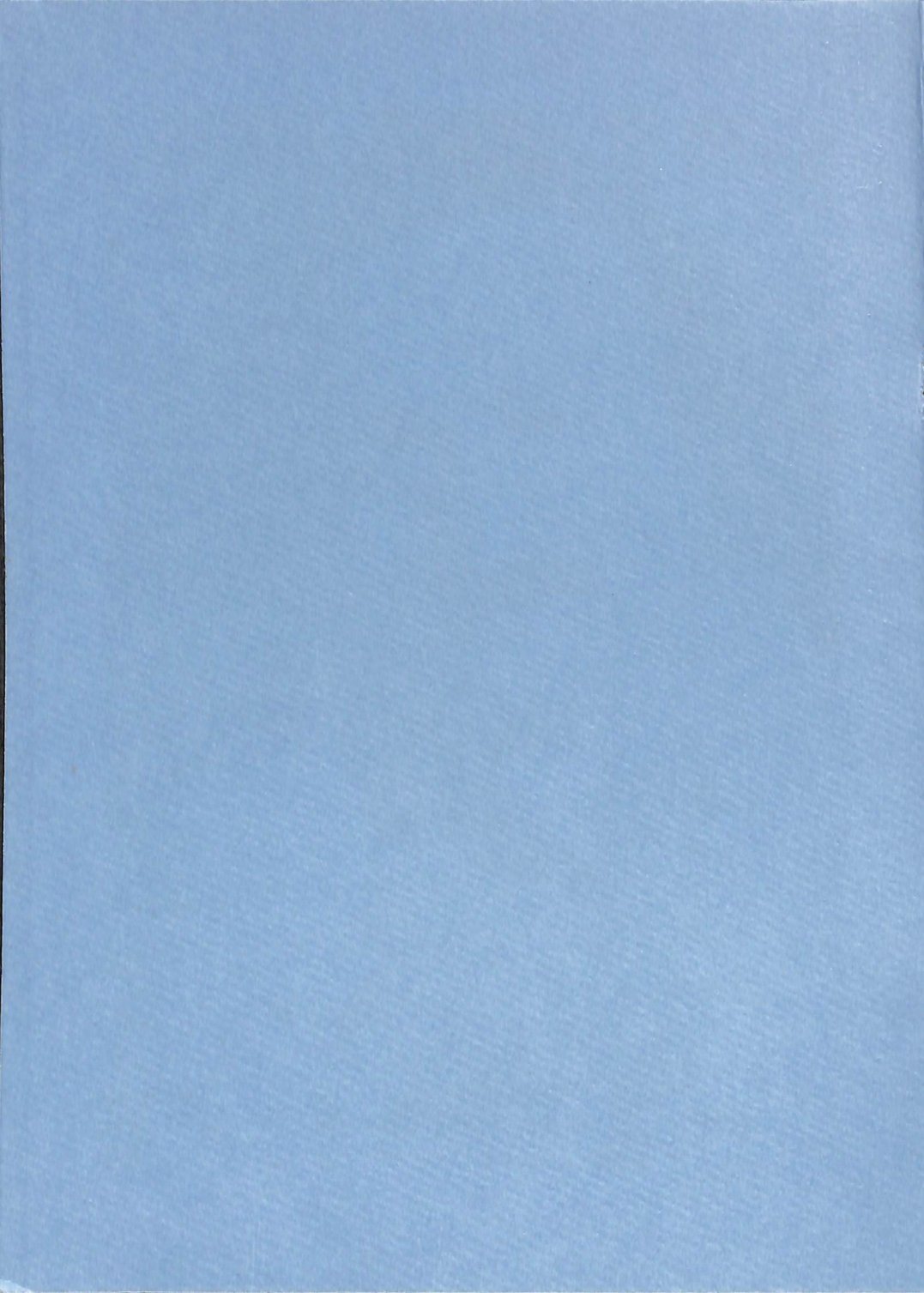
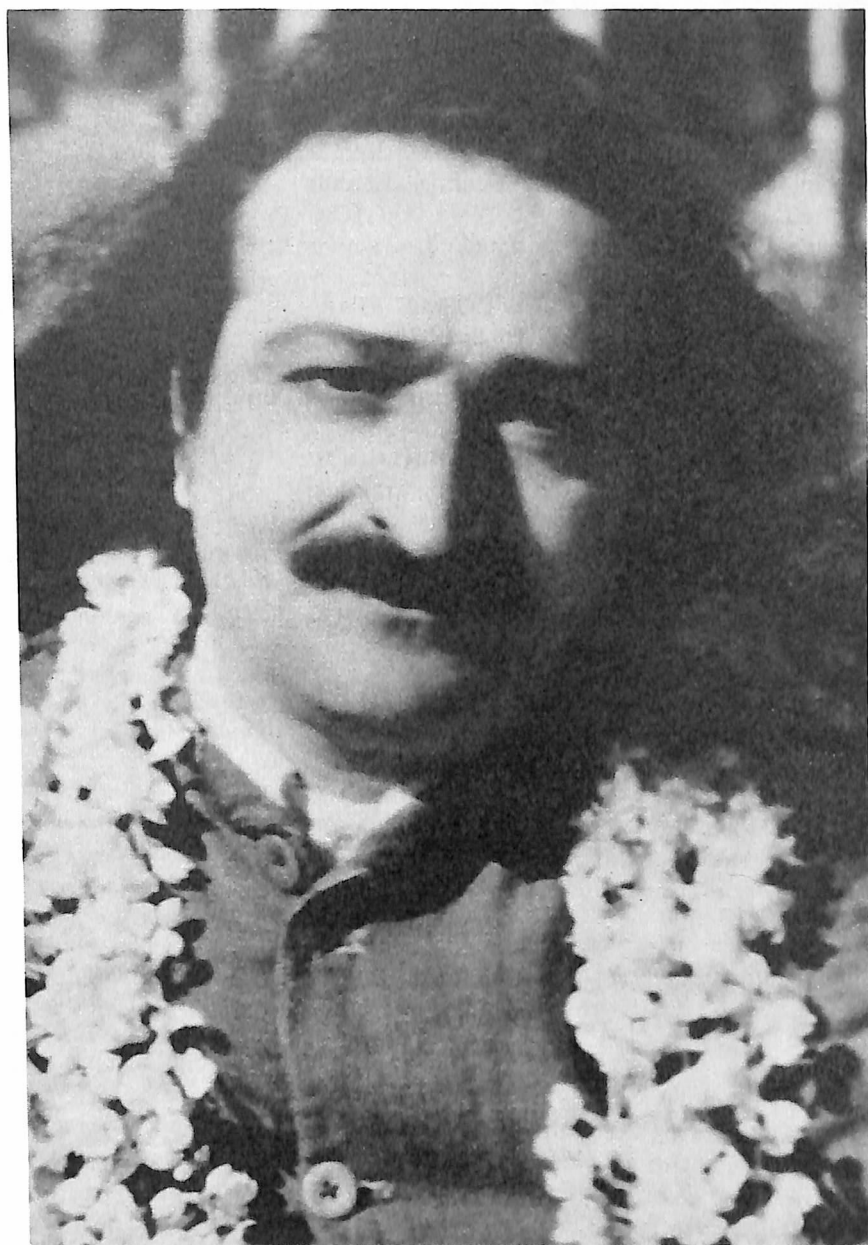


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# THE RETURN OF THE GOD-MAN

By Allan Y. Cohen, Ph.D.

## PART I. THE ONE IN THE MANY

Something spiritual is happening, happening now, and accelerating in a geometric fashion. Throughout history, men always have been searching. Some would say the search is for God; others might call it the quest for the Infinite; and still others will talk of the development of consciousness.

Presently, that urge toward the Ultimate Reality is manifesting itself throughout larger and larger segments of our culture. It is more than a theoretical interest. It has become a practical one. People are no longer entranced by mere words--they want action! They are looking for methods--for Ways to the Truth of higher consciousness.

