorious epitaph of the present Advent of the God-Man.

It remains to be seen what the future for the words "Mastery in Servitude" will be. This phrase may be the foremost term exemplifying spiritual momentum for the next millennium. These words which portray the God-Man's life will likely be the words most publicly associated with Meher Baba. The phrase may also become the banner under which humanity rallies, emblematic of its efforts to master the false self through service to the Truth. As such, it may be carried by an individual as his personal motto or by a community as its collective symbol. As centuries pass, however, this exalted phrase may also become tarnished by mankind's ignorance, depreciated into a thoughtless slogan or a meaningless saying. Regardless of how long and in what manner humanity will cherish these words, His Servitude to Creation is a permanent sacrifice so that love may be everlastingly experienced by humanity and infinitely realized by the Soul.

THE RELATIONSHIP - THE RESPONSIBILITY

As I gazed one day at the words "Mastery In Servitude," trying to penetrate the barrier of words, a striking perception emerged; "Mastery in Servitude" expresses relationship. Yes, I thought, nothing and no one lives in a vacuum; everything in the world is in relationship. Everything is moving toward something or someone else. Through language, God exposes the relationship He has with the entire world when He becomes God-Man, explaining what God's life is as man! By His forceful yet intimate statement of relationship with us, we will begin to

understand how He fulfills His responsibility to everyone and everything.

How did this relationship and responsibility begin? Was there a time when God did not undergo servitude? If there was such a time, it would seem to me that it must have taken place before the first soul became God-realized, when Creation was in its infancy and childhood. However, with the realization of the first soul, God "came of age," so to speak. The first soul that realized the Truth now became the Avatar, descending into Illusion as the God-Man, the eternally bound Ancient One. The act of descending put Him into eternal servitude to the universe. Now that is quite a thing to wake up to: you are eternally free and yet eternally bound! Why oh why should He place Himself in servitude at all? After God realized His infinitude through His Creation, why did He continue with Creation? Hadn't the world served its purpose? God had been realized! Why was another soul called forth to experience the entire process of Creation separately from the first soul? Why wasn't once enough?

Intriguing isn't it? But this much we know about the wondrous whim of God, that once is not enough. God wills Himself to sustain an imaginative process called "Creation" in order to make the proclamation "I am God" an infinite number of times. This is ordained by God because the self-revelment of boundless, unfading happiness in an infinite number of souls is worth God maintaining the universe and permitting its suffering. Meher Baba has explained this critical point in the discourse "The Conditions of Happiness:II":

The happiness of God-realization is the goal of all creation. It is not possible for a person to have the slightest idea of that inexpressible happiness without actually having the experience of Godhood. The idea which the worldly have of suffering or happiness is entirely limited. The real happiness that comes

through realizing God is worth all the physical and mental suffering in the universe. Then all suffering is as if it had never been.

Even though God-realization is the purpose of Creation, it is attained, ironically, because of an "accident." This is the term Meher Baba used to describe the soul's union with God. This "accident" emanates from the experience of God being loved at its height. Suddenly the Divine Beloved exchanges roles, becoming the Divine Lover in pursuit of the lover who is now His Beloved. At this point, the "accident" occurs: God engulfs man with His perfect love, which causes union. Due to this accident, the glorious experience of love comes to an end, and the purpose of Creation is fulfilled — God-realization of the Soul.

Thus, the majestic slavery of Love has made independent, infinite Reality an Eternal Beloved. Forever God will chase the lover, who prefers His embrace to the actual merging with Him. Why does God begin to pursue man at that stage when man's love for Beloved God reaches its height? The lovers of God give us the illogical answer by revealing that the lover prefers the *experience* of love to the complete union with love. One such lover has said, "I don't want to become sugar [Love], I want to taste sugar." Consequently, the lover does not long for union; he only aspires to love God as his Beloved. What can we say, who are ignorant of the experience of Love? Well, we do know about its absolute importance from the dedication in "God Speaks": "To the Universe — the Illusion that sustains Reality." In other words, the game of love has nowhere to exist but in Illusion.

This is a very different God from the one who, according to conventional belief the world over, imposes His Will on humanity, as if He were an overbearing landlord who demands his rent payment before it is due. This age-old misconception of "God's Will" will be eradicated by God Himself through the words "Mastery in Servitude." For God-Man to be in the state

of servitude, is there any possibility of Him forcing anything on anyone? Meher Baba has said that "Love and coercion can never go together." His servitude is for the sake of the free expression and experience of love in all its degrees — from that of Divine Beloved, who man finally adores, to that of Divine Lover, in pursuit of man in order for his soul to merge with God.

Yet to sustain this world for the sake of love, God-Man has to suffer. By choosing to communicate this truth through the words Mastery in Servitude, He gives man the opportunity to try to understand His suffering. We may think in gloomy moments that it is we alone who suffer while God resides in infinite bliss. But God-Man *does* share in our suffering. He suffers because He truly loves. Meher Baba portrayed an aspect of this incomprehensible love-story when He disclosed to us that one of His favorite songs was "There's a heartache following me." He chose a very human love-song that voices the grief of love lost. Although He never explained why He liked this song, the listener can hear in the lyrics the unfathomable lament of divine love: **God-Man will do anything for love's sake.** He will bear eternal servitude for it, because without this servitude, the experience of love will not occur.

The most vivid demonstration of the God-Man's Mastery in Servitude was the crucifixion of Jesus. All-powerful, He nonetheless allowed Himself to be crucified physically. His crucifixion has been remembered throughout the Western world as the most significant event of the last 2000 years. Humanity cannot forget how The Christ exposed God's almighty compassion through His being bound on the Cross. His act has revealed *the physical shape* of His boundless compassion that sustains the world at all times. With the God-Man's first descent, He is eternally bound to the Cross. If He ever came down from the Cross, the universe would dissolve. Though God exists independently from Creation, God-Man sustains it through His servitude to it.

Meher Baba describes the God-Man's predicament this way in "The Everything and The Nothing":

As the eternal Redeemer of humanity I am at the juncture of Reality and Illusion, simultaneously experiencing the infinite bliss of Reality and the suffering of Illusion.

With Reality on the one hand and Illusion on the other, I constantly experience as it were, a pull on either side. This is my crucifixion. When you fall a prey to the persuasions of Maya, the pull of Illusion is intensified and I have to exert myself to withstand it and remain stationed at the junction. I do not ever let go my hold on Reality. If the pull of Illusion becomes too great my arm may be pulled out of its socket, but I will remain where I am.

