



MEHER BABA

Compassionate Father

MEHER BABA means "Compassionate Father"—it is the name given by a group of early disciples to their Master when, in the early 1920's, signs of his spiritual status first became apparent. To attempt to describe Baba's life briefly creates an enigmatic thumbnail sketch. For one thing, thousands of people of every major religious tradition regard him to be "God in human form"—the Prophet, the Buddha, the Christ, the Messiah of this age. For another, Baba carried out all of his various activities, which include establishing schools and hospitals, extensive world travel and continuous spiritual teaching, while keeping silence—uttering no words—for the forty-four years from 1925 until he passed away in 1969.

Meher Baba stated explicitly that he is "the Ancient One," that is, the God-Man whose advent is anticipated in many of today's religious and mystical traditions. Most commonly in India he is referred to as the "Avatar," a Hindu word meaning "descent of God." The view of mysticism, however, whether eastern or western, is that the appearance of the Avatar is not a once-upon-a-time event in history, but rather a periodic occurrence on earth.

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

In this light, all the great World Teachers—Jesus, Buddha, Rama, Krishna, Mohammed and Zoroaster being among the best known—are regarded equally as Avatars, the primary manifestations of God on earth for their respective eras. However much the religions founded on these Avatars may differ as they stand today, Meher Baba holds that each of these God-Men has always taught the same essential Truth:

God has come again and again in various Forms, has spoken again and again, in different words and different languages, the Same One Truth—The outer life and habits of an Avatar reflect in some degree the habits and customs of the people of that time, and in his teachings he stresses the aspects that call for improvement. In essence, every Avatar embodies the same ideals of life.

Baba's appeal extends to people of every background. His followers include Protestants, Catholics and Jews in the West, Hindus, Muslims, Zoroastrians and Buddhists in the East, and even many who have considered themselves agnostics or atheists. In a word, Baba and what he teaches are universal. He can be understood in terms of the context of every broad religious tradition, yet he is clear in pointing out that he belongs exclusively to none of them:

All religions are equal to me. And all castes and creeds are dear to me. But though I appreciate all 'isms,' religions and political parties for the many good things they seek to achieve, I do not and cannot belong to any of these 'isms,' religions or political parties, for the absolute Truth, while equally including them, transcends all of them and leaves no room for separative divisions which are all equally false.

Meher Baba came from a Zoroastrian family. He was born in 1894 in Poona, a center of culture and education with a million and a half people about 100 miles east of Bombay. His mother had two unusual dreams around the time of

his birth, one of thousands of people gathered around her, awaiting in adoration the birth of her child, another of a many-armed Hindu goddess worshipping her new-born son. He was given the name Merwan Sheriar Irani, the surname indicating that his family was 'from Iran.'

Merwan's younger years were not out of the ordinary. Interested in poetry and literature, from Shakespeare to the Persian poet Hafiz, and adept at sports, he attended a Roman Catholic high school and later entered Deccan College, the most respected in West India, where the eastern scholar Sir Edwin Arnold had once been professor. It was in his second year at college, at the age of nineteen, that Merwan had the experience which revealed to him his identity as the Avatar of the age and his spiritual mission in the world.

This revelation came through a kiss on the forehead from an ancient woman in Poona, regarded to be a Perfect (fully enlightened) Master, known as Hazrat Babajan. This white-haired saint, said to be over 120 years old at the time, was herself a living shrine in Poona. For more than twenty years she had lived beneath a neem tree on the roadside, and she received thousands of pilgrims and aspirants who came from every part of India to sit with her and take her silent blessing.

One evening, peddling back home from the college on his bicycle, Merwan passed by Babajan and she beckoned to him. He got down from his cycle, walked over and sat with her in silence. At the end of their meeting the old woman kissed Merwan on the forehead and he rose and went immediately home. Baba describes that time as follows: *With just a kiss on the forehead, between the eyebrows, Babajan made me experience thrills of indescribable bliss which continued for about nine months. Then one night she made me realize in a flash the infinite bliss of self-realization (God-realization).* On various occasions when Baba visited Babajan in the months that followed, she would point to him and say, "This child of mine will one day shake the world."

