

HIS HOLINESS
MEHERBABA

AND

MEHERASHRAM

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

WHEN England and Germany were steeped in barbarism, when Greek and Roman civilisations had scarcely taken birth, when Chinese and Egyptian civilisations were in their infancy, when Arabia and Persia gave no hopes of their future glory, India was basking in the sunshine of a glorious civilisation, — a civilisation the like of which the world has never seen, which has been peerless in its majesty, matchless in its spirituality, precious in its culture, unparalleled in its benignity and uni-

que in its continuity. Gone are the civilisations of Greece and Rome; dead are the civilisations of ancient Persia and Egypt; but the civilisation of India still flourishes notwithstanding the shocks it had to receive and the attacks it had to encounter.

The civilisation of a country is to be estimated neither by its extent and conquests, nor by its population and prosperity. The criteria of gauging it should be literature, art, science, and above all spirituality. Judged by these criteria, the Indian civilisation has always been unparalleled and unique.

Great as has been the contribution of India to literature, to art, and to science its value sinks almost into insignificance when we think of the glory of her high position in the realm of spirituality. Nobody can understand India without understanding her religion. Her religion is the

greatest thing about India. From times immemorial the lives of the Indian people have been governed more by religious motives than by the mean considerations of gain. The transitoriness of life, the inevitableness of death, the immortality of soul, the omnipresence of God, the doctrine of reincarnation or palingenesis, *Moksha* or liberation of the soul from the chain of births and deaths, and union with God have been the favourite themes for discussion of the Indian people, time out of mind.

India has been justly called a land of philosophers. But still better would it be to call this Aryavarta a land of saints. One of the greatest Indian saints of the present day is my beloved Master, His Holiness Sadguru Meher Bâbâ.

CHAPTER II

A LIFE-SKETCH OF HIS HOLINESS MEHER BÀBÀ CHILDHOOD AND BOYHOOD

THE full name of His Holiness MEHER BÀBÀ is Meherwanji Sheheriyarji Irani. He was born in Poona on the twenty-fifth day of the second month of the year 1894. His parents, both of whom are spiritually-minded Zoroastrians, are still living. The childhood of Mehervan or Meher, as we shall call him for some time, was happy to a degree. He was very active and as mischievous as active, but his mischief was as

innocent as amusing. The child received a good training at the hands of his parents who vied with each other in training Meher in the way of righteousness.

Meher was put to school when he was only five years old. He passed the Matriculation examination in 1911, at the early age of seventeen. In the same year he joined the Deccan college, but his college career came to an end by the middle of 1913, as a consequence of his spiritual enlightenment.

Before I describe his spiritual enlightenment, I think it necessary to mention briefly the intellectual and moral characteristics of our subject's boyhood. Meher's memory was far superior to that of the average boy. This retentive memory coupled with remarkable intelligence enabled him to exhibit himself as a bright student, though he took interest only in literature. His mind was not attracted to science.

Mathematics occasionally gave him headaches. Even history did not entertain him, but good poetry never failed to charm him. He cultivated a great taste for it. Before he was sixteen he had read most of the plays of Shakespeare and a number of works of a number of poets, English as well as Indian and Persian. Of all the poets he loved Hafiz the most, for Hafiz made the boy's heart dance with joy and detached his attention from the world of everyday. It is noteworthy that even then Meher himself was a poet. According to Carlyle, he who can read a poem well is a poet. Meher was a poet not merely in this sense, but also in the ordinary sense. For three years, from the time when he was in the matriculation class till he brought his University career to an end, he contributed under the pseudonym of 'Huma' poems on spiritual subjects in Gujarati, in Urdu, in Persian and in Hindustani, to the

columns of the " Sanj Vartaman ", which is one of the most popular Anglo-Vernacular newspapers of Bombay. Though he was not spiritually advanced at that time, his poems were hailed as essentially spiritual. They were eagerly read by thousands of Parsis, Hindus and Mussalmans. It is probable that many readers believed, that the author had lost himself in the ecstatic contemplation of divine beauty.