In the present article, we shall explore one such Way, as well as the life and spiritual philosophy of its creator, Meher Baba. Meher Baba is a spiritual leader rapidly emerging as the most powerful, challenging and provocative voice in the world of applied mysticism.

### WHO IS HE?

Unarguable is the growing controversy around Meher Baba's views. For he says "There is no doubt of my being God personified...I am the Christ...I assert unequivocally that I am infinite consciousness; and I can make this assertion because I AM infinite consciousness. I am everything and I am beyond everything." Thus, Baba asserts his identity with previous "Avatars" (or descents of God into human form for the purpose of giving a spiritual push to humanity through love), e.g. Zoroaster, Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Jesus and Mohammed.

Whatever one's initial reaction to Baba--joy, shock, disdain or openminded skepticism--one thing is certain; Meher Baba cannot be validly overlooked by any sincere seeker, spiritual scholar or social scientist interested in the development of consciousness.

It is perhaps tempting to dismiss Baba's assertions as the ravings of a lunatic or at best as the words of a spiritual pretender. Yet one of the most respected and distinguished scholars of Eastern mystical literature, the late Dr. W. Y. Evans-Wentz, wrote the following of "GOD SPEAKS" (one of Baba's major books): "No other teacher in our own time or in any

known past time has so minutely analyzed consciousness as Meher Baba has in 'GOD SPEAKS'...Meher Baba's enlightening treatise adds much to the sum total of learning, and contributes incalculably to the enrichment of mankind, for as the Sages of Asia teach, the most intrinsically valuable of all riches, and greater than mundane wealth, is Right Knowledge."

Further, Eric Shroeder, for years the keeper of Islamic Art at Harvard University, said "Meher Baba's dictation of this work may be called a systematic metaphysic of Consciousness; and since the consciousness of so notable a mystic transcends that of us, he speaks as one having authority."

Those who would be led to issue an immediate indictment of a lack of modesty on Baba's part are disarmed by the logic of his reply that a true Avatar or God-Man would be, by definition, infinitely honest--and could only say exactly Who He really was. But let us suspend the inevitable judgmental processs, and review the highlights of Meher Baba's life.

### HIS LIFE

Meher Baba (means "Compassionate Father") was born in Poona, India on February 25, 1894 as Merwan Irani. He went through his junior year in College as a very bright, literate and well-liked youngster. At age 19, he came across Hazrat Baba Jan, a Sufi Perfect Master (or God-realized teacher). In an instant, she ripped away the veil of impressions which separated Merwan from his consciousness as the Avatar. For some time afterward, he was unconscious of the ordinary world. The agonizing process of "coming down" to share the consciousness of an ordinary human being took place over seven years under the guidance of Shri Upasani Maharaja, an acknowledged Hindu Perfect Master. At the age of 27, he was fully established in Christ consciousness, i.e. full God-consciousness Plus full human consciousness.

Obviously, the role of Avatar is a unique one. Baba explains that God in human form appears on Earth every 700 to 1,400 years, depending on how quickly the Message of the last World Messenger has decayed. In his human aspect, the Avatar is subject to all natural laws and usually undergoes tremendous physical suffering. But the greatest suffering, Baba says, involves his realization and sharing of the spiritual bondage of mankind. The painful irony is that everything is God and is One, but that the ordinary human mind is trapped by the illusory notion of separateness. Baba stresses: "I am God and you are God--the only difference is that I am fully conscious and you are not." Thus, Baba says "I have come to help you to realize your own Divine Self."

As in the past, illustrated by the life of Jesus, the Avatar's human manifestation symbolizes the highest kind of attainment possible by any and every human being. Baba's life has been characterized by Love, compassion and service to others. Highlights have been the establishment of hospitals, schools and ashrams for the insane and "God-intoxicated." More concretely, Baba has personally fed thousands of the poor, blind, and crippled; washed lepers, and cheered the otherwise infirm. In addition, he has voluntarily traveled thousands of miles undergoing great hardship in order to rescue the "masts", who are individuals trapped between higher planes of consciousness because of the lack of a spiritual master. (Documentation for this phase of Baba's work can be found in a remarkable book by Dr. William Donkin, entitled "THE WAY-FARERS"). Further, Baba has held "darshan" (open meetings) with literally hundreds of thousands of lovers and devotees. He has supervised the spiritual training of hundreds directly and countless more indirectly.

Regarding his personal life, he never touches money except to give to the poor, is strictly celibate and lives in very simple surroundings with his closest disciples (mandali) near Ahmednagar, India. He is described as having a superb sense of humor. Although Baba is a vegetarian, he has eaten meat on occasion to demonstrate the relative unimportance of eating habits, rituals or ceremonies in comparison with the Love for God.

Meher Baba, as previous Avataric manifestations, does not care to create a new religion. His followers are of all religions and even non-religious backgrounds. He says: "I am not come to establish any cult, society or organization...I have come to sow the seed of love in your hearts so that in spite of all superficial diversity which your life in illusion must experience and endure, the feeling of Oneness through Love is brought about amongst all nations, creeds, sects and casts of the world."

### HIS SILENCE

Perhaps one of the most interesting and mysterious things about Baba is that all his work has been done in complete physical silence since 1925. He now communicates fluently through hand gestures which are interpreted by his mandali. His major works were dictated on a small alphabet board in English, though Baba is the master of several other languages. The mystical significance of his silence seems connected with two linked facets of Baba's role. He has stressed the point that "I have not come to teach, but to Awaken." Thus, Baba de-emphasizes the role of words and focuses on the importance of right action as well



as love for God.

The second, equally important aspect is his repeated assurance that when he breaks silence, he will release a tide of love which will pervade each individual's consciousness from within. Thus, Baba promises that he will give a spiritual push to all creation, leading to a new social order based on love, tolerance and true perception of spiritual reality. Baba says that when he does break his silence, many people will come to know Who he is, for they will have experienced the impact of God's love.

Baba has said that he will break his silence before he leaves his physical body and to expect it at the climax of worldly ignorance, disorder and anti-spirituality.

Baba has often gone into self-imposed seclusion for varying periods of time. Most probably, during these times, Baba intensifies his work on the inner planes of consciousness during this period. It is an interesting sidelight to note that Baba never sleeps in the ordinary sense (he never loses his Infinite Awareness), although he does rest his body 2 or 3 hours during the night. (A fairly comprehensive biography of Baba by Charles Purdom--called "THE GOD-MAN" was published by Allen Unwin Ltd., London.)

Baba's frequent trips to the Western world have made it possible for closer ties to be established with hundreds of Americans. On the practical level, those who have actually met Baba in person consistently report elevating feelings. Even to an unbiased observer, it would appear that the mere physical presence of Baba turns a key of love and spiritual longing which makes such a meeting one of the most important experiences in one's life. Most of those who have accepted Baba as their inner Master report their lives as being dramatically changed--by an almost miraculous reorientation of their consciousness.

### CONCLUSION

Obviously, Baba's assertion that he is the Christ of this age will be proven neither intellectually nor scientifically, and it seems safe to predict the emergence of a major controversy regarding his true status.

In the next part of this article, we shall examine some of the high points of Meher Baba's metaphysics, spiritual philosophy and psychology. Baba's writings on these subjects have fascinated even those who think of Baba merely as a very remarkable and loving human being.



Perhaps a fitting close for this first part are the words of a spiritually advanced Saint in India as he saw Baba for the first time: "Look at this man's face and forehead; they shine as if the sun were there; can't you recognize who He is?"

## PART II: THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

"I am the Divine Beloved who loves you more than you can ever love yourself. I and God are One."

In the first part of this article, we explored the life and spiritual status of the author of this quote, Meher Baba. This remarkable spiritual personality has revealed himself to be the Avatar of the age and one in consciousness, wisdom and power with Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Jesus and Mohammed. We reviewed facts which make it difficult to ignore his provocative challenge for humanity to "come unto me" and partake of the flood of Divine Love which he promises will accompany the breaking of his Silence.

