

..... Age after age, when the wick of righteousness burns low,
Avatar comes yet once again to rekindle the torch of love and truth..
..... the Avatar's call rings out : " COME ALL UNTO ME ".....

THE CALL OF HOPE

(Messages of Meher Baba)

MEHER ERA PUBLICATIONS, POONA-II

Published by

K. K. Ramakrishnan,
MEHER ERA PUBLICATIONS,
Avatar Meher Baba Poona Centre,
441/1, Somwar Peth, Poona 11.

Printed by

D. D. Gangal,
Lokasangraha Press,
1786, Sadashiv Peth, Poona 2.

In commemoration of
the 73rd Birthday of
Avatar Meher Baba
25th February 1967.

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“ I am the one so many seek and so few find. No amount of intellect can fathom me. No amount of austerity can attain me. Only when one loves me and loses one's self in me, I am found.”

Meher Baba

THE ONE WHO HAS FOUND :

*“ I had met Meher Baba nearly two years before at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, U.S.A. This meeting was the culmination of ten years of spiritual study and search for that ideal Guide in whom I could unreservedly place my confidence; that man who, I felt, had mastered every difficulty and obstacle which still confronted me. During the previous ten years, I had studied the methods and practices of the great

*Extract from 'Journey with God.'

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Sufi schools and had read fairly widely in Vedanta, Buddhism and other systems, including Taoism and Confucianism. In Meher Baba I found that person who not merely *knew* these things, but was the living embodiment of all these systems and knowledges. In other words, he was a man who had reached the summit of Truth; in religious terms, was God-realized. "Of course, I knew that Baba, as everyone affectionately calls him, had been saying for many years that he was God-realized, was, in fact, an incarnation of Godhead, a God-man (in the same meaning as Christ is believed to be by the Christians, Mohammed by the Mohammedans, Buddha by the Buddhists, etc.); and I knew that the Sufis and thousands of people everywhere had recognized this claim, but as with Thomas, I had to see for myself.

"Well, I had seen; and the cry of the deepest parts of my consciousness had been answered. I was satisfied that if ever it was possible to "see" God on this earth, I had seen Him. And as time went on, the proof that this had not been merely some emotional conversion was shown by the simple fact that a true creativity began in me a few days after this meeting and has continued ever since."

Francis Brabazon

THE HOPE OF HUMANITY



AVATAR MEHER BABA

INTRODUCTION

The activities which is called life either has a meaning and purpose, or it has not. The frightening insecurity which an intensive materialism has engendered, has generated a pessimism which however, is denied by the fact of our continued activity : the simple fact remains that we are still continuing to work and dream and plan. If for no purpose, why ? The eat, drink and be merry idea is absurd, because we can't get enough to eat and drink ; and we are not merry. The philosophy of a planned economy that will distribute the world's goods equably, as being in itself sufficient goal, does not explain why there is unrest, suspicion and fear amongst the people who have been practising this philosophy.

It seems certain that the efforts made by politicians and statesmen through their various world organizations, national and international conferences to remove war from the face of the earth and to establish peace in its place have failed and there is an increasing

awareness in the minds of philosophers and thinkers, who wish well of human society, that a spiritual awakening of mankind is essential to save itself from annihilation.

Leaders of organized religions ask us to turn to God and let God do something about it. But it is not a question at all of turning to God and letting God do something about it, but to face the fact of His being here and doing His job.

Messages of Meher Baba, this booklet bears, contain the very basic challenge that Baba is God-Man—a challenge which, I feel, few thinking men and women who are concerned about the world picture today, and their personal position in it, can afford to disdain completely.

It is with a view to help as many readers as possible to listen to His Call—the only hope for man, this booklet is released on the 73rd Birthday of Avatar Meher Baba.

K. K. Ramakrishnan

THE CALL OF HOPE

"Age after age, when the wick of righteousness burns low, the Avatar comes yet once again to rekindle the torch of love and truth. Age after age, through the noise and disruption of war, fear, and chaos, the Avatar's call rings out :

'Come all unto Me'.

"Although the veil of illusion may cause this call of the Ancient One to seem as a voice in the wilderness, still its echo and re-echoes pervade through time and space, rousing at first a few, and then millions from their deep slumber of ignorance. In the midst of illusion, as the Voice behind all voices, it awakens humanity to bear witness to the manifestation of God amidst mankind.

"The time has come. I repeat the call and bid all come unto me.

"This time-honoured call of mine thrills the hearts of those who have patiently endured all in their love for God, loving God only for love of God. There are others who fear and shudder at its reverberations and would flee or resist. And there are yet others who are baffled, failing to understand why the all-sufficient Highest of the High need give this call to humanity.

"Regardless of the doubts or convictions people may have, I continue to come as the Avatar because of the infinite love I bear for one and all. Though judged time and again by humanity in its ignorance, I come to help man distinguish the real from the false.

"The divine call is little heeded at first because it is invariably muffled in the cloak of the infinite true humility of the Ancient One. Yet in its infinite strength it grows in volume until it reverberates and continues to reverberate in countless hearts as the voice of reality.

"Strength gives rise to humility, while modesty indicates weakness. Only he who is truly great can be really humble.

"When a man admits his true greatness in the firm knowledge of his greatness that is in itself an expression of humility. He accepts his greatness as completely natural, and merely expresses what he is, just as a man would not hesitate to admit that he is a man.

"If a truly great man, who knows himself to be truly great, were to deny his greatness, this would belittle what he indubitably is; for modesty is the basis of guise while true greatness is free from camouflage.

"On the other hand when a man expresses a greatness he knows he does not possess, he is the greatest of hypocrites.

"The man is honest who, knowing that he is not great, firmly and frankly states that he is not great.

"There are more than a few who are not great, yet assume an air of humility despite their belief in their own considerable worth. Through both words and actions they repeatedly express their humbleness, professing to be the servants of humanity.

"True humility is not acquired by donning a garb of humility. True humility emanates spontaneously and continually from the strength of the truly great. Voicing one's humbleness does not make one humble. Regardless of how often a parrot may say 'I am a man', it does not make him a man.

"The absence of greatness is better than the establishment of false greatness by assumed humility. These efforts at humility not only do not express strength, but on the

contrary they are expressions of modesty born of a weakness which springs from a lack of knowledge of reality.

"Beware of modesty. Under the cloak of humility it invariably leads one into the clutches of self-deception. Modesty breeds egotism, and man eventually succumbs to pride through assumed humility.

"The greatest greatness and the greatest humility go hand in hand, naturally and without effort.

"When the Greatest of all says, 'I am the Greatest', it is only a spontaneous expression of an infallible truth. The strength of His greatness does not lie in the raising of the dead, but in His great humiliation when He allows Himself to be ridiculed, persecuted and crucified by those who are weak in flesh and spirit. Throughout the ages humanity has failed to gauge the true depths of humility underlying the greatness of the Avatar. They judge His divinity by their own limited standards acquired from the religions. Even real saints and sages, who have some knowledge of truth, have failed to understand the Avatar's greatness when faced with His real humility.

"History repeats itself through the ages as men and women in their ignorance, limitation and pride sit in judgment on the God-incarnated man who declares His Godhood, condemning Him for uttering the truths they cannot understand. But He is indifferent to abuse and persecution, for in His true compassion He understands; in His continual experiencing of reality He knows; and in His infinite mercy He forgives.