For nearly seven years after Babajan's momentous kiss, Merwan was drawn to contact four other spiritual figures in India who, like Babajan, were considered to be Perfect Masters. Their function, as Baba has related, was to bring Merwan "down" to normal consciousness of the world while he kept simultaneously the undiminished infinite consciousness of God-realization. (This return to a consciousness of Illusion, after consciousness of the One Infinite Existence has been permanently attained, is very, very rare, yet absolutely essential for one who is destined to work as a True Guide, bridging the gap between Truth and ignorance in his relationship with mankind.) During this period, Merwan soon came to be known as a 'Sadguru,' or Perfect Master, himself, and a number of spiritual seekers—Hindus, Muslims and Parsis (Zoroastrians) alike—began to gather around him and take him as their Master. It was these men who first began to refer to Merwan as "Meher Baba."

In the years that followed Baba set an incredibly strenuous pace for the men who followed him. Often he traveled from village to village, having his men gather the poor, or lepers, whom he would bathe, feed and clothe with his own hands. On these trips Baba always traveled incognito. Usually he gave each of

these villagers a roll of cloth, a sack of grain, or simply money, this being the only time that Baba ever handled money at all.

In 1925, just a few months before he began his silence, Baba established a free hospital and dispensary for the poor, as well as a school which offered free primary education to village boys and girls of all castes. At that time in India it was almost unheard of for a school to be open to children from the lowest social class—the so-called ‘untouchables’—but even more unique was the section of the school which Baba developed into the “Prem (Love) Ashram.” This was a group of selected boys of different religious backgrounds to whom Baba paid special attention, from giving them spiritual discourses and training to caring for the boys personally, even cleaning the latrines.

It was about three months later, in June, that Baba first announced his intention to maintain a period of silence. Although it was not unusual for spiritual masters in India to keep silence from time to time, those who were close to Baba could hardly imagine how they would get along if he were not to speak—he was always discoursing, singing devotional songs, outlining plans, giving instructions, praising or chiding the disciples. Yet, on the evening of July 9th, 1925, he advised them to “listen well—you will not hear my voice again for a long time.” Indeed, no one has heard Meher Baba’s voice for the more than four decades since that time.

As Baba traveled, he demanded more and more in the way of endurance and readiness to serve from his disciples. Many times, following an exhausting day which had begun before dawn and ended after midnight, Baba would rouse his men after barely two hours’ sleep and indicate that it was time to set out for the next village. Long journeys on foot, little sleep, scanty and irregular meals—for certain periods this was standard fare for Baba’s close ones. The activities which he charted out seemed designed to bear fruit in several directions at once: not only were many thousands of individuals given direct help and relief, but Baba’s mandali, as he referred to his disciples, were gradually initiated into a life of selfless service and “mastery in servitude.”

Obviously one of the most common questions asked about Meher Baba is why he kept silent. When Baba first undertook the Silence, he stated that it was because of the heavy spiritual working that lay ahead, indicating a general increase in chaos and conflict in the world. Through the years that followed Baba gave scores of further hints and clues about the meaning of his Silence. Several times he has cryptically declared that when he breaks his Silence, he will do so by uttering only “One Word”:

I have come to sow the seed of love in your hearts so that, in spite of all superficial diversity which your life in illusion must experience and endure, the feeling of oneness, through love, is brought about amongst all the nations, creeds, sects and castes of the world.

In order to bring this about, I am preparing to break my Silence. When I break my Silence, it will not be to fill your ears with spiritual lectures. I shall only speak One Word, and this Word will penetrate the hearts of all men and make even the sinner feel that he is meant to be a saint, while the saint will

know that God is in the sinner as much as He is in himself.

Baba has indicated that the 'speaking of the Word' will in actuality be a release of immense spiritual energy and irresistible love, and that all persons and creatures will benefit from it.

...Because all forms and words are from this Primal Sound or Original Word and are continuously connected with It and have their life from It, when It is uttered by me It will reverberate in all people and creatures and all will know that I have broken my Silence and have uttered that Sound or Word.

The effective force of this Word in individuals and their reaction to It will be in accordance with the magnitude and receptivity of each individual mind.

Baba stated repeatedly that he would speak when the breaking of his Silence would have its most universal impact. His work, he said, "can be compared to the amassing and arranging in a universal heap the accumulated rubbish of man's ignorance in illusion that enmeshes him in the false and prevents him from realizing his true identity." Essentially the question of when Baba will speak seems to be a matter of timing. He indicated that he would wait for the most opportune time to release this 'tide of Truth,' perhaps in the same way that a lecturer waits for his audience to sit down and turn their attention toward him before he begins to speak.