Applying the last sentence to Meher Baba's physical life, did the pull of Illusion for the world become so great that He had to have it centered on His hip which was pulled out of its socket due to His car accidents?

How can we be pulled toward Reality? The preoccupation of fulfilling our daily responsibilities can easily make us forget the basic rationale for life and love in Illusion. For when the aim of our life has been brought into attunement with this greater mission of life, we are bound to be pulled toward Reality. In fact, Meher Baba has set forth this rationale most clearly in the final two paragraphs of His discourse on "Love," as quoted below. What appears in the right hand column are Meher Baba's words, which are correlated with my own analysis of Baba's exposition, outlined in the left hand column.

*What is the Reason
for Creation?*

"It is for love that the whole
universe sprang into existence,

What is the Reason for Sustaining Creation?

and it is for the sake of love that it is kept going.

Why Does God Become God-Man?

God descends into the realm of Illusion because the apparent duality of the Beloved and the lover is eventually contributory to His conscious enjoyment of His own divinity.

Why is the World of Duality Maintained?

The development of love is conditioned and sustained by the tension of duality.

Why does God Suffer the One Over-Soul to Be Separated into Souls?

God has to suffer apparent differentiation into a multiplicity of souls in order to carry on the game of love.

What is God's Relationship with His Creation?

They are His own forms, and in relation to them He at once assumes the role of the divine Lover and the divine Beloved. As the Beloved, He is the real and the ultimate object of their appreciation. As the divine Lover, He is their real and ultimate savior, drawing them back to Himself.

What Is the Purpose of Creation?

Thus though the whole world of duality is only an illusion, that illusion has come into being for a significant purpose. Love is the reflection of God's unity in the world of duality. It constitutes the entire significance of creation....

But, while love gives meaning to the world of duality, it is at the same time a standing challenge to duality. As love gathers strength, it generates creative restlessness and becomes the main driving power of that spiritual dynamic which ultimately succeeds in restoring to consciousness the original unity of being."

Here is our world: created for the sake of love; sustained for the experience of that love; and nullified when that experience reaches its height and loving becomes love itself. If the world exists entirely for love, then actually, what is the source of the resistance to living love's truth? We all know that to uphold in our daily actions the truth that the world exists only because of love is no child's play, especially when it seems that everything around us points to the contrary. However as man's soul and God's Oversoul are one and the same Reality, we may assume that there also is a resemblance between God's Illusion and man's ego-mind that will explain this resistance.

To begin with, Illusion and man's ego-mind suffer the same curious, impulsive unconscious nature called Desire. This force of Illusion propels the entire panorama of Creation forward through the evolution of forms. It is God's great consciousness-seeking vehicle. In man, as the final evolutionary form, Desire relentlessly perpetuates itself even further by penetrating the heart. Desire's evil reputation may understandably originate from the fact that it maintains the unconscious nature of man, obscuring his true being, which naturally causes suffering for one's self and for others. Yet, the most apparent reason for man's suffering is the agonizing attempt to seek love through the unconscious force of desire.

Desire, the illusion of Love, is a mirage that, since it is merely Love's ghost and not its spirit, vanishes as we move closer. The mirage of love is chased by mankind to any degree until finally the hunt erupts in the larger social scale with volcanic violence. Even seemingly inconsequential "wants" can end up causing complicated and distressing results because of the desire for love. Though it may be bad love, sad love, mad love or glad love, any kind of love is sung about in the world because no one can live without love, which is inseparable from life itself! Love indeed does make the world go round. But the way in which it spins is because of desire.

Love, on the other hand, is praised as Light because in it nothing is hidden. In it, the Oneness of Existence is revealed. Love and desire can never be harmonized, for once desire is understood, love nullifies it. Thus, we, and perhaps God along with us, are faced with the irresistible and necessary contradiction between love and desire. This is so, because as quoted earlier, "The development of love is conditioned and sustained by the tension of duality." Love's slow development, through the intricacy of desire, often makes our daily experience incomprehensible. The endless inconsistencies within ourselves and everyone around us make us wonder if it is really humanly possible to live a normal, natural, balanced life. Most people, I imagine, think it is not possible. However, humanity always has before it a portrait which illustrates the human experience as a natural expression of the divine. That portrait is the God-Man's life.

The word "natural" has come to be used, at this time when the world itself is so unnatural, in many different ways. What is it, then, to be "natural"? I would say that, where there are no hindrances to the Truth, there "naturalness" can be found. But it is almost impossible for us to imagine a life in which our human limitations are not obstacles to the Truth. Therefore, it is the God-Man's life that redeems us by providing the model of a human being who is truly natural *in spite of limitations*. He

demonstrates that it is not limitations that create obstacles to the expressions of Love and Truth; it is the falseness of our separative ego-mind that perpetuates the barriers. His love for everything and everyone is expressed with complete naturalness, because it is unhindered by any falsehood. He takes each human experience, limited as it is, and lives it entirely and wholly free of any obstacles to the truth. His spontaneity to the circumstances of life is beyond mere creativity. His responses shine with the substance of the One divine Life that is in everyone. Thus He captures the inherent simplicity of Man's heart and inspires it to live for the Truth because He expresses the human state unencumbered. This is what makes Meher Baba's personality undeniably brilliant.

However, the God-Man's naturalness is not easily understood because He is the only human being who is actually human. Posterity fails to understand the truth of His natural personality because it does not appreciate what it is to be human. When God-Man comes down from the 7th plane of consciousness and sees the collective image that humanity has created of Him, the distortion of His life, His love, His humanity, how can He be recognizable to Himself? Even Saints have a difficult time in recognizing Him. If even they experience this difficulty, then what about common man? Perhaps those who lived with Him understand something of His naturalness because, through the expression of their humanity, they mirror it so attractively. Yet, in the frailty of our confrontation with experience, we commonly say, "Well, I am only human," or, "This is natural." But are we really being human, or are we really being natural, when we justify our prejudices as preferences? The God-Man's naturalness is no vindication of human weakness, but a challenge to it.

In the discourse "The Avatar," Meher Baba sets forth this challenge:

Being the total manifestation of God in human form,
He is like a gauge against which man can measure

what he is and what he may become. He trues the standard of human values by interpreting them in terms of divinely human life.... He has demonstrated the possibility of a divine life for all humanity, of a heavenly life on earth. Those who have the necessary courage and integrity can follow when they will.