"God is all, God knows all, and God does all. When the Avatar proclaims that He is the Ancient One, it is God who proclaims His manifestation on earth. When man speaks for or against the Avatar, it is God who speaks through him. It is God alone who declares Himself through the Avatar and through mankind.

"I tell you all with my divine authority that you and I are not 'we', but 'One'. You unconsciously feel my Avatarhood within you. I consciously feel in you what each of you feels. Thus every one of us is the Avatar in the sense that everyone and everything is Everyone and Everything, all at the same time and for all time.

"There is nothing but God. He is the only reality and we are all one in the indivisible Oneness of this absolute reality.

"When one (man) who has realized God says, 'I am God, you are God, and we are all One', and when he also awakens this feeling of oneness in His illusion-bound selves (mankind), then questions of lowly and great, poor and rich, humble and modest, good and bad, simply vanish. It is man's false awareness of duality that misleads him into making illusory distinctions and filing the results into separate categories.

"I repeat and emphasize that in my eternal experiencing of reality, no difference exists between the rich and the poor. If however such a question of difference between affluence and poverty were ever to exist for me, I would consider the one really poor who possessed worldly riches but not the wealth of love for God. I would know that he was truly rich who owned nothing, but possessed the priceless treasure of love for God. His is the poverty that kings may envy, and that makes even the King of kings his slave.

"In the eyes of God the only difference between the rich and the poor is the intensity and sincerity of their longing for God.

"Only love for God can annihilate the falsity of the limited ego, which is the basis of life ephemeral. Only love for God can bring one to the realization of the reality of one's unlimited ego, which is the basis of eternal existence.

The Divine Ego expresses Itself continually, but man, shrouded in the veil of ignorance, misconstrues this indivisible Ego, experiencing and expressing it as the limited, separate ego.

"Listen when I say with divine authority that the oneness of reality is so totally unlimited and all-pervading that not only are we all one, but even the collective term 'we' has no place in the infinite indivisible Oneness.

"Awaken from your ignorance and try at least to understand that in this completely indivisible Oneness not only is the Avatar God, but also the ant and the sparrow and one and all of you are nothing but God. The only apparent difference is in their states of consciousness. The Avatar knows that the sparrow is not a sparrow, while the sparrow does not realize this. Being ignorant of its ignorance, it identifies itself as a sparrow.

"Do not live in ignorance. Do not waste your precious lifetime in differentiating and judging your fellow men, but learn to long for the love of God. Even in the midst of your worldly activities, live only to find and realize your true identity with your beloved God.

"Be pure and simple and love all, because all are One. Live a sincere life, be natural and be honest with yourself.

"Honesty will guard you against false modesty and will give you the strength of true humility. Spare no pains to help others. Seek no reward other than the gift of divine love. Yearn for this gift sincerely and intensely and I promise in the name of my divine honesty that I will give you much more than you yearn for."



THE HIGHEST OF THE HIGH

On the morning of the 7th of September, it being the anniversary of Zoroaster's birth, Meher Baba said :

Consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, each and every creature, each and every human being—in one form or the other—strives to assert individuality. But when eventually man consciously experiences that he is Infinite, Eternal and Indivisible, then he is fully conscious of his individuality as God, and as such, experiences Infinite Knowledge, Infinite Power and Infinite Bliss. Thus Man becomes God, and is recognized as a Perfect Master, Sadguru or Kutub. To worship this Man is to worship God.

When God manifests on earth in the form of man and reveals His Divinity to mankind, He is recognized as the Avatar—the Messiah, the Prophet. Thus God becomes Man.

And so Infinite God, age after age, throughout all cycles, wills through His Infinite Mercy, to effect His presence amidst mankind by stooping down to human level in the human form, but His physical presence amidst mankind not being apprehended, He is looked upon as an ordinary man of the world. When He asserts, however, His Divinity on earth by proclaiming Himself, the Avatar of the age, He is worshipped by some who accept Him as God; and glorified by a few who know Him as God on Earth. But it invariably falls to the lot of the rest of humanity to condemn Him, while He is physically in their midst.

Thus it is that God as man, proclaiming Himself as the Avatar, suffers Himself to be persecuted and tortured, to be humiliated and condemned by humanity for whose

sake His Infinite Love has made Him stoop so low, in order that humanity, by its very act of condemning God's manifestation in the form of Avatar should, however indirectly, assert the existence of God in His Infinite Eternal state.

The Avatar is always One and the Same, because God is always One and the Same, the Eternal, Indivisible, Infinite One, who manifests Himself in the form of man as the Avatar, as the Messiah, as the Prophet, as the Ancient One—the Highest of the High. This Eternally One and the Same Avatar repeats His manifestation from time to time, in different cycles, adopting different human forms and different names, in different places, to reveal Truth in different garbs and different languages, in order to raise humanity from the pit of ignorance and help free it from the bondage of delusions.

In the world there are countless Sadhus, Mahatmas, Mahapurushas, Saints, Yogis and Walis, though the number of genuine ones is very, very limited. The few genuine ones are, according to their spiritual status, in a category of their own, which is neither on a level with the ordinary human being nor on a level with the state of the Highest of the High.

I am neither a Mahatma nor a Mahapurusha, neither a Sadhu nor a Saint, neither a Yogi nor a Wali. Those who approach Me with the desire to gain wealth or to retain their possessions, those who seek through Me relief from distress and suffering, those who ask My help to fulfil and satisfy mundane desires, to them I once again declare that, as I am not a Sadhu, a Saint or a Mahatma, Mahapurusha or Yogi, to seek these things through Me is but to court utter disappointment, though only apparently; for eventually this disappointment is itself invariably instrumental in bringing about the complete transformation of mundane wants and desires.

The Sadhus, Saints, Yogis, Walis and such others who are on the via media, can and do perform miracles and satisfy the transient material needs of individuals who approach them for help and relief.

The question therefore arises that if I am not a Sadhu, not a Saint, not a Yogi, not a Mahapurusha or a Wali, then what am I? The natural assumption would be that I am either just an ordinary human being, or I am the Highest of the High. But one thing I say definitely, and that is, that I can never be included amongst those having the intermediary status of these real Sadhus, Saints, Yogis and such others.

Now, if I am just an ordinary man, my capabilities and powers are limited—I am no better or different from an ordinary human being. If people take Me as such, then they should not expect any supernatural help from Me in the form of miracles or spiritual guidance; and to approach Me to fulfil their desires would also be absolutely futile.

On the other hand, if I am beyond the level of an ordinary human being, and much beyond the level of saints and yogis, then I must be the Highest of the High. In which case, to judge Me with your human intellect and limited mind and to approach Me with mundane desires would not only be the height of folly, but sheer ignorance as well, because no amount of intellectual gymnastics could ever understand My ways or judge My Infinite State.

If I am the Highest of the High, My will is law, My wish governs the law, and My Love sustains the Universe. Whatever your apparent calamities and transient sufferings, they are but the outcome of My Love for the ultimate good. Therefore, to approach Me for deliverance from your predicaments, to expect Me to satisfy

your worldly desires, would be asking Me to do the impossible—to undo what I have already ordained.

If you truly and in all faith accept your Baba as the Highest of the High, it behoves you to lay down your life at His feet, rather than to crave the fulfilment of your desires. Not your one life, but your millions of lives would be but a small sacrifice to place at the feet of One such as Baba, who is the Highest of the High, for Baba's unbounded love is the only sure and unfailing guide to lead you safely through the innumerable blind alleys of your transient life.