If you, the reader, have just become acquainted with Meher Baba, it is as appropriate for you to remain skeptical as it is for you to be open to the possibility that he is exactly Who he says he is. Indeed, Meher Baba himself says "Unless you question, you will never learn." Thus, to enrich your knowledge of this controversial spiritual personage, let us inquire into the most important aspects of Baba's observations of the nature of consciousness and the universe--its creation, evolution and final destination.

### IN THE BEGINNING

Of all metaphysical (and scientific) questions, there can be few of greater importance than that of the Creation. The whys and wherefores of Creation provide a basis for understanding the nature of Reality and Illusion, yielding a key to the recognition of purpose and meaning in human existence. A true or Perfect Teacher should be able to explain Creation in a straight-forward and understandable manner. A Master who is one with infinite consciousness knows the cosmic story from experience, and could be expected to offer some explanation to a sincere seeker.

Those who accept Meher Baba as the Christ are not surprised by his clear exposition of the nature and purpose behind Creation. (Baba's "GOD SPEAKS" is the comprehensive text on this matter and Murshida Ivy Duce's "WHAT AM I DOING HERE?" is an excellent, simplified paperback introduction.)

The essence of this topic may be best expressed by the following:

"You are infinite. You are really everywhere: but you think you are the body, and therefore consider yourself limited. If you look within and experience your own soul in its true nature, you will realize that you are infinite and beyond all creation...The processes of evolution, reincarnation, and realization are necessary to enable the soul to gain self-consciousness." - Meher Baba

Let us explore these statements briefly. Meher Baba points out that before the beginning of creation, God was infinite but unconscious of his infinity. One might say it is as if God (Or Self, Infinity, the Absolute-however you may think of it) was sound asleep.

Because God is infinite, He (It) contained the latent wish to become conscious of his Godhood. Analogically, we possess the latent urge to wake up from a night's sleep, though we are not conscious of ourselves unless we are in the waking state. Baba explains that the creation of the universe is a direct result of the actualization of God's urge to become conscious. The original Cause of the Urge is a "Whim" on the part of God. It can be called a Whim because only a totally independent entity (Which is God) can have a truly causeless Whim.

Meher Baba relates that the original Whim can also be called the first "Word" uttered by God, i.e. "Who Am I?" "Hence this whim, which once surged, once began the beginning of all things in creation."

But ironically, when God first became conscious, He became conscious not of unity but of duality, not of His own infinity but of diverse and imagined finiteness. The reason behind the original misperception is fairly complex; let us simply suggest that it involves the original artificial duality of the observer and the observed. Thus, God's first consciousness was not complete but most finite. Let us take a human example which seems parallel. Perhaps you have had that momentary experience on opening your eyes in the morning when you don't know who you are or where you are. Perhaps you first became aware of the ceiling and became very temporarily identified with the ceiling as yourself. Thus, when God first "awoke" to the implications of "Who Am I?" He did not become fully aware of His true nature.

From the original duality, God, with infinite imagination, generated an Infinite dream which created and continues to produce the Universe

as we know it. The apparent separation of individualities (or souls) occurred as God identified himself with the different forms of creation and their consequent experiences. When, for example, we are dreaming, we create many characters and forms which appear to have separate existence, but which really are none other than the expression of one, unified mind. Meher Baba explains further that God, as each soul, evolves through seven basic kingdoms of form (stone, vegetable, animal, etc.) in order to acquire more and more complete experiences of what He is not. (Baba says: "It is necessary to experience being caged in order to appreciate freedom.")

Evolution, then, is not the evolution of matter, but rather the evolution of consciousness, which uses form in order to accumulate relevant experience. In this process, each soul takes on and then drops innumerable forms. The progressive change of physical forms is called reincarnation, which continues (through the human form) until perfection is attained.

Interestingly, evolution of matter stops at the human being, which possess full consciousness and is capable of attaining God-realization. However, the human soul must reincarnate over and over again in order to escape the innumerable impressions ("sanskaras") or memories which it has accumulated in its long evolution. It is as if these impressions were dust on your mirror and must be wiped away in order for you to see yourself as you really are. Thus, it is imperative for each soul to eliminate all those impressions which cloud its realization of being in complete unity with infinite God. However, as implied above, these impressions have the necessary function of providing the contrast between limited and infinite sight.

Final God-realization is the experiencing of the answer to the original question ("Who Am I?"). This realization is not to be confused with intellectual understanding of one's divinity, but represents a permanent and unlimited experience of the infinity of the Self.

In sum, the true goal of life and consciousness is to rip away that limiting veil of impressions, dissociate one's identification with the limited self (or limited sense of "I") and to experience oneness with God and the accompanying infinite knowledge, power and bliss. It is the Law of Karma (or cause and effect) which governs the reincarnation process and guarantees the soul's inevitable progression toward the experiencing of all phases of duality and illusion. And sooner or later, the soul exhausts enough impressions to become intensely involved in spiritual matters. This development may be said to represent a change from

"evolution" (focusing on the external universe) to "involution" (looking within oneself). Inevitably, the soul in human form becomes ever more conscious of being on a journey, and Meher Baba emphasizes:

"The spiritual journey does not consist in gaining what a person does not have, but in the dissipation of ignorance concerning himself and life and the growth and understanding which begins with spiritual awakening. To find God is to come to one's own self."

#### IT MAKES SENSE

Obviously, we have not done justice to the exquisite completeness of Meher Baba's metaphysical explanation of consciousness and the universe. But even from this sketchy introduction, one may extract a new clarity about other phases of esoteric thought. (The following points and more are elucidated in "LISTEN, HUMANITY," narrated by Don Stevens. The book also gives an intimate glance of Baba's techniques as a Master in human form.)

For example, take that ever haunting problem of good and evil. From Meher Baba's spiritual philosophy, "good" becomes anything which gets you closer to Self-realization and "evil" anything which delays the journey. But Baba points out that there is no real evil, merely "lesser degrees of good," because every soul is headed for eventual unity with God, no matter what it does nor how long it takes. Thus, in Baba's system, we can judge actions and attitudes in terms of efficiency in getting us toward the goal, not from the vantage point of a pious moralism.

Meher Baba is very explicit about the things that retard our spiritual progress. His spiritual rule seems to be that any thought, word or deed which feeds the limited ego, generating selfishness and separateness, is a chain keeping us from true spiritual freedom. Our cravings or desires are the obstacles which lead us to express thoughts and behaviors deleterious to our liberation. Desires expressed in characteristics like anger, lust, hatred, greed and jealousy only create more desire and increase the experience of separateness when it is the state of "desirelessness" which is true freedom. In desirelessness is also "selflessness". When one can become unconscious of the limited self, then one can become conscious of the unlimited Self which is identical with God and infinite Consciousness.

#### A PREVIEW

Anticipating the final section (on techniques for spiritual

development), one can begin to understand the central importance of Love in the spiritual journey. Meher Baba has said:

"God and love are identical, and who has divine love has received God."

True love represents the force propelling us toward unity, toward merging, toward unselfishness. Love for God most quickly hastens the uniting of God the Lover and God the Beloved.

The extension of love in action is selfless service, and it is no coincidence that Meher Baba's motto is "Mastery in Servitude." and that his whole life has exemplified selfless concern with other living beings. Below, we shall explore the implications of Baba's emphasis on Love and Service and present a summary of his explication of the practical ways to spiritual advancement. And if Baba is the Avatar of the age, he is able to tell us what the best approaches are with full authority. It follows that he can help us on our journeys and hasten our discovery of the one, final divine answer;

"There is only one Original Question and one Original Answer to it. Between the Original Question and the Original Answer there are innumerable false answers.

These false answers--such as--I am stone, I am bird, I am animal, I am man, I am woman, I am great, I am small--are, in turn, received, tested and discarded until the Question arrive at the right and final Answer, I AM GOD." - Baba

### PART III: PATHS TO THE GOAL

This is the last section in our discussion of a remarkable man and his spiritual philosophy. To this point we have briefly reviewed the life and basic metaphysics of Avatar Meher Baba, a spiritual luminary who has stunned, enlivened and challenged a growing number of seekers by the assertion of his conscious divinity as the Messiah of our age.