Meher Baba makes a statement of great significance for the welfare of humanity when He declares that because He is the "total manifestation of God in human form" He is the gauge for mankind. The profound connection between absolute divinity and natural humanity permits us to measure ourselves against Him, so that we may live "life at its best" as an ordinary human being.

Specifically, what might be the values that He "trues?" In the same discourse, Meher Baba gives the description of His personality, of what He calls "the divine human example." It is a clear, definitive description that proclaims human values "in terms of divinely human life":

"a love unmixed with desire,"
"a power unused except for others,"
"a peace untroubled by ambition,"
"a knowledge undimmed by illusion."

The above characteristics express the human state free of falsehoods. The God-Man demonstrates this divinely human life as a real possibility for all humanity. Moreover, through the expression of His mastery, He makes it practical for mankind. He elevates the common values of the time so humanity can express this true standard of human life. The God-Man knows that since man cannot wield His divinity as its standard, man has to rely on His humanity as its gauge.

Eruch has been sharing with us for over 25 years His perception that the Avatar is "Man amongst men." For many

years I could not, for the life of me, grasp how the God-Man could ever be my gauge or mankind's. But dwelling upon Meher Baba's "Mastery in Servitude" led me to reflect upon His Humanity, which opened beautifully and completely into His unfettered humanness. By accepting Meher Baba's challenge and daring to make Him the gauge, we can move toward becoming natural human beings, where life is lived in terms of divine values.

In essence, the relationship of Mastery in Servitude is not God to Man; it is God-Man to Man. Both God-Man and Man become natural in and through the love of each other. God fulfills the highest state of God and becomes the natural God-Man through His love for His Creation. Man fulfills the human condition and becomes a natural human being through His love of the God-Man.

Man can live a truly balanced spiritual life as an ordinary human being by following Meher Baba's naturalness — the divine human example. Moreover, through the God-Man's personality, man eventually realizes his own divinity. Thus, God-Man fulfills His responsibility to mankind.

THE ETERNAL BOND

We are all familiar, in our own individual ways, with Meher Baba's mastery. We watch it direct our lives every day. The definition of the word "mastery" itself reveals nothing new to us. Returning to the dictionary, we find that it states the meaning of "mastery" as: "the authority of a master; the upper hand in a contest or competition; the possession or display of great skill or technique; skill or knowledge that makes one master of a subject."

As the Master of Illusion, Meher Baba possesses and displays the greatest of skills and techniques by leading humanity towards surrendering its limited self. As The Creator, He is not only the master of all subjects but is also in fact all subjects. As the Final Authority, He has the upper hand whenever our ego contests or competes with His efforts at guiding us.

We may be less familiar with the meaning of the word "servitude." Interestingly, the word has changed very little throughout the centuries, descending from the Latin *servitudo* which means slavery. The word servitude denotes "a condition in which one lacks liberty especially to determine one's course of action or way of life." Meher Baba has indicated that His course of action and way of life are determined by humanity's limitations. Therefore, He adjusts to those conditions. However these "determinations" and "adjustments" are His acts of servitude to humanity's bindings. He has to bind Himself in accordance to the way in which humanity has bound itself. Because we are bound, He has to become bound; otherwise, what is He uniting Himself to? Thus when infinite God is limited to being God-Man, He loses His liberty.

We are accustomed to our own limitations, enduring them as the rule of life. But what do we make of the idea of unlimited God reducing Himself to the confinement of eyes, ears, nose, mouth, hands, feet, and limbs; to the acts of eating and evacuation; to the physical bindings of bodily fatigue, disease and pain: in short, unlimitedness restricting itself to the shape of every limitation of a man? What humanity witnesses however, is only that portion of the God-Man's servitude which He undertakes for man's sake.

His complete union with Creation touches every particle of the universe. Infinite God descends into unimaginable restriction, layer after layer, realm after realm, throughout the world. He locks Himself in numberless prisons of little forms of

various shapes and sizes, animate and inanimate, and becomes one with everything. Although God-Man's perfect union with Creation glorifies Him as the Divine Beloved, this absolute union with every limitation in the world, also binds Him to His own Creation as its subject. This is His Mastery in Servitude.

Being infinitely free, this bondage He submits to, surrenders to, age after age, advent after advent, for all eternity, attests to one thing: RELATIONSHIP — God's Relationship with His own self. A common word used today for establishing relationship is "bonding." God has been bonding with His Creation for quite some time. The word "bond" has many interesting meanings, three of which could be used to express different relationships God has with the world:

the state of being "bound in slavery"— God Man's relationship with the world;

"a binding agreement"— This was the word used in both the Old and New Testaments to express the relationship between God and humanity;

"a fusible ingredient that combines or unites; a uniting or binding element" — This is "The Nothing". The "Nothing" is the binding and bonding element for the existence of the Creation.

God bonds with Creation in both His aspects of form and formlessness. As The Avatar, He descends into Creation by enslaving Himself in order to unite with it. But as The Formless Infinite Reality, when He *mixes* with "The Nothing," the result is the creation of the universe. Meher Baba says in the discourse "The Beginning and the End of Creation":

The manifold evolving universe arises from the mixing of the one Reality and Nothing. It springs out of Nothing when this Nothing is taken against the

background of the one Reality.... Its apparent existence is due to the one Reality, which is, as it were, behind Nothing. When Nothing is added to the one Reality, the result is the manifold and evolving universe.

God, although bonded to His Creation, is not conscious of it. But God as God-Man is consciously bonded to His Creation and consciously suffers Creation.

God-Man and His Creation both are bound in slavery, with a binding agreement, a Covenant, that establishes this eternal relationship. Thus, His bond with Creation, His Mastery in Servitude, continues even when He is not in physical form. Only when Creation vanishes at the time of Mahapralaya does God-Man rest. And what does that "rest" mean? It means that since Creation is no more, His infinite suffering no longer exists. Now He abides in infinite bliss without the responsibility of Creation, in a state that is similar to the other states of God that are free of Creation consciousness. Yet, it is the unfathomable magnitude of God-Man's suffering, which He takes on in order to sustain Creation for the sake of love, that proclaims Him as the Lord of Creation and the Highest of the High for all states of God.