They cannot obligate Me who, surrendering their all—body, mind, possessions—which perforce they must discard one day, surrender with a motive; surrender because they understand that to gain the everlasting treasure of Bliss, they must relinquish ephemeral possessions. This desire for greater gain is still clinging behind their surrender, and as such, the surrender cannot be complete.

Know you all that if I am the Highest of the High, My role demands that I strip you of all your possessions and wants, consume all your desires and make you desireless rather than satisfy your desire. Sadhus, Saints, Yogis and Walis can give you what you want; but I take away your wants and free you from attachments and liberate you from the bondage of ignorance. I am the One to take, not the One to give what you want or as you want.

Mere intellectuals can never understand Me through their intellect. If I am the Highest of the High, it becomes impossible for the intellect to gauge Me nor is it possible for My ways to be fathomed by the limited human mind.

I am not to be attained by those who, loving Me, stand reverentially by, in rapt admiration. I am not for those who ridicule Me and point at Me with contempt. To have a crowd of tens of millions flocking around Me is not what

I am for. I am for the selected few, who, scattered amongst the crowd, silently and unostentatiously surrender their all—body, mind and possessions to Me. I am still more for those, who, after surrendering their all, never give another thought to their surrender. They are all Mine who are prepared to renounce even the very thought of their renunciation and who, keeping constant vigil in the midst of intense activity, await their turn to lay down their lives for the cause of Truth at a glance or sign from Me. Those who have indomitable courage to face willingly and cheerfully the worst calamities, who have unshakable faith in Me, eager to fulfil My slightest wish at the cost of their happiness and comfort, they, indeed, truly love Me.

From my point of view, far blessed is the atheist who confidently discharges his worldly responsibilities accepting them as his honourable duty, than the man who presumes he is a devout believer in God, yet shirks the responsibilities apportioned to him through Divine Law and runs after Sadhus, Saints and Yogis, seeking relief from the suffering which ultimately would have pronounced his eternal liberation.

To have one eye glued on the enchanting pleasures of the flesh, and with the other, expect to see a spark of Eternal Bliss is not only impossible but the height of hypocrisy.

I cannot expect you to understand all at once what I want you to know. It is for Me to awaken you from time to time throughout the ages, sowing the seed in your limited minds, which must in due course and with proper heed and care on your part, germinate, flourish and bear the fruit of that True Knowledge which is inherently yours to gain.

If, on the other hand, led by your ignorance, you persist in going your own way, none can stop you in your choice of progress, for that, too, is progress which, however slow and painful, eventually and after innumerable incarna-

tions, is bound to make you realize that which I want you to know now. To save yourself from further entanglement in the maze of Delusion and self-created suffering which owes its magnitude to the extent of your ignorance of the true Goal, *awake now*. Pay heed and strive for Freedom by experiencing ignorance in its true perspective. Be honest with yourself and God. One may fool the world and one's neighbours; but one can never escape from the knowledge of the Omniscient—such is the Divine Law.

I declare to all of you who approach Me, and to those of you who desire to approach Me accepting Me as the Highest of the High, that you must never come with the desire in your heart which craves for wealth and worldly gain, but only with the fervent longing to give your all—body, mind and possessions—with all their attachments. Seek Me not to extricate you from your predicaments, but find Me in order to surrender yourself whole-heartedly to My will. Cling to Me not for worldly happiness and short-lived comforts, but adhere to Me, through thick and thin, sacrificing your own happiness and comforts at My feet. Let My happiness be your cheer and My comforts your rest. Do not ask Me to bless you with a good job; but desire to serve Me more diligently and honestly without expectation of reward. Never beg of Me to save your life or the lives of your dear ones, but beg of Me to accept you and permit you to lay down your life for Me. Never expect Me to cure you of your bodily afflictions but beseech Me to cure you of your ignorance. Never stretch out your hands to receive anything from Me, but hold them high in praise of Me whom you have approached as the Highest of the High.

If I am the Highest of the High, nothing is then impossible to Me; and though I do not perform miracles to satisfy individual needs, the satisfaction of which would

result in entangling the individual more and more into the net of ephemeral existence—yet time and again at certain periods I manifest the Infinite Power in the form of miracles, but only for the spiritual upliftment and benefit of humanity and all creatures.

However, miraculous experiences have often been experienced by individuals who love Me and have unswerving faith in Me, and these have been attributed to My *nazar* or Grace on them. But I want all to know that it does not befit My lovers to attribute such individual miraculous experiences to My state of the Highest of the High. If I am the Highest of the High, I am above these illusory plays of Maya in the course of the Divine Law. Therefore, whatever miraculous experiences are experienced by My lovers who recognize Me as such, or by those who love Me unknowingly through other channels, they are but the outcome of their own firm faith in Me. Their unshakable faith often superseding the course of the play of Maya gives them those experiences which they call miracles.

Such experiences derived through firm Faith eventually do good and do not entangle the individuals who experience them into further and greater bindings of Illusion.

If I am the Highest of the High, then a wish of My Universal Will is sufficient to give, in an instant, God Realization to one and all, and thus free every creature in creation from the shackles of ignorance; but blessed is Knowledge that is gained through the experience of ignorance in accordance with the Divine Law. This Knowledge is made possible for you to attain in the midst of ignorance by the guidance of Perfect Master and surrenderance to the Highest of the High.



THUS HAVE I HEARD

Shirinmai (Baba's mother) had an unusual dream just a few days before Baba's birth (February 25 1894). In the dream she was led to a wide, open area where she was rapidly surrounded by a sea of foreign appearing people, extending on all sides to the horizons. Shirinmai felt that all the strangers were looking steadily and expectantly towards her. She awoke in a state of alarm.

Shirinmai further narrated : "On another occasion, some months after his birth I dreamed that I was standing in the doorway of our house, holding Merwan in my arms. I saw that there was a well nearby in the compound of the house. The figure of a striking woman, like a Hindu goddess, was rising out of the center of the well. I could clearly see the lavish green sari in which she was dressed, and the many green bangles with which she was adorned. Bright flowered designs were painted on her forehead in many colours and in her hands she held a tray containing flowers, a lighted lamp and other articles used by Hindus in their worship. I stood motionless in fascination until the weird figure beckoned to me to hand Merwan (Meher Baba) over to her. Trying to hold him all the more tightly, I was awakened from the dream.

"Merwan was very active and mischievous from the time he was able to toddle, and would walk out of the house when my attention was distracted. This often compelled me, when I was especially busy with housework, or had to go for my bath and there was no one in the house to look after him, to tie one end of my sari to his waist and the other

to the bedstead. Even then I could not always keep him out of mischief. Once (about January, 1895) I had left him playing on the floor. Returning to the room some minutes later I was horrified to see him playing merrily with a big black snake. This time it wasn't a dream. With a piercing scream I rushed forward, but the snake slipped quickly out of the house and was never seen again."

Baba described the all-important occasion when the great Sufi saint, Hazrat Babajan, kissed him on the forehead, tearing away the veil which obscured his own God-realization.

"When the five Perfect Masters bring me down they draw a veil over me. Although Babajan was in the form of a woman, she was one of them (the five Perfect Masters) and she unveiled me in my present form. With just a kiss on the forehead, between the eye-brows, Babajan made me experience (May, 1913) thrills of indescribable bliss which continued for about nine months. Then one night (January, 1914) she made me realize in a flash the infinite bliss of self-realization (God-realization).