From the moral standpoint Meher's boyhood was throughout almost ideal. He was a dutiful son, a true brother, a loving friend, a faithful servant of God and a kind and courageous boy. Character is said to be the diamond that scratches every other stone. Knowledge is power, but character is, or should be, a greater power. A man's worth should be estimated not by what he has, but by what he is. Thus estimated Meher's worth was great

indeed. His great moral characteristics were kindness and generosity, courage of a high order, love of Truth and love to God, obedience to parents and respect for elders, cheerfulness and self-control. He was noted for his early rising, hard work and punctuality. He was characterised by self-reliance, independence of mind and a genius for friendship.

It may seem strange that such a boy should have no ambition in life. But it is quite true that Meher had none. He wanted to face life as it came, for he was enwrapped in blissful contentment. He had then no aspiration after God-realisation. What God-realisation is, he had no idea of, though he was very well acquainted with the poems of the God-realised Hafiz.

CHAPTER III

WHAT IS GOD-REALISATION ?

BEFORE proceeding further, it is necessary to explain what God-realisation is. God-realisation means nothing but union with God. To be one with God should be the aspiration of every spiritually-minded person. As the difference between man and God is one of degree and not of kind, it is quite within the bounds of possibility that 'Jivàtman' (individual soul) can effect the union with 'Parmàtman' (Supreme Soul or God). Jivàtman and Paramàtman or man and God become

united when the conditions precedent to the unification are present. The idea of the union with God may seem to be fantastic and heretical to the orthodox fanatics of every creed, but it is a reality of realities. Jesus Christ, who was God-realised, on one occasion, said; 'Be ye, therefore, perfect, even as your Father, which is in heaven, is perfect.'

God-realisation is the noblest practical ideal to which we can aspire. It and nothing else should be the object of every religion. Religion is neither the performance of rites, nor the muttering of mantras nor the acceptance of dogmas, nor the study of scriptures. It lies neither in books, nor in churches or temples; neither in streams and rivers, nor in caves and mountains. It is nothing short of realisation.

The mind, with the help of intelligence and energy, enjoys the world through the

gross body. On the other hand, with the help of love, inspiration and energy, it enjoys the planes through the subtle body. There are seven planes in all, and it is only when a man crosses the first six planes and goes into the heart of the seventh that he becomes one with God. It is noteworthy that it is possible, even though not assisted by any perfect saint or a God-realised person, for those who have ceased to be carnally-minded and whose *sanskaras* have been wiped out, to pass through the first three planes. But the fourth plane is a stumbling block, and it has proved to be the undoing of many a spiritual aspirant. Those who succeed in entering the fourth plane are so much enraptured and entranced, and come into the possession of so many supernatural powers that they fondly think, if they have no master to guide them, that they have reached the goal and have nothing to do more. With

the help of powers, referred to above various miracles can be performed, including those of restoring the eye-sight to the blind and raising the dead. Paradoxical as it may seem, these extraordinary powers should not be exercised, until and unless the seventh plane is reached and thereby union with God is effected. These powers have nothing to do with Truth, with God-realisation. On the contrary, as the saintly Junayad has observed, the reliance on miracles is one of the obstacles which hinder the spiritual aspirant from penetrating into the innermost shrine of the Truth. "During my novitiate," said Bayazid, "God used to bring before me wonders and miracles, but I paid no heed to them; and when He saw that I did so, He gave me the means of attaining to Knowledge of Himself." But, unfortunately, most of those who reach the fourth plane, cannot resist the temptation of exercising those

powers. The consequence is that not only their progress comes to a stop, but a horrible relapse they have to experience ultimately.

All those who are God-realised have the power of performing miracles, but all those who have the power of performing miracles are not God-realised. The spiritually-imperfect or semi-advanced persons who have the audacity to perform miracles should be avoided as dead plague rats. Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, on one occasion, said, "Visit not miracle-workers. They are wanderers from the path of truth. Their minds have become entangled in the meshes of psychic powers, which lie in the way of the pilgrim towards the Brahman, as temptations. Beware of these powers, and desire them not."