CONTROL THROUGH SURRENDERANCE

God and "Nothing" are inextricably mingled together for all time. Because of this eternal mingling, the "Nothing" is called His consort, counterpart or shadow. When Existence is mixed with Non-Existence, the result is the illusion of existence. This Illusion is His Infinite Creative Imagination projected out of "Nothing." The God-Man is responsible for sustaining Creation, since He embodies the only state of God that is eternally Creation Conscious. In "The Everything and The

Nothing," Meher Baba describes the role of the Avatar thus: "The Avatar is the Axis or Pivot of the universe, the Pin of the grinding-stones of evolution, and so has a responsibility towards everyone and everything."

This responsibility is born out of His relationship with Creation. But as in every relationship, a basic question arises "who is in control?" Is the God-Man, who is in continuous servitude to His own creative whim, in control? Or is it the illusive, unsundered shadow of His own imagination? As I look at the play of human activity, I wonder who is chasing whom? Do the positions of authority and servility chase each other? Is it the parent, teacher, employer, beloved chasing the child, pupil, employee, lover, or is it really the other way around? Or is life a chase of opposites, each exerting control over the other through various means?

In the stages of evolution before human form, the question of control between God and His Creation does not arise to the threshold of consciousness because the flow of life is expressed through instinct. But in the relationship between God and man, the control factor is decisive, for the direction of one's life is at stake: either towards Reality or Illusion; either towards oneness or manyness.

The fear of losing control dominates human experience. Seemingly, once we connect with one another, the tug of who gets control begins. In the heat of battle, in the small differences of opinion, in the subtle seeking as to who is going to give way in a particular moment of life, we often end up viewing the struggle in terms of the "other" person suffering from "control issues." But the plain fact is that we all have control issues, simply because our ego is not under our control. We all have this dis-ease.

Why is the fear of losing control so fundamental to us? An explanation can be found in Meher Baba's discourse "The

Beginning and the End of Creation" where He states,

That portion of the not-self, or the environment, with which consciousness succeeds in identifying itself gets affiliated with the self in the form of "mine." And that portion of the not-self with which it [consciousness] does not succeed in identifying itself becomes the irreducible environment that inevitably creates a limit and an opposition to the self.

Quite obviously, then, because we do not want to be limited or opposed by anything or anyone, we try to maintain control. The attempt to control environment is the history of humanity. Surrendering control is the private story of the heart.

There are many kinds of control. Each operates and becomes evident according to the relationship which it inhabits. Control gives structure to a relationship in its formative stages. It is maintained so the relationship may continue to exist. And when the relationship goes through an alteration, control is either invalidated or established along new lines.

The dictionary gives many meanings to the word "control," some of which are:

- (1) "to have power over: Rule";
- (2) "an act or instance of controlling; also power or authority to guide or manage";
- (3) "direction, regulation, and coordination of business activities (as production and administration)";
- (4) "to exercise restraining or directive influence over: Regulate";
- (5) "skill in the use of a tool, instrument, technique, or artistic medium";
- (6) "restraint."

These definitions point to a few of the many phases and aspects of our lives where control is operative. These aspects have been briefly reformulated as follows:

AREA OF LIFE:

KIND OF CONTROL:

- | | |
|--|---|
| (1) Interactions
Between People: | <i>Domination either over others or by others:-</i> Directly or indirectly the use of external coercion forces us to be either the one in a position of authority or the one in a position of servility. |
| (2) Interactions
Between People
Involved in
Activities: | <i>Regulation through authority or influence:-</i> The regulation of activity through control is a basic function in life. Here the play of domination extends itself past the interactions alone and into the field of activity. |
| (3) Work or Career: | <i>Identification, through what we do:-</i> Through the ability of personal outer self control, we develop our skills, talents, competence, etc. This development results in the creation of our own self-image and our projection of that identity to the world. |
| (4) The Spiritual
Balance in
One's Life: | <i>Moderation, the restraint on one's actions:-</i> Through personal inner self discipline one achieves control over one's self and not others. The force of coercive, external control used by others can not dominate the individual who is actively aware of inner control which leads toward inner oneness. |

Among these different kinds of control the crucial one, from the point of view that we are exploring here, is **restraint**, a word that in the past implied to me either a conscious unresponsive composure or unconscious emotional repression. But some time ago I remembered how Meher Baba makes use of the word in a message entitled "Control" in "Life at Its Best." As I re-read Baba's message, I began to perceive a much deeper meaning than I had once assumed:

Keep your mind quiet, steady and firm. Do not submit to desires, but try to control them. One who cannot restrain his tongue cannot restrain his mind; one who cannot restrain his mind cannot restrain his action; one who cannot restrain his actions cannot restrain himself; and one who cannot restrain himself cannot attain his real Infinite Self.

Restraint, according to Meher Baba, leads us towards the Truth. It guides us past our impulses to control the environment and focuses our efforts on the task of controlling ourselves. In the discourse "The Removal of Sanskaras:II" Baba further describes how this kind of control can be worthwhile:

Control which has true spiritual value does not consist in the mechanical repression of thoughts and desires, but is the natural restraint exercised by perception of positive values discovered during the process of experience.... It is fundamentally creative and not negative in its purpose, for it is an attempt of the mind to arrive at self-adjustment in order to release the expression of true values of life.

In this illuminative paragraph, Meher Baba explains where control has spiritual value and where restraint becomes natural. "Natural" is the word Baba uses to describe this vigorous process. Later in the discourse, He calls it "creative control," because it is a distinct, conscious attempt to undo habitual

reactions to life. Creative control of our separative self leads to the awareness of the truth of the unity of all life. To obstruct the expression of this truth is to resist His Will — the supreme, pervasive control of the universe. Since we lack this understanding, we continue to exhibit the audacity of trying to control the environment for our own selfish pursuits, either directly through domination or indirectly through manipulation.

Meher Baba has said, "I suffer infinite agony eternally through your ignorance." Much of our ignorance is based on our choice of control. God's truth of the unity of all life is perpetually challenged by humanity, which mishandles the One universal life by cutting it into tiny pieces heedlessly insisting upon preferences. In "Life At Its Best" Meher Baba calls the impressions of the ego-mind "unendingly aggressive" toward the one divine life. However, through the maturity of experience we can consciously choose the direction of our control: from the external to the internal; from environmental control to creative control. As we exercise the choice of creative control, we cultivate the ability to master our impulses born of separatism and to replace them with expressions of spiritual oneness. Meher Baba dramatically states how decisive this is in the message "Eternal Now" from "Life at its Best": "Each moment with which man is confronted can either tighten the grip of the false or deliver him to the Truth."