"At the time Babajan gave me the nirvikalp (inconceputal) experience of my own reality, the illusory physical, subtle and mental bodies—mind, worlds, and one and all created things—ceased to exist for me even as illusion. Then I began to see that only I, and nothing else, existed.

"The infinite bliss of my self-realization was, is and will remain continuous. At the moment I experience both infinite bliss as well as infinite suffering. Once I drop the body, only bliss will remain.

"But after I became self-conscious I could not have said all this. Nor could I say it even now if it had not been for the indescribable spiritual agonies which I passed through for another period of nine months (until October, 1914) in returning to normal consciousness of the suffering

of others. During those nine months I remained in a state which no one else could have tolerated for even nine days.

"After physical death an ordinary man is usually dead to the world and the world is dead to him. Yet he continues to live his discarnate life beyond the sphere of gross existence. During the first three days of my superconscious state (January, 1914) I was truly dead to everybody and everything other than my own infinite reality, although my physical body continued to function more or less normally. Actually dead, though really living, I was consequently considered by others to be seriously ill. I was allowed to remain in bed, lying with wide open, vacant eyes which saw nothing.

"When man (the individualized soul) enters the seventh plane, which is the one and only plane of reality, his consciousness is fully freed once and for all from everything else. It then is wholly occupied by the reality of the real self or God. So it is said that the individual soul becomes superconscious, or God-conscious.

"To other souls who function within the illusion of duality, the God-conscious one may seem to be physically as much alive as they are. Nevertheless, regardless of the fact that the superconscious one's gross, subtle and mental bodies may remain functioning, he is dead to illusion for all time. His consciousness has transcended the illusory limitations of births and deaths that lie within the illusion of duality.

"The conscious state of God is known only to those who have achieved it. Such a state of realization of divine oneness is completely beyond the domain of mind itself. It is rare of man to become superconscious. One in millions might achieve it. It is rarer still for the God-conscious to be able to return with God-consciousness to normal consciousness of all the illusory existences—gross, subtle and mental as a Perfect Master.

"Usually the gross, subtle and mental bodies of the God-conscious one automatically drop within four days if, after attaining superconsciousness, he does not begin to return to normal consciousness of the illusory world of duality. In an unusual case all three bodies of the God-conscious one continue to function indefinitely in the relative higher and lower spheres of illusion. Then, for others, such a one is truly the ever-living dead, a real Majzoob-e-kamil, or conscious God in the midst of illusion-conscious humanity. To touch such a one is to touch God Himself!

"In my case, I did not drop the body on the fourth day, nor did I become established in the gross sphere as a Majzoob, nor did I begin to regain the normal consciousness of a Perfect Master. Only such a Perfect One is capable of knowing the state in which I had to remain for nine months.

"On the fourth day and after I was slightly conscious of my body and began to move about without any consciousness of my surroundings. I received no promptings from my mind as would an ordinary man. I had no knowledge of the things I did or did not do. I did not sleep and had no appetite. No one had any idea throughout this period that I sat, talked, walked, lay down and did everything by instinct, more like an automaton than an ordinary human being.

"My sleepless, staring, vacant eyes worried my mother most. She believed and told others that I had gone mad. In her anguish she could not refrain from going once to Babajan and demanding to know what she had done to me. Shrinmai did this because she knew that I used to go and sit near Babajan for a while each night during the previous nine months (May, 1913-January, 1914). Babajan indicated to my mother that I was intended to shake the world into

wakefulness, but that meant nothing to Shirinmai in her distress.

"For a long time I was given regular medical treatment, but no amount of drugging and injections could put me to sleep. As Shirinmai used to say, 'Having exhausted all available means,' she sent me to Bombay to stay with Jamshed (Baba's late elder brother) for a change.

"Thinking to keep me occupied with day-to-day activities, Jamshed encouraged me to cook the food for the two of us. Sometimes I did the cooking all right, but I did it as I did other things—without knowing what I was doing. I can recall the particular bench in the Victoria Gardens on which I passed most of the time, sitting alone, entirely oblivious of the world and its affairs.

"Although the infinite bliss I experienced in my super-conscious state remained continuous, as it is now, I suffered agonies in returning towards normal consciousness of illusion. Occasionally, to gain some sort of relief, I used to knock my head so furiously against walls and windows that some of them showed cracks.

"In reality there is no suffering as such—only infinite bliss. Although suffering is illusory, still, within the realm of illusion, it is suffering. In the midst of illusion, Babajan established my reality. My reality, although untouched by illusion, remained connected with illusion. That was why I suffered incalculable spiritual agonies.

"Nine months after my self-realization (November, 1914) I began to be somewhat conscious of my surroundings. Life returned to my vacant eyes. Although I would not sleep, I began regularly, to eat small quantities of food. I now know what I was doing but I continued to do things intuitively, as if impelled to do them by inner forces. I did not do things of my own accord or when asked by others. For example, when I began to teach (December, 1915)

Persian to Buasahib (the late Behram F. Irani, the first and one of the closest of Baba's disciples), my mother tried to collect more pupils for me, thinking this would hasten my 'recovery.' But I would attend to no one else and continued to teach only Buasahib.

"Later on (April, 1915) I also began to go for long distances on foot or by vehicle. Once I left Poona by rail for Raichur (more than three hundred miles south of Poona), but after travelling for only thirty-four miles I felt the urge to leave the train at Kedgaon. There for the first time I came in physical contact with Narayan Maharaj (one of the five Perfect Masters) whose ashram is not far from that railway station.

"Similarly, from time to time I was also drawn to see majzoobs like Banemiyan Baba at Aurangabad and Tipoo Baba at Bombay. Once in the company of Behram (Buasahib) I travelled as far north as Nagpur and saw Tajuddin Baba (another of the five Perfect Masters.)

"Finally (December, 1915) I felt impelled to call on Sai Baba, the Perfect Master among Masters. At that time he was returning in a procession from Lendi (in Shirdi), a place to and from which he was led everyday in order to ease himself. Despite the crowds I intuitively prostrated myself before him on the road. When I arose, Sai Baba looked straight at me and exclaimed, 'Parvardiga:' (God-Almighty Sustainer).

"I then felt drawn to walk to the nearby temple of Khandoba in which Maharaj (Shri Upasani Maharaj) was staying in seclusion. He had been living on water there under Sai Baba's direct guidance for over three years. At that time Maharaj was reduced almost to a skeleton due to his fast on water. He was also naked and surrounded by filth.

"When I came near enough to him, Maharaj greeted

me, so to speak, with a stone which he threw at me with great force. It struck me on my forehead exactly where Babajan had kissed me, hitting with such force that it drew blood. The mark of that injury is still on my forehead. But that blow from Maharaj was the stroke of dnyan (Marefat of Haqiqat, or divine knowledge).

"Figuratively, Maharaj had started to rouse me from 'sound sleep.' But in sound sleep man is unconscious, while I, being superconscious, was wide awake in sound sleep. With that stroke, Maharaj had begun to help me return to ordinary consciousness of the realm of illusion.

"That was the beginning of my present infinite suffering in illusion which I experience simultaneously with my infinite bliss in reality. But it took me seven years of acute struggle under Maharaj's active guidance to return completely to, and become established in, normal human consciousness of the illusion of duality, while yet experiencing continuously my superconsciousness.