Baba also continually pointed to a strange and difficult time that would precede mankind's experience of the breaking of his Silence. He referred to a period of "humiliation," in which the faith and love of his followers would be severely tried, and even his words would appear to go against him. Time and again he stressed that his Manifestation as the Avatar would be linked to the universal breaking of his Silence, and that this time would not come until the very peak of chaos, confusion and conflict in the world.

When I say that my Manifestation is connected with the breaking of my Silence, people should not expect an outpouring of verbosity. I will utter THE WORD OF WORDS that will irresistibly impart to those who are ready the "I-AM-GOD" state...The Word that I will speak will go to the world as from God, not as from a philosopher - It will go straight to its heart.

At one point Baba even indicated that the preparation for this breaking of his Silence could lead to the dropping of his physical body.

Despite Baba's verbal silence, he has clearly communicated a great deal. His means of communicating varied over the years, but for the most part they revolved around the use of an alphabet board and gestures. Several of Baba's discourses on consciousness and the various stages of the spiritual path have been dictated primarily through the use of an alphabet board, letter by letter. Baba gave up the use of the alphabet board in 1954, however, and from that time relied on a unique and personal language of gestures for all verbal communication.

Although Baba traveled widely during his lifetime and visited the West on ten different occasions, it was not until he spoke out explicitly on the issue of drugs that he began to be well known in the United States. Soon after the first blooming of the psychedelic movement, a number of westerners inquired of

Baba about the validity of drug experience, from marijuana to all variety of 'consciousness-expanding drugs.' His statements in reply were disarmingly direct:

If God can be found through the medium of any drug, God is not worthy of being God...No drug, whatever its great promise, can help one to attain the spiritual goal. There is no short-cut to the goal except through the grace of the Perfect Master, and drugs, LSD more than others, give only a semblance of 'spiritual experience,' a glimpse of a false reality...The experience is as far removed from Reality as is a mirage from water. No matter how much one pursues the mirage, one will never reach water, and the search for God through drugs must end in disillusionment.

As for organized religions, with their time-worn rituals and ceremonies, Baba compares them to the husk on grain, the shell which surrounds the kernel of true spirituality. When the mind expresses itself in patterns of formal rites and rigid ceremonies, it is nothing more than an empty echo of the habit of countless generations, performed automatically without 'heart.' God, according to Baba, is a very selective listener. He does not listen to the language of the mind and its routine meditations, concentrations and thoughts about God. He only listens to the language of the heart and its message of love, which needs no ceremony or show...

Love is essentially self-communicative: those who do not have it catch it from those who have it...No amount of rites, rituals, ceremonies, worship, meditation, penance and remembrance can produce love in themselves. None of these is necessarily a sign of love. On the contrary, those who sigh loudly and weep and wail have yet to experience love. Love sets on fire the one who finds it. At the same time it seals his lips so that no smoke comes out.

Consequently, Baba gives no rituals or ceremonies, no particular diets or exercises, no specific form of meditation to his followers. There are no 'churches,' no designated teachers. There is no fee. True religion, in Baba's eyes, is not a card-carrying affair but rather a matter of 'the heart,' the degree to which one lives an honest and loving life. Baba regards the avowed atheist who faithfully carries out his work in the world as far more blest than the man who, claiming to be devoutly religious, shirks his practical, everyday responsibilities. "The greatest sin," he said, "is hypocrisy."

True religion consists in developing the attitude of mind which should ultimately result in seeing One Infinite Existence prevailing in the universe;

when one could live in the world and yet be not of it, and at the same time be in harmony with everyone and everything;

when one could attend to all worldly duties and affairs and yet feel completely detached from all their results;

when one could see the same divinity in art and science and experience the highest consciousness and indivisible bliss in everyday life.

From the late 1920's until the end of his life on earth, Baba's activities were varied and unique. Most of the 1930's constituted a period of world travel, during which Baba journeyed widely and aroused people around the globe to the

quest for higher consciousness and their own infinite reality. Toward the end of the thirties and for the next decade, Baba turned his attention almost exclusively to his work with "masts," spiritually advanced souls who are intoxicated with their inward experience. Baba and his disciples worked arduously to contact innumerable such persons, simultaneously giving them a spiritual boost while coordinating their energies as so many relay stations for the giant spiritual power house.