In short, what may be ominously named as obedience to God's Will is nothing other than relinquishing control lovingly, very lovingly, in order to live in the truth of the One universal life. The extraordinary process of giving up control, which begins with obedience, ends with surrenderance. Spiritual surrenderance is the culmination of all experience. To surrender, whether God is surrendering to man or man is surrendering to God, is to become "the Beloved." Man's surrenderance of his will to enter God's Will makes him God's Beloved, and God-Man's surrenderance of His formlessness to enter Creation

makes Him the Divine Beloved of all humanity.

Although God's Will pervades the universe, it is God-Man's surrenderance that serves the universe. We do not usually equate authority with service, but the God-Man's authority is a result of it. Yet even God-Man's surrenderance is another form of control. After all, control is necessary to sustain Creation. But how does He choose to sustain the world? He sustains it through the highest expression of control — Mastery in Servitude. The mastery inherent in His control is expressed in His servitude. It is the control of divine love wherein He surrenders to limitedness so that we surrender our limitations.

THE MILLENNIUM OF HUMANITY'S MATURITY

When I was in Italy in 1986, I viewed in various churches the widespread glorification of Jesus' life in Italy through art. As I was admiring at how Jesus and his disciples were portrayed centuries ago, I became aware that these portrayals seemed to me too remote from the informality of our age and too reserved, in the distance that they presumed between God and Man, to express our relationship with Meher Baba. This observation made me wonder for the first time if God's relationship with humanity evolves as human civilizations develop? Similarly, I questioned myself, if humanity's relationship with God matures just as a personal relationship with God unfolds as one grows closer to Him?

One day as I was walking down the aisle of a church, I came across a gigantic painting that depicted the dramatic scene of Jesus saving the drowning Peter. Its emotional portrayal immediately evoked the memory of a similar scene that took

place 2000 years later, in which the roles were reversed: now it was Eruch saving a drowning Meher Baba. The impact of this thought was immediate! Did an extraordinary event take place on a universal scale between Meher Baba and Eruch that would alter the relationship of God-Man and man? According to His universal work, The Avatar sometimes chooses one person to represent humanity. By *allowing* Eruch the opportunity to save Him, did He bestow upon humanity at that time a greater degree of intimacy with Him?

As I read this portion of the text to Eruch, he recounted what Meher Baba had said to him at that time: "You may now be feeling that you could get hold of my arm and get me out of the muck of the waters of the ocean. A day will come when I will pull you out of the muck of Illusion." When we hear about this climactic event and other extraordinary moments in Meher Baba's life, it is evident that Meher Baba Himself expressed and encouraged in others the give and take of an intimacy with Him that dispelled traditional views of a remote God.

We know that each Avataric Advent awakens humanity's spirit in a new and deeper way. In the discourse "The Avatar," Meher Baba has described the previous stage of development for mankind as "the transition from sensation to reason." He then further declared that the next remarkable step of mankind's development will be "the transition from reason to intuition." I visualize that each of these developmental stages of man — sensation, reason, and intuition — would effect a distinct relationship and degree of closeness between God and man. Since mankind will develop the capacity for intuition, wouldn't man's relationship with God be based on intuition? An intuitive relationship with God, it seems to me, would be very different from a relationship with Him that is based on reason or the senses.

I assume that a relationship based on the senses allows only a primitive recognition of the God-Man. This does not

mean He is loved less. It means that man's love for God at that stage may be similar to what a child offers his elders — a degree of closeness that is unsophisticated because the relationship is elementary.

When the relationship is based on reason, it is full of vacillations similar to what may be called youthful indecisiveness. Moreover, there is the tendency for the reasoning mind to make God in the image of man rather than man being made in God's image. Hence, this stage of relationship permits only an immature degree of closeness.

However, as mankind's relationship with the God-Man finds its new basis in intuition, the relationship begins to reach toward maturity. How may this be so? The senses and the mind rely on the external world for their functioning. They promote God as something external. But the faculty of intuition can only function internally. Thus intuition provides what is called "insight".

In its next transition from reason to intuition, mankind will turn away from its old practice of relating to God as something outside of itself and begin to perceive Him as being within itself. Turning within allows the heart to receive a direct experience of God rather than rely on an image of Him that is based on the external world. The heart, less cluttered by worldly notions, perceives the simplicity of the spirit. This beautiful unfoldment in mankind's faculties bestows a genuine intimacy between God-Man and man. Although mankind has not attained the stage of illumination where God's face is seen, man has reached the stage of intuition where God's voice begins to be heard within the heart.

Thus, human development entails that there is parallel growth between consciousness and relationship — whether the relationship is human or divine. To elaborate further on this point: children adore their parents because their love is based

on helplessness. Youngsters admire their friends because their love is established on shared experience. Adults yearn for a beloved because their love propels them to unite their heart with another.

Though the above developmental pattern is oversimplified, it does reflect the development in mankind's personal relationship with God in the last 2000 years: Jesus expressed the relationship with God as being with "the Father"; Mohammed expressed the relationship as being with "the Friend"; and today, Meher Baba expresses the relationship as being with "the Beloved."

In order for Meher Baba to proclaim Himself as "the Divine Beloved," He must have given humanity the capacity to love Him with the mature love of a "lover." In the discourse "The Avatar," Meher Baba says that during Avataric periods, "Qualities of energy and awareness, which had been used and enjoyed by only a few advanced souls, are made available for all humanity." What was once the privilege of only the great mystics — to approach God through the beloved-lover relationship, is now being offered to all humanity. Thus, it would seem that mankind has passed the stage of loving God through the adoration of a child for "the Father" and as the admiration of a friend for "the Friend." Because humanity's relationship with the God-Man has progressed to this stage, the next millennium could well manifest mankind's maturity.

Although humanity's relationship with God matures as the ages pass, what really initiates this development is the God-Man's progressive declaration of who He is in each Advent. Once again to survey the progress of the last 2000 years, we find: As Jesus, He announced Himself as "The Son of Man," in one area of the world that did not believe God could become man; as Mohammed, He announced Himself as "The Prophet of God" in another area of the world that believed in idol worship; and now as Meher Baba, He declared Himself as "God in

human form." This proclamation directly challenges humanity's ignorance not in one small area of the world but globally. Man's customary beliefs will be confronted by the essential truths. God-Man has openly stated that the soul is one with God, and Creation is sustained for the realization of this Truth. The God-Man has come not to teach but to awaken.