"The more normally conscious I became, the more acute my suffering grew. For years therefore I continued to knock my head frequently on stones. That was how I eventually lost all my teeth, for through the constant knocking they became prematurely loose. This also resulted in a wound which was constantly fresh, and therefore I always used to keep a coloured handkerchief tied around my forehead.

"The more I returned to worldly normality the more impatient my mother became to see me settled into the routine of life. To satisfy her I joined the Kan (Kavasji) Khatan theatrical company as its manager (1916) and travelled with the show to Lahore.

"Several years later, after becoming almost three-fourths normally conscious while retaining full superconsciousness, I went to Sakori and stayed for six months (July-December,

1921) near Maharaj. At the end of this period Maharaj made me know fully what I am, just as Babajan had made me feel in a flash what I am.

"During those six months Maharaj and I used to sit near each other in a hut behind closed doors almost every night. On one such occasion Maharaj folded his hands to me and said, 'Merwan, you are the Avatar and I salute you.'

"For about four months after this (January-May, 1922) I stayed in a small jhopdi (thatched hut.) It was built for me temporarily on the edge of some fields in the very thinly populated area of what is now the Shivajinagar area of Poona. In this manner I began to live independently, surrounded by men who formed the nucleus of the mandali. One of these was the first to start addressing me as "Babā."

"Some of the men were drawn intuitively to me long before they had any clear idea of my inner state. Others were attracted to me by hints from Babajan and Maharaj. And still others I drew directly to me.

"At that time both Babajan and Maharaj began telling various people, referring to me, that 'The child is now capable of moving the whole world at a sign from his finger.' Once (May, 1922) Maharaj addressed a large gathering of the mandali and said, 'Listen to me most carefully. I have handed over my key (spiritual charge) now to Merwan, and henceforth you are all to stick to him and do as he instructs you. With God's grace you will soon reach the goal. Still others, Maharaj asked individually to follow me.

In 1922 Baba established his first and ideal ashram in Bombay, which was called the "Manzil-e-Meem" (Abode of M). Here more than forty men of various faiths and qualifications stayed night and day with Baba for ten months, leading a routine life of rigorous discipline.

In those days Baba would often become temperamentally violent, but showed no trace of malice in his actions.

"My body" he commented, "was then very lean, but also supple, as I was constantly and energetically active. From four in the morning even in the severest cold I would move about in my thin mull sadra (robe). Those who did not know me well at that time might well have considered me very quick-tempered, for suddenly, with or without provocation, I would beat anyone at hand.

"In those days most of the mandali were hefty, robust young men. Several of them were good wrestlers and some were seasoned athletes. But when I would start for a brisk walk, the majority would have to run to keep up with me. Sometimes I would ask them all to press collectively on my whole body with all the force they could exert. Within a few minutes they would be breathless and drenched with perspiration without having fully satisfied me.

"One of the group had the physique of a giant, but once in a certain mood I knocked him down with a single slap. Another one had to have a doctor treat his ear because of a blow I gave him. One of the mandali used to go into hiding at once on such occasions and would not emerge again without asking others if my mood had changed.

On one occasion the mandali and Baba were sitting together in good spirits in the big upstairs hall in the Manzil-e Meem, when Baba suddenly seized a plump fellow of about two hundred pounds, dragged him like a rag doll to the edge of the stairs and flung him down. The place rang with the crashes as the heavy man rolled and stumbled to the bottom.

Baba then struck another of the mandali a sharp blow on the forehead, stepping back with a smile as if nothing had happened. Both of the victims of the sudden outburst were quizzed with considerable concern by Baba as to

whether they had suffered any injuries, but neither was any the worse for the squall.

Aside from these unpredictable moments of violence, Baba always appeared to be busy with various duties aimed at the physical, mental, moral and spiritual welfare of the mandali. In his usual candid fashion, Baba closed his own and the mandali's reminiscences of these early years with the unarguable statement. "When the money was finished we came over to Arangaon."

Then for more than a year and a half, to the end of 1924, Baba moved almost constantly with the mandali about the country, once going as far as Iran. Occasionally on arriving at some new place Baba would say that they were going to settle down there for a long time, but no sooner had the mandali finished the preliminary arrangements than Baba would start them on the move again. It was a period of hard labour for the mandali, great privation for Baba and fatiguing travel by third class rail or foot over great distances for all.

"For various spiritual reasons," Baba continued his reminiscences, "and due to the nature of the work I was then doing, I was unable to eat regularly. Practically speaking, therefore, I was fasting almost all the time. For months I would take no food or drink except at intervals of thirty-six or more hours. At times I also subsisted for a week or two at a stretch on a few sips of liquid such as tea, milk or dal soup. I did not fast for the sake of fasting, and I suffered and felt weak, just as any ordinary man who fasts."

"During World War I, Meherabad was a military camp divided, then as now, by the railroad to Ahmednagar, into an upper (hill) section to the west and the lower (fields) part to the east. When I arrived here with the mandali for the first time (April, 1923) the whole area was desolate

and filled with thorns and snakes and scorpions. The military buildings were in ruins.

"In contrast to the life at Manzil-e-Meem, the mandali now had to do everything without the help of hired labour. They had to draw water, cook food, wash clothes, carry loads and work all day as common labourers, as well as carry out promptly the various instructions I gave them."

Although Baba came initially to Arangaon (Meherabad) with the mandali ostensibly to settle there, they stayed only four days on that occasion. The second stay lasted eleven days, and the third only two. The longest stay before 1925 was the fourth, which lasted three months. This period (March-May, 1924) was known among the mandali as "Ghamela Yoga" (the practice of regular hard labour). This was the period when the camp was largely restored.

"By that time (May)," Baba commented, "the abandoned camp was almost shipshape again. The first new building was called the Agrakuti (also called jhopdi, a small square room solidly constructed of stones and mortar and made insect proof by screen placed over all openings) where I have sat in seclusion and worked on a number of occasions for various periods of time.

"Other than for one paid mason, all the construction, clearing repairing, etc., was done by the mandali who worked like coolies for six hours each day. They worked so hard that most had blisters on their hands.

"After several months (January, 1925) we settled down and the place gradually became known as Meherabad. For almost two years (until November, 1926) it was like a small model town. In it lived about five hundred souls, working in the hospital, the dispensary and the schools. There were also ashrams for boys, men and

women, and shelters for the poor and for lepers, all of which were established here in connection with my work.

"At that time nearly a thousand rupees a day used to be spent for the maintenance of the various services, while the mandali often lived on plain dal and rice for lunch, and milkless tea or a thin soup of methi (bitter spinach) leaves and coarse bread for dinner. During that period I remained generally on liquids or on limited meals taken once in a week or a fortnight.

"Weekly rations were issued to the most helpless of the Arangaon villagers. They were so needy that later, when the ashrams were shifted some scores of miles away to Toka, they used to travel on foot or by bullock-cart all that distance rather than miss the weekly quota of coarse grain.

"Hundreds of people from the villages near Meherabad benefited from the free hospitals, and thousands utilized the dispensary provided for out-patients. Boys of all castes and creeds including untouchables soon began to live, eat and intermingle freely.