Next followed the most enigmatic of all Baba's work, the three years of his "New Life." In this mysterious phase, Baba set out with twenty hand-picked companions to live a life of "hopelessness, helplessness and aimlessness." Peniless, begging for their food, all including Baba traveled about India incognito, carrying out Baba's instructions and living in strict accordance with the "conditions of the New Life" in the face of tremendous physical fatigue and mental strain. During this period Baba accomplished to his utmost satisfaction his own extremely important spiritual work, and his disciples were initiated into a more demanding way of life than they could ever have imagined:

This New Life is endless, and even after my physical death it will be kept alive by those who live the life of complete renunciation of falsehood, lies, hatred, anger, greed and lust: and who, to accomplish all this, do no lustful actions, do no harm to anyone, do no backbiting, do not seek material possessions or power, who accept no homage, neither covet honor nor shun disgrace, and fear no one and nothing: by those who rely wholly and solely on God, and who love God purely for the sake of loving: who believe in the lovers of God and in the reality of Manifestation, and yet do not expect any spiritual or material reward: who do not let go the hand of Truth, and who, without being upset by calamities, bravely and wholeheartedly face all hardships with one hundred per cent cheerfulness, and give no importance to caste, creed and religious ceremonies.

This New Life will live by itself eternally, even if there is no one to live it.

The last several years in Baba's life represent still another phase in his work. Apart from a handful of mass gatherings with his lovers and a very few individual meetings with newcomers, Baba spent these later years in relative seclusion. In contrast to earlier years, he traveled almost not at all. Instead, he spent hours each day alone, doing what he called his "universal work." Baba carried on this enigmatic inner activity with a methodical regularity, offering little explanation of its purpose except that it was of paramount importance.

You can only see what you see me doing outwardly, but I am continually working on all planes of consciousness at the same time. As my Manifestation time is closing in, the pressure of my Work is tremendous... None can have the least idea of the immensity of the Work that I am doing in this seclusion. The only hint I can give is that compared with the Work I do in seclusion, all the important work of the world put together is completely insignificant. Although for me the burden of my Work is crushing, the result of my Work will be intensely felt by all people in the world.

As the seclusion work progressed, Baba's health grew worse and worse.

Late in 1968 his close disciples became increasingly concerned and begged Baba to be less neglectful of his health by slowing down his work. That would mean once again prolonging the date of its conclusion. If now I allow that to happen, it will indefinitely postpone the result and set it on a different course!

God's Truth cannot be ignored; thus, by mankind's ignorance and weakness, a tremendous adverse reaction is produced—and the world finds itself in a cauldron of suffering through wars, hate, conflicting ideologies, and nature's rebellion in the form of floods, famines, earthquakes and other disasters. Ultimately, when the apex is reached, God manifests anew in human form to guide mankind in the destruction of its self-created evil, that it may be re-established in the Divine Truth.

My Silence and the imminent breaking of my Silence is to save mankind from the monumental forces of ignorance and to fulfill the divine plan of universal unity. The breaking of my Silence will reveal to man the Universal Oneness of God, which will bring about the universal brotherhood of man. My Silence had to be. The breaking of my Silence has to be—soon.

Baba continued to work intensely, and only his close mandali witnessed the inconceivable suffering which accompanied his working. Finally, to his disciples' great relief, Baba announced that his Work was done 100% to his satisfaction and that the results of that Work would soon begin to manifest. By now, however, the state of his health had grown extremely grave—Baba stated matter-of-factly that the tremendous burden of the work in his last great seclusion had indeed “shattered” his health. As his disciples urged him to submit to further medical tests, he refused with the following words: “My condition has no medical grounds at all; it is due purely to the strain of my Work.”

Baba gave many veiled hints in the weeks that followed that he would soon drop the body. Although many times before Baba's Work had taken a severe toll on his health, this time he more than once declared, “My time has come.” While his close ones grew increasingly upset and depressed by the deterioration of his condition, Baba constantly reminded them to remain cheerful and not to worry. On January 31, 1969, joking about the amount of medicine that he was being given for his baffling illness, Meher Baba passed away.

I am never born. I never die. At every moment I take birth and undergo death...Although I am present everywhere eternally in My formless infinite state, from time to time I take form, and the taking of the form and leaving it is termed My physical birth and death.

In this sense, I am born and I die when My universal Work is finished.

The breaking of My Silence—the signal for My public Manifestation—is not far off. I bring the greatest treasure which it is possible for man to receive—a treasure which includes all other treasures, which will endure forever, which increases when shared with others. Be ready to receive it.

To love Me for what I may give you is not loving Me at all. To sacrifice anything in My Cause to gain something for yourself is like a blind man sacrificing his eyes for sight. I am the Divine Beloved worthy of being loved because I am Love. He who loves Me because of this will be blessed with unlimited sight and will see Me as I am.