The preceding dramatic revelations in the history of mankind indicate that humanity will advance toward the Truth with a maturity never known before. Now we have been given the capacity to absorb the following spiritual realities into daily living: (1) God takes human form; (2) the soul eventually realizes its own Godhood; (3) the relationship of love between God-Man and mankind has matured into a relationship between Divine Beloved and Lover; and (4) humanity will find itself endowed with the faculty of intuition.

Meher Baba has said in His "Final Declaration" in 1954:

When I come again after seven hundred years the evolution of consciousness will have reached such an apex that materialistic tendencies will be automatically transmuted into spiritual longing, and the feeling of equality in spiritual brotherhood will prevail.... *Gradually*, in the course of the next seven **HUNDRED** years, this feeling [of Oneness] will supersede the tendency of separateness and rule over the hearts of all, driving away hatred, jealousy and greed that breed suffering, and happiness will reign.

THE AGE FOR ACTIVE SPIRITUALITY

In the past, according to common understanding, the pursuit of spirituality meant withdrawing from the world. But

Meher Baba has given humanity a clear understanding that real spirituality is not separate from life but, rather an "enlightened attitude" toward each and all of life's circumstances. Mankind is not only to pursue its relationship with God inwardly, but further, that relationship is to have an uplifting impact in man's environment. Such a life is described in Meher Baba's discourse "The Life of the Spirit":

Since the physical body and other material things can be used for the life of the spirit, true spirituality does not take any hostile attitude toward them but seeks expression in and through them.... Things of beauty can become the source of purity, happiness, and inspiration; works of art can ennoble and raise the consciousness of people. The attainments of science can redeem humanity from unnecessary suffering and handicaps; political action can be instrumental in establishing a real brotherhood of humanity. 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.

Contemporary humanity, however, is yet to be spiritually awakened, and thus is unable to channelize its energy toward the life of the spirit. The present world view would only see the implementation of Meher Baba's message as impractical and idealistic. Yet the spirit affirms this activity as natural to the human experience.

Our age is not pastoral but one of overwhelming complexity. Life is no longer limited to the work of our hands but has expanded to the endless reaches of our minds. There is no place of lasting refuge, no place to remain silent and secluded. This is not a meditative age in which the mind, at peace with itself, can easily turn within and commune with

God. This is a turbulent time, when the mind is being inundated from within and from without, from oneself and from one's society by excessive desire. It is difficult to retain any focus for long, as sub-conscious murmurings surface continually. In this state of restlessness, mankind in this century has begun to release the power of its intellect to a new degree. Technological achievements have made the world smaller. Within a few moments we can communicate with people on the far side of the world or even, within the same few moments, destroy them! The avenues of beauty, art, science and political action that could be channels for the life of the spirit are instead tools for possessiveness, egotism, divisiveness and destruction.

To sustain the spiritual growth of a faltering humanity, Meher Baba disclosed, personified, and imparted the Truth of God's eternal silence through His man silence of 44 years. In this overpopulated age, when the world is flooded with noise, Meher Baba responded with the sound and activity of God's Silence. Although He spent years in seclusion, He was never alone. He was always in motion, always serving other forms of His own Self.

Significantly, then, Meher Baba's life of ceaseless activity suffused by His silence will equip humanity with a dynamic spirituality, characterized by outer service and inner silence. This spirituality utilizes mankind's active mind and lifestyle of this age. The outer service, initiated by an awakened humanity, will be a spiritually vital attestation of the purpose of love and life in all spheres of human endeavor. In the midst of this intense enterprise, the inner life of man will silently grow through the heart-depth remembrance of Beloved God. In one of Meher Baba's discourses, He named this type of action "spiritual work."

Active spirituality will transform mankind and the society he lives in. The combined effects of these transformations will engender what Meher Baba called "The New Humanity." This

theme will be discussed in the next booklet I hope to write, titled: "The Transformation: The New Humanity."

WHO IS THE DOER IN ACTIVE SPIRITUALITY: HE, I, OR THE MIND?

As we all know, for those who lived under His guidance, Meher Baba emphasized a life of service. His stress on service was not a call to advance the humanitarian ideals of social service. It was a continual invitation to dedicate everything to Him — a dedication that led to freeing the self from the ego. As Meher Baba stated in the discourse "The Avatar," "Those who consecrate their lives to Him gradually become identified with Him in consciousness. Little by little their humanity is absorbed into His divinity, and they become free." Dedicated action to this degree becomes the basis for making our service true service.

Yet the medium for service in an age of "active spirituality" is none other than our false, limited ego which approaches experience under the delusion that it is the **doer**. This false identification with the action feeds the mechanism of habituated reaction to life. Once the mind is activated by impressions of limitation, it incites the mind to "think" and induces the body into activity that produces ego-identification. Furthermore, through the exertion of our will, we choose to identify with the impressions that provoke us to think ourselves the doer, the performer, the executer, the accomplisher, the achiever, the arranger, the organizer, the server, etc. Yet, regardless of all this thinking and doing and willing, Meher Baba tells us that we can not be the doer and that to identify ourselves with "the doing" is false, as our true identity is infinite and eternal being.

The problem is further compounded when, having been accustomed to identifying ourselves as the **doer**, we think "our doing" is for His Cause. Baba says in the discourse "The Dynamics of Spiritual Advancement" that "the most essential condition of spiritual advancement is the decreasing of egoism to its minimum. The objective of spiritual advancement is not so much 'works', but quality of life free from ego-consciousness."

Because activity easily increases ego-identification, in previous ages, as far as spiritual effort was concerned, it was kept at a minimum. However, in this age of action, humanity's inner and outer worlds are being transformed into vehicles for the expression of divine truths. Out of the necessity of the times, humanity will confront obstacles to the truth differently than in the past.

In an age of active spirituality, one is continuously confronted with the challenge of not identifying with the work one is performing for His Cause, but rather using it as spiritual activity to express divine qualities which lessen the ego. Meher Baba names these qualities in the "Discourses" as patience, persistence, accepting the world as it is, forbearance, moral courage and confidence, freedom from worry, cheerfulness, enthusiasm, equipoise, one-pointedness, and most importantly, availing oneself of the help of the Master. These qualities when put into action lead to disassociation from the ego-mind, and through this, we begin to observe who is really the doer in our lives. To begin to know who is the doer is to begin to know spiritual freedom.