"From dawn to dusk I would move about the place and take an active part in every phase including the cleaning of latrines. Each day I spent three to four hours bathing the school children. When the number boarding became considerable, I allowed the mandali to share this service with me. All the mandali also had to grind grain for one to three hours each day, depending upon their assigned duties. I also shared in the daily grinding for an hour or more.

"Despite my silence (starting July 10, 1925) I continued all my usual activities. At that time I communicated by writing on a slate, and also for more than a year wrote for a number of hours daily on a work which remains unseen and unpublished to this day. I did most of my writing work in my small cupboard-like room constructed under-

neath the big wooden table which stands near the dhun (sacred fireplace). It was at this time (November, 1925) that we began to light the dhuni each month.

"At certain fixed hours I saw visitors freely. Hundreds came daily for my darshan, believing in my spiritual status, but most sought my blessing only for material benefit. On special occasions the stream of visitors would continue unbroken from morn to night and their numbers would run into the thousands." (At least twenty thousand people had Baba's blessing in 1926 on his thirty-second birthday).

"Once an old man offered to dedicate everything he had to me, and then he would begin, he said, to lead a life of service and renunciation. However, on investigation, it was found that what would be dedicated to me was a wife and seven children to be taken care of.

"On another occasion a yogi called and sought my instructions as he said he was determined to find God at any cost. I told him to wait for my instructions under a certain tree. He remained there for seven days and walked away on the eighth, unnoticed by anyone.

One of the characteristics of Baba's activities which often puzzles people is the manner in which he will suddenly and without warning stop a project in apparent mid-career, regardless of the degree of evident success it is experiencing. In November-December, 1926 he did this to the institutions and services which were thriving at Meherabad, closing them all lock, stock and barrel.

Baba commented cryptically on this singular trait of his as follows : "Usually a temporary scaffolding is set up around a big building which is under construction, and when the building is completed, the scaffolding is removed. Often my external activities and commitments are only the external expression of the internal work I am doing. In either case, my external activities and commit-

ments may be continued indefinitely or I may end them promptly at the end of the inner work, depending upon the prevailing circumstances."

While showing the sahvasis about Meherabad Hill, Baba often told stories of the Meher Ashram and the Prem Ashram days (1927-1929).

"At that time, in addition to continuing my silence, I also gave up writing (January, 1927). Shortly thereafter I started to communicate by spelling out words on an English alphabet board, which I discarded recently (October, 1954).

"The school known as Meher Ashram was started as a small day school for the boys of the adjoining village of Arangaon. After some time it was turned into a regular boarding school (May, 1927) that housed more than a hundred boys. Efforts were made to collect them from various cities and different countries. One of the mandali was sent to England for that purpose. None came from the West, but a number of boys from Iran did join the Meher Ashram.

"My first aim was to arrange for teaching the boys English through their various vernaculars, by standards set up in the University of Bombay. Having accomplished this, I began to spend all of my time, day and night, on the general welfare and spiritual upliftment of the boys. Even though I had entrusted several mandali with the job of keeping watch over the boys round the clock, still I would frequently appear in the dormitory in the dead of night to see if they were well wrapped and sleeping all right.

"This was also the period when I carried out one of my longest continuous fasts, which lasted five and one-half months (November, 1927-April, 1928). Once during this period I took nothing but a few sips of water for more

than twenty-eight days. The remainder of the time I lived on cocoa in milk taken once in twentyfour hours.

“ Even this was in scant supply as it happened. Lahu (Baba’s favourite among the untouchable boys) used to carry my supply to me every day, and on the way he would drink half of it and then pass on the other half to me. I found out about this at the end of my seclusion when the women mandali assured me that they had sent Lahu regularly, as I had originally instructed them, with the thermos bottle full of cocoa. When I questioned Lahu about this, he readily confessed pilfering half my cocoa every day. I pardoned the little fellow as readily as he had acknowledged the guilt.

“ During part of this period I remained continuously indoors for more than three months (November, 1927-February, 1928) at the spot where my future tomb is located. I did not step out of the crypt (the underground part of Baba’s future tomb) and the temporary small structure placed over it. The temporary hut has now been replaced by the present domed building.

“ In the daytime I spent most of the time in the upper room, which had two windows level with the floor, and at night I would retire into the crypt. One of the two windows in the upper room faced the Meher Ashram on the east and was in line with a raised platform before the ashram. The boys and the mandali would sit on this, near me but outside my room, and I would give them discourses and carry on discussions with them with the help of my alphabet board.

“ Through the west window I could see the sadhak-ashram (hermitage), which consisted of a string of small rooms standing at that time near my place of seclusion. Some of the mandali were also in seclusion in these small

rooms, fasting under my directions on a small quantity of milk taken once or twice a day."

The following account of one of the incidents which occurred during that period is adapted from Sobs and Throbs :

On January 1, 1928, the fifty-second day of Baba's fasting and the twelfth of his self-imposed confinement a majority of the boys began to break into tears at different times throughout the day. In the evening matters came to a climax. Each boy in the ashram burst into tears and began to sob as if all his dear ones had suddenly been reported dead.

For about one hour, between seven and eight in the evening, this awesome phenomenon held the onlookers spellbound. The tumult could be heard a quarter of a mile away from the ashram.

Attempts were made by those in charge to quiet the boys and to find out the cause of the outburst. But it was all to no avail. All seemed to be engrossed in crying, and deaf to all else. "Baba, Baba," were the only words which could be heard distinctly in all this tumult. Finally the boys were brought close to Baba's presence, and with magical swiftness they became silent again.

Continuing his reminiscences to the Sahvasis, Baba said, "At a later stage (March, 1928) Meher Ashram was divided into two sections. The new portion was called 'Prem Ashram' (Shelter of Love). In it were housed the boys most awakened to love. They were given some freedom from the daily school routine to allow for their preoccupation with meditation and the spiritual experiences that most of them periodically had.

"One of the boys from Iran, of about eighteen years, lost consciousness of his body and surroundings, for four days. Had an enema not been given to him then at my

orders he would have died. Thereupon the boy regained ordinary normal consciousness, but not the consciousness which is regained after union with God, as that is an entirely different and unique achievement. For a long time afterwards he would weep and complain bitterly about my having dragged him down from the blissful state in which he said he had seen nothing but Baba.

"When some of my (internal) work had to be done afresh (June, 1928), both the ashrams were shifted root and branch to Toka (about forty-five miles north of Ahmednagar). There the area of my seclusion included the whole of the Prem Ashram. It was a picturesque spot at the junction of the rivers Godavary and Pravara. Swimming was added to the daily recreation of the boys.

"Here again I fasted on a few sips of water and milkless tea for a number of days (forty-two days, September-October, 1928). The boys were overjoyed when I ended my fasting by drinking some orange juice. As it happened to be the birthday of Krishna, they insisted on carrying me in a palanquin around the new colony of 'Meherabad,' dressed as Krishna.

"Singing and dancing, they tossed my palanquin back and forth. Due to the fast I had just ended this jerky ride was excruciatingly painful for my abdomen. Out of my love for the boys and their love for me I managed to remain cheerful at the time, but I suffered the physical consequences for two months afterwards."

Often during the course of the sahvas weeks Baba would discuss the need to keep fit and avoid colds. Some of his most enlightening comments concerning his own physical susceptibilities were embodied in his reminiscences of his first trip to England in September, 1931, not long after the closing of the Prem Ashram.