As the fourth plane is so very dangerous, those who span it and go into the fifth, may justly be said to have cut the

gordion knot. Passage from the fifth plane to the sixth is not difficult, but none, with his gross body, can go from the sixth to the seventh plane, without the active assistance of a God-realised person. Those who reach the seventh plane become one with God or God-realised. They immediately experience the Sat - Chit - Ananda (existence absolute, knowledge absolute and bliss absolute) state for God is Sat, Chit and Ananda. Some of those who realise God give up their body and mind at once. Such are called " Videh-Muktas " or " Fana-Fillahs ". Those who do not leave their body and mind are either Mujzubs, or Saliks, or Sadgurus. Mujzubs, who are also called Paramahamsas, are those who enjoy the Sat - Chit - Ananda state but who are unable to render any service to the world or even to a single individual, as they are absolutely super-conscious and absolutely unconscious of

the Universe. As soon as a person realises God, he becomes absolutely unconscious of the Universe on account of the infinite bliss. He regains his subtle and gross consciousness, only if his master is pleased to restore it. Only a few out of millions realise God. And fewer still regain their consciousness after their union with God. Those who regain it, but who are indifferent to the welfare of humanity are called Saliks, who are also called Jivan-Muktas. Sadgurus, who are also called Kutubs, on the other hand, are those God-realised personages who, after regaining consciousness, work for the good of the world. They are all-knowing. Their energy is boundless. Their powers are infinite. Their souls are ever in ineffable bliss. As they are perfect, they can perform miracles without harming themselves in any way; but as a rule, they seldom do so. They live in the world but they

are not of it. It is with the sole purpose of serving mankind that they condescend to live with common folks. They are absolutely above temptation. Not a single bad thought can seek entrance into their minds. There are no limits to their greatness and goodness. They are capable of giving an impetus to the spiritual progress of the whole world. Any Sadguru can make an ordinary man, if he is found fit, as spiritually perfect as himself.

All Sadgurus hold the same opinions on all spiritual questions. The differences in their teachings are generally due to different conditions and circumstances in which they find themselves. The same is the reason for their giving different pieces of advice or different religious commands to different persons, as occasions demand.

CHAPTER IV

HOW THE YOUTH MEHER BECAME
A SADGURU

WE shall now continue the life-sketch of the hero of this booklet. One day, in the month of May, 1913, as good luck would have it, for the first time in his life, Meher came into contact with Her Holiness Hazrat Bàbà Jàn of Poona, who is a Kutub. Her Holiness, who is nearly 130 years old, as soon as her eyes fell upon Meher, got up from her seat and embraced him. That embrace was by no means ordinary, but highly significant and highly

extraordinary. The wonderful effect of that embrace was that Meher was thrilled, from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet, with spirituality. It was a divine thrill, the like of which only a few fortunate men have experienced. Meher was undoubtedly dazed for a while by it, but gradually grew accustomed to it.

In January, 1914, i. e. about eight months after he was given the divine thrill, Her Holiness Bâbâ Jân made her disciple pass through all the planes. In other words, Her Holiness made him God-realised. As soon as Meher began enjoying the bliss of the seventh plane, he became unconscious of everything except his own divine self and for full nine months he remained so. During this whole period, it goes without saying, whatever he did, he did without any motive, without the least prompting of his mind, without becoming in the slightest degree cognisant

of his own actions. He acted like a mad-man, a harmless mad-man, but was happy to a degree, for was he not enjoying ineffable bliss ? At the end of the above period he recovered a little consciousness of his, which was sufficient enough to make him cognisant of his actions. His full consciousness was restored to him by his second Master, His Holiness Upasani Maharaj of Sakori (District Ahmednagar) at the end of 1921, i. e. nearly eight years after he became God-realised. Thus he became God-realised before he was twenty years old, and a conscious Sadguru at the age of twenty-seven.