Because of the profundity of his writings, the purity of his life and the potency of his spiritual influence, it is difficult to dismiss perfunctorily his promise that the breaking of his physical silence will release a spiritual floodtide of Divine Love unprecedented in the recorded history of man. Meher Baba has explained that each soul is destined

for eventual full consciousness of unity with God and the consequent experience of infinite wisdom, power and bliss. Above we examined Baba's explication of the universe and humanity as a manifestation of the evolution of consciousness, driven by God's original desire to know Himself as God.

Meher Baba points out that spiritual progress for every soul is inevitable, and even when the quest for God-realization is unconscious, the soul's evolution is fully governed by the Law of Karma. Progress on the spiritual journey can be tremendously accelerated however, when a soul becomes conscious of its own ability to help in the process.

Now let us consider the ways or methods by which an interested individual can speed the full realization and bliss of his infinite nature. We have suggested that this task is one of spiritual efficiency. It is necessary for each individual to transcend the limitations of the impressions (or *sanskaras*) of duality which have accumulated over innumerable lifetimes. Thus, it is required that we dispel our identification with the limited "ego" and become more and more aware of the Real Self residing within.

#### WHAT TO DO?

This is where you, the reader, are presumably most concerned. You have probably asked yourself in one way or another just how best to make spiritual progress. And by progress we do not mean the mere accumulation of esoteric knowledge, but the actual application of practices which bear spiritual fruit.

If Meher Baba is the supreme spiritual authority of our time, it is reasonable to expect rather straightforward and helpful answers to this practical question. Indeed, Baba's explanations are not only direct but so comprehensive that we can mention only the high points in this article. (An excellent, perhaps incomparable, source of methods for spiritual development are available in Baba's "DISCOURSES". This new paperback edition and all other volumes mentioned in these articles are available from Sufism Reoriented, 1290 Sutter Street, San Francisco, 94109).

The spiritual journey is not an easy one, although nothing can be more worthwhile. It requires more courage and balance than that of a tightrope walker. As might be expected, some methods for pursuing the journey are more effective than others. Obviously discrimination between true ways and inferior ones is extremely important. Meher Baba frankly points to the pitfalls of inferior methods, approaches which are

distinctly detrimental for spiritual advancement. Among these are the illusionary effect of drugs (LSD and others) and the perverting obsession with occult powers or psychic experiences. Although Meher Baba stresses the need for a guide, it may be spiritual foolishness to put oneself under the direction of a pseudo-saint or imperfect master, Baba says:

"To entrust the development of our soul to the guidance of an imperfect teacher (Guru) is like making a mad man sit on our chest with a sharp instrument in his hand."

What, then, are the basic guidelines for safe and sure spiritual advancement? Meher Baba explicates that the path to God-realization may primarily traverse one or more of three basic ways: Knowledge, Love and Action. All the ways to God-realization encouraged by Baba have the dual function of doing away with limiting impressions while reducing selfishness in its broadest sense.

#### THE WAY OF KNOWLEDGE

Although Baba does not give it primary importance, one of the techniques for increasing true knowledge is through meditation, which is broadly defined: "...meditation consist in thorough thinking about a particular object to the exclusion of every other thing."

It is a conscious, natural process which is described in precise detail in the "DISCOURSES". If there is a general lesson surrounding the many different forms of meditation described by Baba, it is the central importance of the object of meditation. For example, in "associative meditation," perhaps the most important type, "meditation has to serve the purpose of associating consciousness with the eternal Truth." Thus, a very fruitful form becomes a meditation on God, in manifest or unmanifest form. This can be accomplished in such ways as reading the revealed Truths of a God-Man or a Perfect Master, concentrating on a physical or mental image of such a One or by repeating His Name.

It might be relevant to mention that persons in the modern Western countries seem to have great difficulty in finding the time, opportunity or concentration necessary for deep meditation. Also, Baba cautions that one can become addicted to different experiences culminating from meditational practices. Once again, the Master is necessary to help the aspirant keep meditation balanced and integrated with the rest of life.



## THE WAY OF LOVE

The way of Love, or Bhakti Yoga, is of primary importance in Meher Baba's life and discourses. Baba explains that the principle of love is the essential driving force in the cosmos and it is only through love that unity with God can be attained. Further, Divine Love is the only force capable of completely breaking through the prison of the limited ego or limited self. Baba sums up the final mystical goal in five words: "Being is dying by loving."

The spiritual aspirant must carefully consider the object of his love, for one tends to become more and more identified with what he loves. It becomes easy to see why physical love or even the highest human love must remain incomplete. The most perfect approach is to love God as your Real Self. If one loves God completely, one becomes God.

## ACTION AND SERVICE

But how should one love God? Meher Baba says:

"To love God in the most practical way is to love our fellow beings. If we feel for others in the same way as we feel for our own dear ones, we love God."

Baba stresses that spirituality must be expressed in action, in life itself, to be of true benefit to the aspirant. This orientation is called Karma Yoga. Very few traits are as deleterious as spiritual hypocrisy. But selfless service to others, in the course of one's normal duties and responsibilities, becomes a most appropriate vehicle for building a strong spiritual foundation. Again, this is no mere moralism on Baba's part, since remembrance of others in love and selfless service weakens the inherent tendency towards selfishness, the greatest barrier to man's true destiny. Baba says:

"The more you remember others with kindness and generosity, the more you forget yourself, and when you completely forget yourself, you find God."

Selfless service tends to reduce selfish desires which hide God from man.

## PERFECT GUIDANCE

Although the paths of knowledge, love and action outlined

by Meher Baba and previous great spiritual teachers is sensible and direct, the fact is that loving God as he should be loved is almost impossible. It is an unfortunate reality that we cannot simply turn on divine love, and that, aside from trying we are frustrated in destroying our limited ego by ourselves. Without the assistance of a perfect guide, it is, in Baba's analogy, like a man trying to stand on his own shoulders.

Thus, the most practical and efficient means for us to progress is to latch on to a perfect guide. In comparison, all other methods are as puddles to the ocean. Now it is correct to note that truly illumined spirits can be of significant benefit, even though they are not fully perfect. These are the "saints" on the fifth and sixth planes of consciousness. However, they are limited in promoting the aspirant's progress. In many times, knowledge of a living perfected Master may not be available. However, since Meher Baba is living and perfect, we are discussing the real possibility of treading the most direct path. (Parenthetically, we might distinguish between a Perfect Master or Man-God and the Avatar or God-Man. Both are infinite consciousness in human form, although the Avatar takes on the additional responsibility of running the spiritual hierarchy, sharing man's bondage of illusory consciousness and taking charge of the spiritual welfare of mankind.)

The perfected Being, Meher Baba explains, has complete consciousness of infinite wisdom, infinite power and infinite bliss beside being conscious of the entirety of the manifest universe. His prime function is to assist others on the spiritual path. It is the Perfect Master who knows precisely each soul's past Karma and what each individual needs to speed his journey. And it is only through a Perfect Master that a soul can be totally liberated.

### THE KEY

The one sure key which opens the door to infinite bliss is a growing relationship (internal more than external) with a living God-Man. The best relationship is one of complete love, obedience and surrendrance to the living Master--in this particular case, to Meher Baba. If one truly loves the Master, nothing else matters:

"I want love--nothing else. Love me and let God love us. When you love Baba, God will love you, and God's loving means everything."

Love for the Master is an involuntary development on man's part and truly a reflection of His love for us. But one can hasten the awareness of this love through obedience to him. Baba highlights the significance of obedience here:

"Complete remembrance of God, honestly in action, making no one unhappy, being the cause of happiness in others, and no submission to low, selfish desires, while living a normal worldly life--can lead one to the path of Realization. But complete obedience to the God-Man brings one directly to God."

Faith and trust in the Master is the cement which crystalizes the constancy of the disciple's love. Baba stresses to his followers:

"Don't worry...leave everything to me." The reliance of an individual on his Master is the healthiest kind of dependency.