"Some of you might ask why, being the Avatar, I

could feel or catch cold. You might as well ask also why I should feel hungry or need rest! We have bodies and they are naturally subject to all sorts of ailments, and as a consequence we must suffer. Therefore one should take all practical precautions to avoid, and take proper treatment to recover from, the bodily ailments.

"The God-realized ones who do not return to ordinary normal consciousness and yet happen to retain their bodies (MajzooBs), have no body-consciousness : just as they have literally no consciousness of anything other than their own Self. Their own bodies also remain to them as 'nothing,' and therefore nothing can affect 'nothing.' As long as it is necessary, their infinitely conscious divinity directly supports their bodies within illusion as 'supports' for the maintenance of the whole illusion of creation.

"Masts, who are mad and absorbed in God-love, also remain immune as a rule to bodily ailments. The intensity of their 'smokeless' fire of love neutralizes all bodily reactions, and thus they continue freely living their life of love for God.

"Once the God-realized soul comes down with his God-consciousness to normal consciousness of the illusion of duality, then the physical body of even such a God realized Perfect Master is subject to ordinary contagion and disease. Simultaneously I exist at every level, and as I am therefore on a level with your consciousness, I suffer, experience and enjoy just as you all do.

"On our first visit to England I had not anticipated having to experience the bitter London cold without proper clothing. This came about due to the fact that the English mandali were eager to perpetuate their remembrances of their first direct contact with me by taking pictures of me in garments such as I had worn in India.

"The warmth of their love and devotion compelled

me to take off all my warm clothes. Then, for more than an hour, I allowed them to make me sit, and stand in various poses, remaining cheerfully in the open air with only my cotton sadra on. They were very happy to get the pictures they wished, and I was no less happy to see them happy. However I alone know how the cold bit to the very bone. "The westerners did not love me any less then, but they understand me more deeply now. In the automobile accident (Oklahoma, June, 1952) several of us suffered very painful injuries, and a number of my bones were broken. However the love all bore for me was quickened rather than shaken. In the distant past, as Krishna, I died physically when I was accidentally shot with an arrow."

In his reminiscing Baba also spoke often of the ashrams for the mad and the masts which he conducted in his next period of external public activities (1936-1947). Most of the inmates of the Mad Ashram (August, 1936-September, 1940) were gathered from among the ordinarily insane men who had no one to love or care for them. They were brought from near and far, regardless of caste or creed. No medical efforts were expended on treating their mental infirmities, but they were physically well attended and they were indulged in any innocent idiosyncracies.

Baba planned and supervised the Mad Ashram, and he also served and nursed its inmates with patience, tolerance and love.

Aside from its humanitarian and spiritual aspects, the Mad Ashram also prepared the mandali for the subsequent running of the Mast Ashrams. The seven principal ones of these were maintained at different remote places such as Ajmer, Jabalpur, Bangalore, Meherabad, Ranchi, Mahabaleshwar and Satara (1939-1947). The nature of the external routine was common to both mad and mast ashrams.

just as there was considerable similarity between the externally alike but internally dissimilar inmates.

Baba clarified the dissimilarity as follows : "Ordinarily it is very difficult, and cursorily it is impossible, to distinguish between a madman and a mast. One is actually mad and the other appears to be mad. Internally the two are poles apart. The mad has lost the power of correct reasoning. The mast has transcended the limitations of intellect. A madman is mentally infirm, a mast is spiritually enlightened. The mad have distorted ideas about their bodies and surroundings. The masts have an utter disregard for theirs because their hearts directly experience inner truths beyond the gross sphere, and they are more or less imbued with God-love.

"Even in the Mad Ashram there were a few masts, but most were more or less ordinary madmen. One of the latter, Fakir Bua, assumed the airs of a sage. He would nod his head and utter monosyllables mechanically without any meaning, but his movements and utterances gave the appearance of his agreeing or disagreeing with what he heard. He also made frequent gestures with his fingers. However this was only habit, as there was no sense or significance to the gestures, although the contrary is true in the case of a mast.

"When the Mad Ashram was closed (September, 1944), Fakir Bua, along with the rest of the insane, was sent back to the place from which he had come (Poona). Through a misunderstanding, a rumor spread through the grain market in Poona that Fakir Bua had returned from my ashram as a saint.

"This error was discovered some months later when one of the mandali, who was searching for masts and saints for my work, heard that there was one in the Poona area whom hundreds of people worshiped. When the mandali

had managed to jostle through the crowds he found none other than poor old Fakir Bua sitting on cushions placed on a coarsely decorated platform, happily nodding his head to the crowds around him.

"There are undoubtedly many in India who are genuinely engaged in the search for truth, but the masses are more eager to win cheap material benefits through rare spiritual blessings. Equipped with long hair and an ochre coloured robe (the garb of the wandering holy man), an unscrupulous man can easily dupe hundreds among the masses here. If one person worships some individual, hundreds will quickly follow suit, hoping thereby to rid themselves of their immediate problems for the asking.

"Years ago among the growing number of new mandali there was one individual who followed carefully my directions to observe silence, keep fasts and do japs (repeating the name of God). After leaving the mandali however he began to pose as a saint and induced people to worship him. I sent him a word of warning against his pretentiousness, but he did not heed it.

"After some time he became involved in an affair with a woman and ultimately returned to me suffering with leprosy. I pardoned him, embraced him and advised him to go humbly about the country giving my message of love and truth to the people. He is now no longer a leper and remains steadfast in his love and service for me.

"Although most of the mandali know of only three or four cases of such fraudulence, there have been seven pretenders who have claimed falsely that they had been spiritually enlightened by me and were my spiritual successors.

"Masts are those who become permanently unconscious in part or whole of their physical bodies, actions and surroundings, due to their absorption in their intense

love and longing for God. My love for the masts is similar in many ways to that shown by a mother who continues to look lovingly after her children regardless of their behaviour. To make her child clean a mother does not even mind soiling her hands with the child's excrement.

"I am the mother of the masts. If God were not there, there would be no masts. They also are like parts of my body. Some are like my right and some are like my left limbs and fingers. Some are nose, ears and eyes for me. I am helpful to them and they are helpful to me. The masts alone know how they love me and I alone know how I love them. I work for the masts, and knowingly or unknowingly they work for me".

Discovering and collecting the mad had been child's play compared to the task the mandali were now assigned to trace, contact and induce the masts to come into the Mast Ashrams.

Although Baba had started contacting the God-mad in 1915, his regular mast trips did not start until 1938. They remain to this day (1957) one of the most active external manifestations of his internal work. A splendid account of seventy-five thousand miles of Baba's mast trips in which he contacted twenty thousand masts, as well as a description of Baba's Mad and Mast Ashram activities, has been given by one of the resident mandali, Dr. William Donkin, in his unique work, *The Wayfarers* (1948, Meher Publications).

Baba once pointed out seven mango trees to a group of sahavasis visiting Meherazad. "These are the offshoot of one of my cherished mast contacts. This mast had presented me with seven mangoes. As I promised the mast, I ate them all completely and the seven seeds I planted here where you now see them grown into trees.

"As the mandali well know, I soon give away whatever I have chosen to receive, except what I receive from the masts. Even if they give me pieces of rags or wastepaper I treasure them".

And later, "I and those who accompany me on a mast trip keep moving night and day for weeks at a time without regular or adequate meals, and only rarely do we rest for a night.