The active Sadguruship of His Holiness Meher Bābā, as we shall now call him, may be said to have commenced from the beginning of 1922. For the sake of others His Holiness has oft undergone great sufferings, and spent a couple of years in travelling throughout India and in some parts

of Persia and Baluchistan. It is noteworthy that His Holiness invariably travelled in third class. For months together His Holiness would not take any solid food. His Holiness has been observing silence since the last three years. Never has he spoken a word during this whole period, nor ejaculated any sound expressing sorrow, anger or delight. His Holiness always keeps with him a paste-board, which contains the letters of the English alphabet. With its help and by gestures, he is able to express all his thoughts and give commands and instructions freely. No Sadguru has ever revealed so many spiritual secrets to his followers as my beloved Master has revealed. Ever since he has been staying at Arangaon, Ahmednagar, His Holiness has been daily giving lectures and instructions on subjects spiritual. His Holiness has oft done what is regarded as menial work by snobs. Not only

has he himself nursed the sick and washed the boys of the Ashram, but has also oft washed their clothes, swept the floors of the Ashram and cleansed vessels.

Hundreds of educated men and women are disciples of His Holiness and thousands of persons are his devotees. Every day scores of persons go to worship him. On auspicious days, hundreds of men, women and children call upon him with the same object. On His Holiness's thirty-second birthday nearly ten thousand persons from different parts of India went to Arangaon with the special object of worshipping him and seeking his blessings.

About a year ago, His Holiness established an educational institution in his colony of Meherabad, at Arangaon, Ahmednagar, which forms a part of the Bombay Presidency, under British jurisdiction.

CHAPTER V

THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION

THOUSANDS of volumes have been written and will be written on education. This subject appeals as much to the philanthropist as to the social reformer. It is generally believed that education means the drawing out of the mental faculties so as to develop their utmost possibilities. But as a sound mind is generally housed in a sound body, education now-a-days devotes itself also to the training of the body. It must be admitted that much attention is paid in both schools and colleges

to the training of both mind and body, but it is a thousand pities that heart and soul are in most cases woefully neglected. Man is not so much body or mind as soul. Body and mind are fleeting and transient, but the soul is birthless and deathless. Is it too much to say that whatever attention a man pays to the salvation of his soul, he cannot be said to be overmindful of its interests? When one considers the sort of education that is given in our schools and colleges, one is not surprised at the number of the people who starve their souls.

As the salvation of the soul cannot be attained without the gold of divine love, free from the dross of all earthly affection, it is absolutely necessary that the heart should be trained. Better an empty head than an empty heart. It is far better to be barren-witted and sleepy-headed than to be bankrupt of heart and devoid of love.

It is far better to be a hopeless idiot than a callous brute. It is not the intellect but the heart that leads to God. If the intellect is not subordinated to the heart then it is a dangerous obstacle to spiritual progress. In life spiritual, intellect is helpless, whereas the heart is all in all. It is love and not intelligence that is the hierophant of God or the master-key with which we can unlock the doors of the mysteries of God. No man can ever make substantial spiritual progress, in whose heart the fire of love does not burn. It is because of this that the German mystic Angelus Silesius has said—

“ Love is the sage’s stone,
It takes gold from the clod,
It turns naught into aught,
Transforms me into God.”

It is true that in many schools what is known as religious education is imparted to students. Would to God that I may

sing its praises! But alas! In most cases this religious education is nothing but the teaching of dry-as-dust dogmas. Boys and girls are fed on empty husks and the kernel is woefully neglected. They are trained to grasp at the shadow and leave severely alone the substance. Moreover, the dogmas are taught in such a manner that students learn to hate all religions other than their own. No wonder that when they grow up, they live like fighting cocks, and lend their breath to blow the flames of fanaticism.