Hence a spiritual life based on activity constitutes a direct assault on the limitations of the false ego. As we become aware of the ego's separative nature, we perceive obstacles to spiritual oneness right in the midst of action. Unconscious barriers that were ignorantly constructed throughout our lives become even more apparent in the heat of action, where identification with the ego-mind is complete. This "meditation in action" replaces the "reflective meditation" of preceding ages.

Meher Baba approaches the dilemma of "Who is the doer?" from many angles. Two of these angles are set forth in the chapters on meditation in the "Discourses": "meditation of action" as a form of personal meditation and the "quest for the agent of action" as a form of impersonal meditation. Both involve the decisive step of no longer identifying action with the ego. The point of the first approach is to refer one's actions to the Master, making Him, rather than the ego, the center of integration of experience. The point of the second is to discover who is the real agent of action, that is, who is this "I?"

Regarding "meditation of action" Meher Baba dictated:

"The aspirant does not allow the ego to feed upon any of his actions — small or great, good or bad. He does not think, "I do this," but on the contrary, systematically develops the thought that through him the Master is really doing all that he does.

For example, when he looks, he thinks, "The Master is looking"; when he eats, he thinks, "The Master is eating"; when he sleeps, he thinks, "The Master is sleeping"; when he drives a car, he thinks, "The Master is driving the car." Even when he may happen to do something wrong, he thinks, "The master is doing this." Thus he completely relinquishes all agency for his action, and all that is done by him is brought into direct reference to the Master. This automatically and necessarily involves and entails determination of each action in the light of the spiritual ideal as seen in the Master."

In this discourse Meher Baba is presenting a personal way to keep the Beloved's presence always in mind. For over 20 years I have found it impossible to follow what Baba is suggesting here. No matter how many times I tried, I felt it too cumbersome to say throughout my life, "It is BABA who is - looking, eating, thinking, sleeping, driving, etc." Perhaps in the

past I took Baba too literally in this passage. However, because the heart is at the root of all actions, thoughts, and words, I eventually found that as I increase my remembrance of Meher Baba, automatically the action, or word, or thought is brought into direct reference to Him. As this continues to occur, I have the opportunity to make a clear choice of trying to live up to the truth of His remembrance in every moment's circumstance. If I am inspired to do so, then quite naturally the ego will lessen its grip upon me. The personal path of integrating my experience around Meher Baba is developing, although differently from the process He described. Looking back at the discourse, I found that His aim was for the ego to relinquish its function as the instrument of the action, thought or word so that each action could be performed in the light of His remembrance.

Although Meher Baba suggests identifying each action with Him in the above manner, He is not really doing the looking, eating, desiring, etc! In the following process of the "quest for the agent of action", Baba suggests another way of not identifying with the limitations of the ego-mind. Baba says that this quest for the agent of action

consists in ceaselessly pressing the query "Who is it that does all these things?" The aspirant finds himself thinking "I sleep, I walk, I eat, and I talk"; "I see, hear, touch, taste and smell"; "I think, feel and desire"; and so forth. The searching question this form of meditation is concerned with is, Who is this "I"? The soul does not experience any of these things. The soul does not sleep, walk, eat, or talk; see, hear, touch, taste, or smell; think, feel, or desire. Who then is the agent? The *source* of all these activities has to be discovered and the mystery of all life has to be explained.

There is a power that does all these things, and one must know oneself to be different from the power and be able to use it with detachment. The aspirant thinks that he walks; it is really his body that walks. The

aspirant thinks that he sees, hears, thinks, feels, or desires; it is really his mind that does all these things through some convenient medium. As soul, the aspirant is everywhere and really does nothing. But it is not enough to think that, as soul, he is everywhere and really does nothing. He must *know* this.

Curiously enough, in this passage Baba does not suggest to identify the walking, talking, eating, sensing, thinking with Him. Even though He has suggested a means of identifying the actions with Him in the "meditation of action," the truth is that He is not doing them. Instead in the "quest for the agent of action", He wants us to put forward the searching query: "who is doing these activities?" Baba says that the soul is not doing these activities and asks us, "What is the power that does all these things?" Then He tells us that it is the mind that does all these things through some medium. In short, the point of this process is no longer to falsely identify with actions that are truly done by the mind through the senses of the body or the faculties of the mind. Here one is trying to inculcate detachment from action, with the understanding that it is the mind that is doing everything.

In these passages, Meher Baba shows us two different ways of trying to integrate consciousness and understand our experience from a viewpoint other than the ego. The process of "meditation of action" is personal and seeks association with Baba. Through it He suggests that to overcome our false, ego-centered life, we refer every aspect of life to Him. This brings His Remembrance into each word, thought and deed. By doing this, His Truth and His humanity enters our life. Self-justifying age-old habits are transformed through our effort into qualities that lovingly express the nuances of the inner oneness of the spirit. The process of "quest for the agent of action" is impersonal and seeks disassociation from one's physical, mental and emotional actions.

Although we are more familiar with the way of identifying with the Master than the way of non-identifying with the ego, the end-point of either way, or for that matter any "way," is to gain awareness that one is not the doer. In an age of action, where any activity is liable to bind us further, this is most essential. It provides the immediate cognizance that we are not the "impressionistic doer" of the present activity. It allows us to be in the world but not of it.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EFFORT AND GRACE

Because I wanted Meher Baba in my life so much, in my youth one of the first things I was ready to accept as a Baba-lover was the notion that Baba did everything. Initially, I tried to see behind the veil of my life, wondering what Baba was doing to me. What was the purpose of each circumstance, event, action, or thought according to God's Will? What was Baba trying to tell me? How was I to obey Him? Eventually, I found that in many ways this line of action increased my naivete about life, leaving me unaware of the vigilant responsibility that was necessary toward my thoughts, words and deeds. But at that time, I could not understand what I was doing "wrong." Pondering about His will did not increase my awareness of Him. Such thinking seemed to be the "right" thing to do because I was a "Baba lover." I was like a person who knew how to drive a car but did not know how to go anywhere because he did not know the direction. In brief, I could not understand the connection between my effort and His Will. Was I to be passive, trying not to assert my ego and to accept whatever happened as Baba's Will? Was I to be active and take results, irrespective of my actions, as Baba's Will? For many years, I would vacillate between these extremes without finding any answer to this dilemma.