"On one such exceptional occasion we were sleeping on a railway platform for the night. At daybreak someone was found sharing my blanket with me. The stranger admitted on questioning that he was a petty thief known to the police. However he insisted that he had not been trying to rob us, but to seek shelter for the night. The mandali were inclined to hand him over to the police but I let him get away".

From mid-October, 1949 to the end of January, 1952 Baba lived what he called his life of complete external renunciation. So far, no complete account has been written of it. The full story of the hardships and crises incident to this life of self-created helplessness remains known only to the companions Baba took with him in his New Life adventure. There were the handful of men and women who had chosen and were allowed to participate in the venture. They travelled with him from place to place in distant parts of India, mostly on foot, and under the most trying conditions, having no ready shelters, no money and no day-to-day provisions to draw upon.

Once referring to the "caravan" (built of an old motor van) which is also preserved at Meherazad, Baba said, "At a later stage of the New Life, this was used as a ready shelter for the night for the women among my new life companions. The caravan was drawn by a pair of bullocks which were the charge of the men. The men also had to

take care of a camel, a horse, two donkeys and two cows, which we took with us for a period.

"My companions suffered unimaginable hardships. At times we used to beg for food and for other day-to-day requirements.

"The last period of over two months of the New Life was spent at Meherazad. During most of that time I did my man-o-nash (annihilation of the mind) work in seclusion, and it was then that the two cabins were removed from the (Seclusion) hill and added to the seclusion area adjoining the garden.

"You who are here for my sahavas are indeed fortunate that I am with you at these various spots at Meherabad and Meherazad where I have done many of my internal and external works. Sixty years from now they will become world centres to which thousands will make pilgrimages, vying with each other to sacrifice their very lives in my name".

At the completion of the man-o-nash period Baba travelled to Europe and the United States where the auto accident referred to above occurred. Arriving back in India in September, 1952, he again plunged into his mast work as well as into his "Fiery Life". Numerous mass darshan programmes were held in many villages, towns and cities in different parts of India, drawing five to fifty thousand people at a time.

In one of the large darshan programmes held at Ahmednagar in September, 1954, several score from Europe, America and Australia also participated.

Following the sahavas programmes in November, 1955, Baba immediately began plans for a year's seclusion starting February 15, 1956, broken only by his mast work and a one month's flying trip around the world in the early fall of 1956 to greet his devoted followers on four continents.



AVATAR IS GOD

In the infinite Beyond state of God, which transcends the categories of consciousness as well as unconsciousness, there appeared the first initial urge for God to know Himself. And with the arising of this initial urge, there was an instantaneous manifestation of infinite consciousness as well as infinite unconsciousness, as simultaneous resultants. Of these two seemingly opposite but complementary aspects, the infinite consciousness plays the role of the Avatar or Divine Incarnation. The infinite unconsciousness finds its expression through an evolution, which seeks to develop full consciousness through time processes. In the human form, the full consciousness strives to have self-knowledge and self-realization. The first man to realize God as one indivisible and eternal Truth was taken up into this realization by the eternal Avataric infinite consciousness.

The Avatar is the first master of the first God-realized soul. But in God-realization the full consciousness of the first master became fused with the eternally infinite consciousness of the Avatar. Therefore, with the "coming down" of the first God-realized man, the Avatar himself descended and took an incarnation in his body. So, from the point of view of incarnation, the Avatar is the same as the first master. This first master had no master in the human form. But all subsequent masters have had masters in the human form to help them in Truth-realization.

The first master could realize God without a master in the human form, whereas the subsequent masters always and invariably need some master for God-realization. The reason is simple. God-realization implies inner poise as

well as adequate adjustment with the universe (which is the shadow of God) along with everything that it contains. The first master (who is also the first incarnation of the Avatar) attained both these things, because it is the very goal of the initial urge seeking fulfilment. He did not have a master in the human form.

With regard to those souls who attain God-realization subsequently, the two requirements stand, viz. inner poise and adequate adjustment with everything in the universe. But there is one great difference. For example, for the soul who is second in attaining God-realization, one of the important factors in his spiritual environment is the existence of a *human* God-realized soul. Hence, while adjusting himself with everything in the universe, this second candidate for God-realization is confronted with the problem of adjusting himself to the first master or God-realized soul who, as we have seen, is indistinguishable from the eternal Avatar. In this case the only adequate adjustment possible is in unreserved acceptance of the bountiful help which comes from the first master. Refusal to accept this help is maladjustment to a tremendous factor in the universe; and this prevents God-realization. This is why the first God-realized person did not need an incarnate master, while all subsequent masters inescapably need some master or masters in order to realize God. They cannot do so by their own independent efforts.

The first master who got fused with the eternal Avataric infinite consciousness is the master of all masters. Yet, if and when the Avatar takes an incarnation in the human form, he brings upon himself a veil; and this veil has to be removed by some master or masters.

The veil with which the Avatar descends in the human form is placed upon him by the five Perfect Masters who bring him down from his formless being. In the Avataric

periods, the five masters always put this veil upon the infinite consciousness of the Avatar, because if he were to be brought without such a veil into the world of forms, the existing balance between reality and illusion would be profoundly disturbed. However, when the five masters think that the moment is ripe, they remove this veil which they have placed on the Avataric consciousness. From that moment the Avatar consciously starts his role as the Avatar.

The incarnation of the Avatar does not take place unless it is precipitated by the five Perfect Masters of the cycle. In all of his incarnations except the first, even the Avatar needs a master in order to come into his own eternal and infinite consciousness. He does not become an exception to the rule that a "touch" of a master is necessary for God-realization. However, the "touch" of a Perfect Master does not necessarily mean physical touch. When we say that we are "touched" by music, or a poem or story, the touch has deeper significance. Far more truly is this so when it is a question of spiritual "touch". In the case of the master, this deeper spiritual touch is often transmitted through the physical touch.

Every time the Avatar descends, he is not necessarily recognized as the Avatar by the masses. He can be recognized as such only by those who are very advanced spiritually. The Avatar himself is the least concerned about whether or not he comes to be recognized as Avatar by large numbers. He plays thoroughly his role as the Avatar and his chief work lies in the higher invisible spheres of existence. If, however, he appears at a critical or transitional cyclic period, as is often the case, he is hailed by the masses as the Avatar of the age.

The Avatar is not necessarily recognized and hailed as the Avatar by each and all, because he covers himself

under a veil for his own spiritual work. This veil, under which he prefers to remain hidden, is different from the veil which the five Perfect Masters draw on him while bringing Him down in the human form. The veil which the Avatar puts on himself can be removed by him at any time, and for any person or persons as he may desire, for the purposes of self-revelation or self-communication.

The Avatar does not take upon himself the *karma* of the world nor does he become bound by it. But he takes upon himself the suffering of the world which is the result of its *karma*. His suffering for the world is vicarious. It does not entail entanglement with the *karma* of the world. But humanity finds its redemption from its *karma* through his vicarious suffering, e. g., illness, humiliation, accidents and the like. In his own ways, the Avatar unfailingly fulfills his incarnation by giving a spiritual push to his age.



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Weekly get-together of Meher Baba lovers is held at 441/1, Somwar Peth, Poona 11 (*opposite to Shahu Swimming Pool and behind K. E. M. Hospital*) every Monday, between 7 and 8.30 p. m. with a view to educate the modern society, the spiritual values of life as revealed through the messages of Meher Baba, the Avatar of the age.

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