I am writing within compass, when I say that there is a horrible dearth of educational institutions, in which, besides secular education, the right sort of spiritual training is imparted to students. So far as I know, there is only one educational institution in which the heart and soul as well as the mind and body of students are systematically trained. That

institution is, as my readers may have already guessed, MEHERASHRAM, established by my beloved Master, His Divine Majesty Sadguru Meher Bâbâ.

CHAPTER VI

MEHERASHRAM

I WOULD call Meherashram, without the least fear of being accused of drawing the long bow, an ideal educational institution. It is open to all communities, and it is entirely free. Boys from any part of the world are welcome to it. To whatever community or creed or country a student may belong, he is charged nothing. Not only instruction, both secular and spiritual, but also books, clothes, food and medical treatment are given absolutely free of charge. Meherashram should not, on this

account, be considered as a mere charitable boarding school. It is open to boys of both well-to-do and poor parents. As a matter of fact nearly half the number of boys of Meherashram belong to the well-to-do.

Secular education is imparted to Meherashram boys, as in other schools, by trained teachers. Meherashram has a splendid library which boys are made to avail themselves of every day. The library contains a number of books on literature and an equal number of books on religious or spiritual subjects in different languages. Meherashram has splendid play-grounds, where cricket, hockey and the Indian game of *ātyāpātyā* are played daily. Annual cricket tournaments for the high schools of the Bombay Presidency have already been arranged. In the first tournament, the Ahmednagar Education Society's High School came off with flying colours. A sil-

ver cup worth over Rs. 250/- was presented to it by the founder of Meherashram.

I must not forget to state that Meherashram justly boasts of possessing a good hospital, which is managed by a skilful physician. All boys together have to take food, which is strictly vegetarian, and have to put on only the uniform dress, which is at once simple and comfortable. In passing it may be remarked that the climate of Meherabad is equable and salubrious, throughout the year. It is as much health-promoting as the waters of the wells of this colony.

Though boys of different castes, creeds, and communities have to live together, they live like brothers. Pride of caste or community is conspicuous by its absence. Equally conspicuous by its absence is religious fanaticism. And no wonder! Several times a day all boys have to chant jointly a couplet which contains the different

names of God recognised by every great creed. They are trained in the way of righteousness, and are fed every day not excluding Sundays, on wholesome spiritual knowledge by competent teachers, according to the instructions of His Holiness Meher Bābā. What is more, spirituality is directly imparted to boys by His Holiness from whom it goes without saying, spirituality literally radiates. To the cynical and the carnally-minded, the very idea of imparting spirituality may seem to be preposterous. But, to be sure, a Perfect Saint can impart it to others just as easily as he can give a tangible object to them. Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa used to say that religion could be given and taken more tangibly and more really than anything else in the world. None can realise God without the grace and assistance of a spiritually Perfect Master. Only a few can make any noteworthy spiritual

progress without the guidance of a God-realised personage.

The average boy likes to eat, drink and play as much as he can. But some of the boys of Meherashram have to be almost compelled to eat, drink and play. And why? Simply because day and night such boys wish to meditate and think of His Holiness Meher Bâbâ. Their hearts are full to overflowing with divine love, and out of sheer spiritual joy, they oft shed tears. A Mahomedan boy, named Abdulla Ruknuddin Awazi, who is only fifteen years old, was so much imbued with divine love to His Holiness and so constantly were his thoughts fixed upon His Holiness that he lost his hunger and could scarcely sleep soundly for an hour for days together. One day in January of the present year, he lost his consciousness, and did not recover it till the lapse of four days. Since then, he is day and night en-

joying divine bliss, and declares that this gross world seems to him to be merely a dream. Besides he sees his Master's Divine Self, which is the Real Self, at all times and in all places. Only a few in the world experience the divine state that this youth of fifteen summers experiences at present.

Some of the boys of Meherashram are Hindus, some Mahomedans and some are Zoroastrians. Unfortunately Christianity of the West is not represented by any student. It is to be sincerely hoped that a few European or American boys will in near future join this institution.

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