#### REMEMBERING AND PERFECTION

If one accepts Meher Baba as the Christ, the approach he presents may seem both simple and mysterious. On an intensely practical level, you may wonder what a person can actually do beyond the basic principles promoting spirituality in his life and cultivating love for Meher Baba. Baba gives what may be the initial clue and final secret in saying "Think of Me always." The remembrance of God has been a pervasive theme throughout esoteric history, and has never been made clearer than in Meher Baba's messages. The technique of remembrance is straightforward--Baba would have you constantly thinking about him, remembering his Name, and trying to be aware of His presence in everything, especially within oneself. This is why Baba emphasizes:

"Do not worry about anything. Keep thinking of me constantly. I am the only One that matters."

In practice, reading any of Baba's messages, repeating his Name orally or remembering him silently are techniques of incomparable potency, while being within the realm of an aspirant's capability: "Love God. Keep him ever-consciously present within you. Let him form the basis of all our thoughts, speech and actions. Remember Him in every little thing you do; the responsibility will then rest with Him."

At the least, the open-minded skeptic might find it interesting to try this kind of remembrance. Repeat Baba's Name continuously for a period of time, orally (when alone) or silently (while doing ordinary duties). Meditate on any photo of him. Read any published works. And then be alert to a subtle intuition that signals your finding what you have been searching for.

Meher Baba promises that he will soon manifest as the Avatar and that the whole world will know it. He also says that "Blessed are they

who come to me now"--before he breaks his Silence and releases the "Ocean of Grace" to all.

"To get nearer and nearer to God...You have not to renounce anything but your own self. It is as simple as that, though found to be almost impossible. You can renounce your limited self by grace. I have come to release that grace."



# SUFISM

By Ivy Oneita Duce

*Cycles change, the worlds rotate,  
But Qutubs ne'er their seat vacate."*

Although presenting a few facts about Sufism, it must be understood that the following is a mere capsule, since great men down through the ages have written fully and beautifully on this subject. I found over five thousand volumes devoted to it in the Al Azhar University in Cairo alone. One difficulty is that so little has been given in the English language and there are very few translations.

There exists a divergence of opinion regarding the origin of the word "Sufi." Some claim it is derived from the Arabic *Safa* or *Saf* which means pure—that is, pure from distinctions and differences. Some think because Sufis wore a woolen robe, the Arabic *Suf* for wool caused the name. Others correlate it with the Greek *Sophia* which is also the Persian name for wisdom. People often confuse the word wisdom with the word intellect, but we regard the source of wisdom as God Himself and feel that it springs from the heart of man. The practice of Sufism is not intellectual, it is devotional, and we speak of it as the religion of the heart. Sufis have always understood Meher Baba's conclusion in *God Speaks* (page 176) that:

"God cannot be explained, He cannot be argued about, He cannot be theorized, nor can He be discussed and understood. God can only be lived . . . Reality must be realized and the divinity of God must be attained and lived."

Union with God is the goal of the Sufi. He speaks of certain stages of his long journey as *Shariat*, *Tariqat*, *Haqiqat* and *Marefat of Haqiqat*. He has some notion of the perils of the path and so he makes it his business to seek a guide to lead him safely through the bewildering aspects of the jungles, seas, mountains and valleys he has to cross. He does not feel that the "God within" so blithely referred to by many as their only pilot has enough chance to steer him correctly, due to it being smothered in his heart by his own ego and desire nature. So he seeks a wise man, one who has attained the Wisdom, to show him how he can also arrive at his goal. He will depend on lesser lanterns to light his way until he can reach a *Murshid*

whose duty it is to guide him to a Perfect Master. It is well known that the journey is long, that Perfect Masters are very rare, and that few merit the grace of a Perfect Master, so seeking souls look for the help of a Sufi who has knowledge of the road. Of course none of us are really Sufis—we are simply aspirants; only one who *has* the wisdom is a Sufi, i.e., a God-realized one.

Sufism has never been propounded by any one man or religion. It is not a religion, it is the essence of all religions, the true spirit or mystical side of all religions—the esoteric side of exoteric religions. It goes back to the anteriority of time but undoubtedly has been revealed more clearly down through the ages. Sufis believe that there have been illuminated souls in the world at all times, and that a great wave of illumination occurs when the world-messenger, or Avatar, comes down to mankind. *Hazrat Inayat Khan* once said: "The true religion, to the Sufi, is the sea of Truth, and all different faiths are as its waves."

Since it is not a religion, people of any religion can become a Sufi.

In Zoroastrianism the best-known Sufi was Hatim. In the period of Daniel there was a Sufi brotherhood. Abraham, the father of great religions, was initiated in a very ancient sect of Egypt. In the time of Mohammad they were called "the brethren of purity." Christians call St. Paul a Christian and Muslims call Shams Tabriz a Muslim, but we would call them Sufis. Sometimes under the name of Sufis, and sometimes under different names. Sufis have lived in different periods of the world as sages, kings, beggars, hermits, workmen, dervishes, monks, prophets, heroes, almost anything you can name.

Sufism is not pantheism, as is often said, because the Sufis believe not only in God manifest but also in the vast reaches of an infinite God in His beyond states which are not manifested in His creation.

Sufism is not Deism because Sufis do not regard God as separate from themselves.

In the same way that a plant will vary when grown under different conditions and in different climates, so there have been different Sufi schools. Four main ones in the East have been the Soharwardia, Nakshibundi, Kaddaria and that established by Moin-ud-din Chisti. Three others are found in the Near East: Maulavi, Sadi and Bakhtashi.

Sufism is often regarded as a purely Muslim offshoot. As mentioned above, whenever a world messenger appears, a fresh, far-reaching wave of illumination occurs, and we have still extant many great works of philosophers, poets, etc., inspired through the advent of Mohammad. Some of these famous names are: Hafiz, Jalal-ud-din Rumi, Ibn Al-Arabi, Al Ghazzali, Al Hujwiri, Farrid Ud-din Attar (whose famous allegory called "The Conference of the Birds" describes so fascinatingly the hazards of the journey through the planes), Saa'di of Shiraz, Shams Tabriz, Anwari, Nizami, Jami. Kabir and Shibli. Among the most noted women were Rabia of Basra and of very recent fame, *Hazrat* Babajan of Poona.

Unfortunately, the only name popularly known to Americans is that of Omar Khayyam, and he is often misconstrued. It has been the habit of Sufis, more often than not, to veil their meaning so that for the eyes of the mystic the intent stands clear, but to the eyes of the layman the verses appear simply beautiful poesy. Because of the idioms Sufi writers use, one might suspect them of being interested only in "wine, women and song," but let us see.

While Christians speak of the church as the allegorical bride and Christ as the Bridegroom, Sufis reverse the positions and speak of God as friend, beloved, mistress, and the Sufi himself as the lover. He will mention the dimpled cheek and perfumed curls of the Beloved, simply to convey in eastern fashion the great beauty of God. He seems always a tippling inebriate but when he suggests drinking wine he is begging us to become intoxicated with love for God. Wine really means anything that uplifts the heart, whether it be prayer, contemplation, divine knowledge, etc.

The *Murshid* is often referred to as the tavern-keeper, and the Sufi school or place where disciples meet with their teacher as the tavern.

Omar Khayyam, and others, refer to "Jamshed's seven-ringed cup" which we know to be an allusion to the seven planes of existence referred to in Genesis and even in Salome's dance of the seven veils. These planes have been most particularly described by Baba. In the Rubaiy'at, references to reincarnation appear and lines like these are meaningful to Baba devotees:

"The world's affairs, as so they seem,  
Nay, the whole universe complete  
Is a delusion and a cheat,  
A fantasy, an idle dream."



Omar sings:

"Poisonous is the world's despair,  
And its sole antidote is wine (love)."