In trying to understand what the "Will of God" might be, I turned to the familiar quote in "The Everything and The Nothing" where Meher Baba declares: "I alone am Real and my will governs the cosmic illusion. It is the truth when I say that the waves do not roll and the leaves do not move without my will." At one time in my life these words meant to me that Baba was literally doing everything. He was actively moving the waves and the leaves, and He was creating these undecipherable circumstances in my life. After many frustrating years, I finally started to wonder if Baba was really "willing" all the events that were somehow happening to me, or was something else at play. During this period I asked Eruch about it, and he answered, "It is not that He is doing it, but since there is no one in Creation but Him, He is the waves, and He is the leaves. Everything is happening because of His Will because He is the only One."

Then, I recalled Meher Baba's message regarding the divine law, called "the inexorable 'Must'." In this message He stated:

Everything and everyone in the universe is constrained to move along a path which is prescribed by its past. There is an inexorable "must" that reigns over all things large or small.... The rule of this inexorable "must" governs and reshapes the so-called destiny of man in every incarnation as long as the "self" of man remains conscious of impressions. The principle of "must" which overrides human plans is based on divine law which both adjusts and gets adjusted by evolutionary impressions. It is only the divine will that can supersede the divine law.

Reflecting on the events in my life in relation to this divine law, I began to admit to myself that my personal notion of "Baba doing something to me" was based on wishful thinking. However, it was true that Baba was doing something to me,

though not quite in the way I had imagined. He was doing it through His divine law which maintains my ignorance because of my own ego-assertions. The waves roll and the leaves fall because they "must" fall that way due to their impressions. I also "must" respond the way I do because of my impressions, which I was upholding because of my ignorance.

Painfully I recognized that the notion I had perpetuated for decades was a naive belief, born more out of fear than faith. Now, in the clarity of the divine law of the inexorable "must" as explained by Meher Baba, I was obliged to accept the responsibility of my own impressions, now seeing them as the instruments that provoke my activity. In the discourse, "True Discipleship", Meher Baba confirms how this takes place: "often that which comes to him [the disciple] as his duty is really a prompting of some sanskaras interpolating themselves between the higher Self and his field of consciousness."

If Meher Baba was not doing anything to me, then who was? Although my mind was disengaged at last from this false belief, it entered a stormy sea of questions: Was I undermining myself and blaming others? Was I at the mercy of my unconscious and sub-conscious impressions? How can I stop "doing it" to myself? But what was I doing to myself? If the law of the "inexorable must" is operative, then what is free will? Most importantly, how is Baba's help active in my life? In other words, the question of who was the doer — my self, my impressions, or Baba — no longer was metaphysical. The inner turbulence demanded that I answer this question if I wanted to have any sort of authentic spiritual direction in my life.

One of the major questions asked of the Mandali all these years concerns the nature of free will. One of their responses to the dilemma of free will has been to refer back to how Prophet Mohammed explained it. He is quoted as saying that our free will extends as far as the choice of which leg we wish to stand on. In other words we have choice, but within limits. This

explanation of free will never pleased me. I always had a vague feeling that something was missing from it. After a long time I recognized what it was! I grasped that there are no limits when it comes to making the important choice in life — the choice of surrenderance to Meher Baba.

In the following passage from "Sparks of the Truth," Meher Baba emphatically states that surrenderance is indeed my choice. It is not a matter of His Will but of my will:

It is for the Master to take the disciple to the heights of attainment, when he is *willing* to tread the Path. But the choice of whether or not he is going to tread the Path rests with the disciple. It is for the Master to give the clarion call of "Awake! Arise or remain fallen forever!" and to precipitate the awareness of the urgent need for spiritual advancement. It is for the disciple to pay heed to his clarion call and gird up his loins for treading the arduous path which is far from being a bed of roses.

If the choice of surrenderance is mine, how then is Meher Baba's help active in my life?

In the discourse "The Travail of the New World Order," Meher Baba describes the relationship between surrenderance and grace in this very personal manner: "I have come to help you in surrendering yourselves to the Cause of God and in accepting His grace of Love and Truth. I have come to help you in winning the one victory of all victories — to win yourself." As I read this, I hear His voice imploring me to *allow* Him to help me to surrender my false self in order that I may win my true Self. Thus, surrenderance is not a matter of my will alone; it is also a matter of His help and grace.

Yet the choice remains mine as to when I will accept that grace. I still have to face the "inexorable must" of my

impressions, which continue to be operative in my life. However, as I allow him to help me to surrender, He accompanies me through the labyrinth of my impressions that operate under the divine law. Though the universe functions under divine law, it is sustained because of divine love.

Thus, the God-Man's grace allows me to dare to confront the falseness of my limited self. His grace enters my life because I dared to surrender to Him. That daring came out of my own free choice for a call to spiritual action in my life. In other words, there may be a progressive unfolding: from spiritual choice to surrenderance, from surrenderance to grace, from grace to actively confronting the falseness of my limited self with His help. The spiritual momentum inherent in this series of interrelated stages is very different from my previous vacillation between passively accepting everything as God's Will or actively deciding that everything I do is because of God's Will. Both of these attempts led to spiritual inertia.

In short, instead of myself wondering what Meher Baba is doing to me, or feeling defeated by my fate, with His help I can begin to undo the false self by actively confronting it. There is nothing vague about facing the false self. To do so requires a firm recognition that what really matters is not so much what I do as how I undo myself. Maintaining this understanding through a moment-to-moment awareness brings the false ego's activities of separation into view.

Meher Baba has explained in the discourse "The Dynamics of Spiritual Advancement" that the limited life of the ego *gradually* becomes transformed into the unlimited egoless-life. Is there a way in which we can perceive this gradual growth of awareness within ourselves and moreover use this comprehension of the process of transformation for gauging our own efforts toward the Truth? In the same discourse, Meher Baba has given a very simple description of what may be very

intricate — the ongoing dynamics of spiritual advancement — specifying that

egoism is replaced by humility,
surging desires are replaced by steadily growing
contentment,
and selfishness is replaced by selfless love.

Using this process as our measure, we can then make our own uncomplicated appraisal of our efforts for a more expansive spiritual life. Moreover, to accept and undergo this transformation illustrates the effort we have to initiate in our relationship with Him. Meher Baba consummates our attempt at surrenderance with His grace.

MASTERY IN SERVITUDE

Mastery in Servitude is the act of surrenderance for both God-Man and Man, and by doing so, each becomes the Beloved of the other.

7-30