\* \* \*

When I was with the American Red Cross in France during the First World War my faith in God was sorely tried because I could not understand how He, who is Love, would allow all these fine, good men to be killed so wantonly. It was only through later Sufistic studies that I realized existence is not just one life in the gross body and that these men who laid down their lives for the benefit of humanity at large were developing great nobility of soul which hastened their journey to the divine goal and wiped out a vast array of sanskaras. In Supplement 15 of *God Speaks*, Baba describes how man can become superior to angels and archangels because of his self-mastery and great love attained in a struggling world. Some references to this appear in the Bible, as in the Psalms and elsewhere.

The year 1960, just ended, marked the fiftieth anniversary of a Sufi school in the United States of America. The Sufi message was borne to the western world by *Hazrat Inayat Khan* of Baroda, India, in 1910. Much has been written about this great mystic, philosopher, poet and musician who was born in 1882 and descended from sixteen generations of spiritual teachers and five generations of musicians. He traveled extensively in America and all over Europe, restating the inner Wisdom in terms of the religious philosophy of love, harmony and beauty. He wrote many books on all phases of life, stating the truth in very simple English because, he said, the world had enough puzzles and he had not come to bring another one. Profound truth is not necessarily complicated. He kept emphasizing that we should look for the unity of our religious ideals rather than for differences despite our living in such a world of variety. He appointed his first disciple here, Ada Martin, whom he lovingly renamed *Rabia* after the great *Rabia* of Basra, as *Murshida* of his newly founded Sufi school. Her life remained dedicated to that cause until she passed away in 1947 in her native San Francisco. She appointed the writer to carry on her work.

*Hazrat Inayat Khan* gave up the body in January of 1927, I believe in Delhi, India. His close friend, Hassan Nizami, who also had founded a Sufi school, was with him at the end. Due to certain statements made to her in person and in letters by *Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan*, plus assurances of

Sheikh Hassan Nizami, Rabia Martin believed herself to be the appointed successor to *Hazrat Inayat Khan* and went to France when the Sufi Summer School opened in 1927 to take charge of the work. There she was met with unexpected schism and opposition, as so often happens after the death of a great saint, and the Sufi order established by *Hazrat Inayat Khan* split into two segments. *Murshida* Martin continued her work in the United States, Brazil and Australia. *Pir-o-Murshid* Inayat Khan's brother took over the rest of his *murceeds* (disciples) except those who were so appalled at the schism they would not continue their training with either leader.

Finding herself confronted with a terrible responsibility upon the death of *Murshida* Martin, the writer was for a time in a dilemma. However, Sufis have always believed in the existence of a spiritual hierarchy living in the world, a hierarchy which is beyond religious labels but which has stemmed from and through all of them. They have always known of the one Perfect Master who acts as the hub of the wheel which guides this hierarchy and the world. He is called the "*Qutub*." So this writer determined that if Sufism was to exist in the Americas she must locate the *Qutub* and get His authoritative help. Before her death, *Murshida* Martin had told of a Perfect Master in India named Meher Baba whom she felt must be the *Qutub*. I determined to find Him.

As it developed later, He had already found me and made it possible for me to reach Him in India the end of 1947. My daughter Charmian and I stayed with Him at Meherazad and He agreed to take our Sufi order under His wing.

Here I would like to try to correct a false impression. Many people attending the Sahavas in this country, and other seekers, become confused because some of Baba's followers are Sufis and some are not. Baba is not a Sufi, He is THE SUFI, even as Jesus, Buddha, Mohammad had the Wisdom—the REAL knowledge. People from all religions, cults and sects come to Him for His divine guidance. He dictated the following words at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, on June 17th, 1952:

"Meher Baba is equally connected with Islam and its Sufism, Christianity and its Mysticism, the Orient and its Vedantism, broad Buddhism, practical Zoroastrianism, Jainism and many other such *isms* which all speak the same divine Truth and lead to the same divine goal. Meher Baba is also detached and above all these divine paths. He has to awaken the followers of these paths to the real meaning of these *isms* in their true spirit by reorienting these *isms*, and in this capacity He has reoriented Sufism in the charter to be universally adopted."

Hazrat Inayat Khan said, "A book is a dead teacher." In his book "In An Eastern Rose Garden" (page 307) he also said:

"Whatever the name of the teacher, there is still the one stem of life and light. As long as the tree of this manifestation exists, the stem will exist. The names are all names of one current of life and light that runs through the tree. The One Spirit of life is given different names, the sacred names; and we more easily recognize the current by the particular name to which we are accustomed. So far we are right, but the mistake we make—and it is to our loss—is to ignore or deny the same truth because it is given to us in another form and in another name. We limit it. We say the truth was only in that period when such and such teachers came. . . . But the Spirit of illumination can never stop as long as life goes on. Illumination has been continued from the first to the last, and will always be continued until the manifestation stops."

Despite these words and those of such great souls as Rumi, Kabir, etc., all of whom exhort us to find a living teacher because Sufistic training is based on the light of a *living* master, some people, due to their attachment to a personality, cannot bring themselves to seek another. All Sufis believe in a *Qutub* and they know that in the present cyclic time the Avatar or World Messenger is due. Sufis of all times have always given the greatest reverence and love to the Avatar, and to the chain of spiritual guidance. Not only Sufis but many thousands of people all over the world have the conviction that Meher Baba is the Avatar of this age. All religions are looking for the "second coming" but the ONE cannot come with a label—as always the One comes for all.

In 1952 the Master reoriented our work and devised a charter for it, and since then we have been operating under the corporate name of Sufism Re-oriented. He would do the same for other Sufi schools if asked, in any country. He is the true light. Baba has also allowed us to publish three of His books and has given His blessing and some of His words to two Sufis, Don Stevens and Francis Brabazon for their books. There will undoubtedly be a fresh crop of Sufi authors during and after Baba's stay on earth. It has always been so.

Sufism Reoriented provides a system of inner training for those who wish to go beyond the form side of religion and arrive at the real heart of

spiritual life. We have to not only intellectually know but *realize* that one current running through everything and every creature in existence. We have to learn how to achieve harmony with each other, with God, and within ourselves. We have to cease compartmentalizing our lives, and to translate our spiritual knowledge into everyday life. Once I repeated to Baba that some men had told me they would like to study with me but that they could not conduct their business if they had to be absolutely one hundred per cent honest. Baba gave one of His expressive looks and replied quickly, "But God has *never* approved of falsehood!" It is as simple as that, and it is astonishing how much energy is conserved and how comfortable one feels when one can be completely honest. Where hypocrisy exists in a heart God does not wish to dwell—hence the need for purity.

It is indeed true that any one can go to Baba without being a Sufi or without Sufistic training, but after the Master again lays down His dear body, there will be need for true Sufis and true Yogis to guide people on the Path. Although I would have preferred to "leave all and follow Him" in the physical sense, the Master has commanded that I establish a strong Sufi school in the Americas, and so, by His grace, this I have been trying to do. Sufistic training teaches that detachment by which one can "leave all" even in the midst of a pressured active mundane life, for Sufis regard the world as their school wherein they have to learn how to live a divine life.



## Interview

# MURSHIDA IVY ONEITA DUCE OF SUFISM REORIENTED

(NCS) During a recent visit to San Francisco the Editor had an interesting visit with Murshida Ivy Oneita Duce, the leader of Sufism Reoriented in the United States. For forty years, until his recent death, she lived a varied complicated and fascinating life with her husband, an internationally known oil executive who served business, education and governments alike, holding many awards and decorations. Despite the intense worldly demands on her time, she managed to keep her eyes on the goal and help further the spiritual quest of many students. She has edited a number of Avatar Meher Baba's books and more recently written a compact paperback called **WHAT AM I DOING HERE?** which is being used in some universities as a text book on mysticism.

She equates the word "Sufism" with wisdom, although it has various derivations and says that the practice of Sufism is devotional rather than intellectual, and that it is not a religion — people of any religion can become Sufis. It is not Deism since Sufis do not regard God as separate from themselves and it is not pantheism because Sufis believe in God unmanifest as well as manifested. The goal of the Sufi is union with God and Sufism Reoriented provides a system of inner training for those who wish to REALIZE Him. Sufism goes back to the anteriority of time and is not simply an offshoot of Islam as it is often said. Sufis have always believed in the existence of a spiritual hierarchy living in the world, which is beyond religious labels but which has stemmed from and through all of them. Among many illustrious Sufis were Hafiz, Ibn Al-Arabi, Al Ghazzali, Al Hujwiri, Attar, Sa'adi, Shams Tabriz, Anwari, Nizami, Jami, Kabir, Shibli, Rabi'a of Basra and of very recent fame, Hazrat Babajan of Poona.

J.L.

Q. Mrs. Duce, I understand you are the Murshida of Sufism Reoriented. What is a Murshida?

MRS. DUCE: A. The word "Murshida" means teacher but it actually refers to a teacher who has attained a certain stage on the spiritual path.

Q. How did you become the head of Sufism Reoriented?

A. Murshida Martin made me her successor but I did not feel adequately prepared and did not want to be a spiritual poseur. When I sought the help of Avatar Meher Baba he told me that this was my destiny and that as long as I remained honest he would help me to fulfill my title of Murshida which he confirmed.

Q. I have understood you were the wife of a prominent oil executive. Didn't you find your responsibilities as the head of a religious group somewhat difficult to reconcile with your role as a business man's wife?

A. The only difficulty was the matter of time — to make time for everything. As a matter of fact I did have a very heavy schedule particularly during my nine years in Washington where I entertained on a large scale and attended various entertainments on a large scale. However I remembered the Bible saying that we should render to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's, and I therefore used every moment that I could to attend to my students, and I must say that my husband was extremely sympathetic toward my work and always agreeable to my doing it.

Q. I judge then from your comments that you didn't find that there was any particular conflict between what was due Caesar and what was due God?

A. To me there was no conflict and to my husband there was no conflict but in the minds of many people there is certainly a conflict in this. I have had people come into my home

and frankly say to me that I couldn't possibly be a spiritual teacher and be surrounded with luxury. This of course stems from the fact that they equate spirituality with poverty instead of realizing that a truly spiritual person is detached in the midst of the good things of life if his karma produces them for him.

Q. Well, I am a bit amazed that where conflict apparently arose, it arose on the part of those people who were interested in the spiritual path rather than on the part of those people who participated in the business world.

A. My husband naturally — since he had a very important position in life — quite often, I think, felt a little worried for fear people would consider me queer and that this might in some way reflect upon his business contacts. However, a true spiritual teacher does not try to inflict his views upon other people and does not run around and preach or proselytize. We understand that everybody is in a certain state of evolution and that all these states are correct for certain periods in each person's many lifetimes, and we try to be in harmony with all people on all levels and to meet them on their level and not have any feelings of separateness from life.

Q. Whereabouts in the world did your earlier business career take you?

A. My father was a mechanical engineer who at one time worked with Thomas Edison. My mother stated that he had dragged her everywhere except Alaska and the Sahara Desert and I therefore seemed to have travel in my bones.

My first big trip away from home was during the First World War when I went over to France with the Red Cross. Later having studied law, I joined an international bank and went for them to Cuba and then spent two years in Columbia where we had nine

banks, most of which time I had to travel on mule-back over the Andes. It was there that I met my husband-to-be. I then came back to New York and became contact editor on the CENTURY Magazine, where I worked with the elder Carl Van Doren and Glenn Frank. I then met Mr. Duce again and we married rather hastily because he was to go back to South America. During the 40 years of my marriage I have been in almost every country on the globe.

Q. Have you found businessmen and politicians interested in matters of the spirit?

A. It was a strange revelation to me that many persons in these walks of life which somehow people are apt to think of as unspiritually directed were seeking and searching for a meaning to life. I can well remember sitting at crowded dinner parties or gatherings among people connected with political or oil interests in different parts of the world and finding here and there men with big names as the world knows them still looking for some confirmation of the truth of their religion, or wanting to know where they were heading and why they were doing what they were doing. It wasn't as if I ever promoted such a conversation, but something would bring it up and because I had an answer they would then overcome a feeling of shyness about discussing such things and we would have many interesting dialogues about the spiritual life. Of course I think the great malaise in the world today is that people try to put spirituality in one compartment and their daily life or their work in another and this can't be done. We seem to have a tendency to fragment our lives in various directions instead of making it flow as a unity.

Q. What are the requirements to become a Sufi?

A. I would say a tremendous and even overwhelming desire to find God and a willingness to place one's self in the hands of a guide who knows the direction and can tell us how to get there. Again, we have the feeling that there are scientific experts, but we reject the idea that there is a spiritual science and that there are such guides in existence.

Q. Are there certain particular qualifications, or vows which the individual must take?

A. Well, of course different Sufi Orders in different parts of the world operate according to the way their particular Murshid has set up his way

of functioning. In my case our Sufi Order is under the direction of Avatar Meher Baba and we operate as he has directed us to. We demand a vow of honesty. This is one of the most needed virtues in the world of today. A candidate is also expected when initiated to trust his Murshid and be guided by him.

Q. Do you feel it is possible for a young person starting out in a career to follow these precepts, and still be completely accepted by modern enterprise?

A. I witness this every day. Nobody has ever promised that following the Path is easy. It was always called sharper than the razor's edge. My students have run into the most extraordinary situations where it seemed as if they would surely lose their jobs if they were honest but instead, it has turned out that they are trusted and their sincerity is recognized. When they get into jobs that seem to require dishonest methods they simply leave them. I once told Meher Baba that several businessmen had mentioned to me that they would give anything to study with me but if they had to promise to be one hundred per cent honest they couldn't stay in business and Meher Baba replied: "God has never approved of falsehood". People try to make Truth and the following of truth very complicated whereas it is just as simple as that. Baba also says that God cannot live in a heart that harbors hypocrisy.

Q. You mentioned earlier that there has been some comment on the part of people who are interested in the spiritual path that you couldn't possibly be a spiritual leader due to your background of relative affluence. Has this ever been a problem with the people who were your spiritual responsibility?

A. I have been the head of this Order for about 20 years. Up until perhaps five years ago I do not think it was ever questioned but the young people of today seem to have an obsession that business people, politicians, people with money, executives and in fact anybody over thirty, are not to be trusted. Naturally they have been dubious also about a spiritual teacher who does not appear in a white robe and sandals with a begging bowl in his hand. However, many are really seeking for the meaning of life and they are very quick to recognize when a person is genuine and sincere. Since my husband's death my circumstances have become more

in keeping with the modern view of how a spiritual teacher should live. So I'm not a hundred per cent sure where this matter stands. However, in our work we teach karmic results of life and our students come to understand that whether a person has good fortune or not is a matter of his previous activities, and they also know that history is full of stories of great figures such as King Janaka who were spiritual masters. But as I said before such masters live in the world but not OF it.

Q. I have spent a good deal of time in asking you about your background because it is an unusual one to have integrated into a career as leader of an organization with its roots in Eastern mysticism. But now let's go on to your present career. How did you become interested in the Sufi way?

A. From the time I was a very small child I was religious minded. I did a great deal of church work, sang in the choir, taught Sunday School and all those things. But as I grew older I became less and less satisfied with the dogma of church which seemed unable to answer my endless questions about God and life after death, why good people had such bad luck in life and bad people had such good luck and things of that sort. This started me on a long search for answers and it wasn't until I met a Sufi Murshida that I felt I was getting close to solid ground and as I progressed in those studies I found my questions fully answered.

Q. What is your personal estimation of Meher Baba, who is the spiritual guide of Sufism Reoriented?

A. All Sufis, if they come from a legitimate Sufi school, know that time in the world is divided into cycles and ages. Many other religious teachings such as Vedanta also know this. It is known that every seven hundred to fourteen hundred years the Avatar comes into the world because of the great need which has arisen for the message to be restated. I certainly had no idea that Avatar Meher Baba was the Avatar when I went to him. I went to him the end of 1947 because my Murshida had told me that she regarded him as the Qutub which means the Perfect Master. I knew that I needed the help of such a one and when I met Meher Baba I was convinced that he was the Qutub; most people who have met him acknowledge him as such. Actually he never admitted that he was the Avatar until

September, 1954, and by that time people all around the world who had gone to him had suspected it, including myself.

Q. Are we to understand that you use the term Avatar as most persons in the Western World would use the word Messiah or Christ?

A. Definitely.

Q. Returning to the subject of Meher Baba, what significance do you feel he has to the average modern man and the present state of world problems? In other words, is Meher Baba for a specialized few, or for the problems of the many?

A. Meher Baba is not only for everybody in all possible walks of life but he is also for the elephant and the ant and all living creatures. The Avatar gives a sort of spiritual push to the creation when he comes into the world, and to ALL creatures you might say. He always comes when, as the Gita says, the message decays and because the average human needs a gauge by which he can measure both himself and what a human being should really aspire to be regardless of race, creed or conditions. The Avatar demonstrates how the poorest and most fallen person can live life divinely.

Q. Perhaps I should ask then the reverse question. That if Meher Baba has this universalized function does he also have a specialized function for the few?

A. It is very hard for the Western World to understand the specialized function of the Avatar unless they are willing to accept the truth of reincarnation. All religions have taught the doctrine of reincarnation including the Christian religion which only stopped so teaching in 553 A.D. If we understand that we go through long journeys as souls from God and back to God requiring millions of lifetimes, we can understand that certain people in the world have traveled longer than others and that some of these are almost at the end of their quest. To these the Master's teachings are perhaps more comprehensible than to others — and to some of these he will give God realization.

Q. How does the Sufi approach modern life? Is he a recluse, or a rebel, or an odd ball, or does he try to integrate?

A. A Sufi should be the epitome of integration. We do not believe in withdrawal from life because when we withdraw from other people and pro-

blems we have not really developed understanding or virtues, stamina or tolerance, endurance or patience. We regard the world as our school and we try to live in harmony with others knowing that we are all one. It isn't always easy but we try because this is the way God planned His creation.

Q. Doesn't such a major effort towards a profound integration into the life of society and business involve the Sufi initiate in some sacrifice in the standards that he has set up for himself by becoming a Sufi?

A. Would you repeat that please, I don't think I understand the question.

Q. Well, there is the apparent fact that the standards of the world are rather non-spiritual and if the Sufi is intended to become so deeply integrated into life mustn't he compromise the standards to which he is aspiring as a Sufi, the internal and moral standards?

A. There can be no compromise with Truth. If we feel we have to compromise then we shouldn't go on the Path. Just a moment, I have something here I would like to read.

These problems come up almost every day with the members of our Order. One young man complained to me bitterly that as a musician he could find no job in San Francisco except in a small band in a nightclub which featured topless waitresses and in which the hit song was "Let me sleep with you tonight." He said to me in anguish, "I just find it hard to keep thinking about our ideals in this atmosphere and I just know that Meher Baba doesn't like what I am doing." I had been presented with so many problems like this of late that I took occasion to write to India and ask Meher Baba's feeling about it and Meher Baba's secretary replied:

"The Beloved Baba says that he has no objection to the boy's continuing his present job in the nightclub, as long as he does not get involved in affairs which he conscientiously feels Baba would not like."

We cannot always earn a living in an atmosphere of spiritual vibrations. We are part of all life and the Master understands all life as no one else can. He also knows that we have to earn our way, and having told us the difference between what is right and what is wrong, he leaves it up to us to develop discrimination and to learn to live in the world and do all our practical duties but still to keep our eyes on the goal which is God.

Q. Why do the Sufis teach principally in closed classes?

A. It is really only older souls who have been ground in the mill of the world through innumerable lifetimes who develop the "divine desperation" through which they finally give their lives into the keeping of a master — for this reason they are more ready for discipline and spiritual knowledge. In the Western World it is not an easy thing to be willing to give obedience to a spiritual teacher. In doing so they have to learn to trust the teacher's instructions and directions implicitly. This cannot be done by masses of people in all grades of evolution. When the Avatar comes all grades and classes of evolution can respond to his love and to the message but they can only do so insofar as their spiritual development will permit. People are like fruit trees, they have to grow and put out branches and finally flowers and fruit and it is only when they become ripe for the journey back to God that they have any desire to be Sufis.

Q. Is it your aim to produce mystic experiences or psychic powers and experiences in your students?

A. Far from it. Occult experiences and powers instead of giving more spiritual insight can more often deter the seeker on the path to God. The only thing that really develops an understanding of God, final illumination and God realization is the development of character and a loving heart. This is so simple that many people reject it. We know that as one progresses on the path psychic knowledge and powers will come as part of the journey. But if they come at the right time we will have the wisdom to handle them correctly without getting ourselves into more karmic debts and problems.

If you grow plants in a greenhouse, they do not withstand the cold weather and wind very well and life has a good deal of cold weather and wind and storms as well as sunshine. Only a firmly rooted good character can withstand the difficult periods of existence.

Q. If I understand you correctly, then you say that development of character rather than psychic experiences is the immediate goal of the Sufi training and this presumably leads to illumination or God realization?

A. This is true but of course the training is directed towards developing discrimination. It is not easy to see



from various points of view other than your own and to really know the best ways of handling the problems in your life.

Q. Do you feel that the Sufi developing in this fashion can be productive and reconcile his viewpoint with the needs of a modern technologically-oriented society?

A. I think more so than the average man because the Sufi has learned not to compartmentalize his life. He dedicates whatever he has to do — whether it be science, medicine or street cleaning — to God and does the best he knows how each day. Even in the competitive life of today he really only wants to do his best because if God has given him talents, he must use them, but he also learns to follow that difficult instruction of Krishna as told in the Gita which is to leave the results to God and not worry if the results are not those expected.

Q. On this subject of science, what is Meher Baba's attitude toward science?

A. Most of the great scientists of today have come around to the real knowledge that there is no conflict between science and spirituality and true knowledge of God. God has given

more and more scientific knowledge through His creatures as the ages go by. It is all a part of Him as well as everything we do, but as a matter of fact Baba has told us that science is going to progress more and more to greater and greater knowledge and heights in the years to come.

Q. What do you feel is behind the increasing tempo of crisis in the world?

A. Human greed and selfishness, and also it is because we have not only reached a new Avatatic age, it being close to 1400 years since the last Avatar, but Meher Baba has told us that we are closing out a grand cycle of cycles that goes back far beyond any history we have in the world. When the Avatar comes he has to clean out an Aegean stable and break down crystallized dogma and practices and free all people for a new dispensation. The upheaval in the earth and the actual quickening of time itself is all part of this present Avatatic age which is making way for a new period in which people will regain a sane understanding of what God desires of His world — love and brotherhood.

Q. What will happen when Meher Baba breaks his silence?

A. He has told us that this will be his one great miracle and that at this time everyone in the world except a small band near him will feel God's love for something like seven minutes, but of course their reaction will depend upon how much sensitivity they have.

Meher Baba has also warned us that he would suffer humiliation before everyone really knows who he is and so he has cautioned us to hold on to his daaman which really means the hem of his garment until the drama of his life is fully played out. There will be tremendous disturbances in the world at that time and Baba has said that he will actually be forced to speak or break his silence by the turn of events and that it will have as great an effect as an atomic bomb would — infinite wisdom will be released, there will be great material destruction and a tremendous spiritual upheaval. The time for all this is very near.



# MEHER BABA AND THE SUFIS

by Don E. Stevens

*The author, Don Stevens, is a graduate in Chemistry of the Johns Hopkins University. He is currently employed by one of the world's major oil companies, in the capacity of a crude oil sales subsidiary. Mr. Stevens' connection with the Sufis dates back to his initiation in 1944. A world traveler, he has had periodic contact with Meher Baba, to whom he is completely devoted. Mr. Stevens is also co-editor of Meher Baba's "God Speaks" and he is editor and narrator of his "Listen Humanity." In addition to the aforementioned publications, he also authors numerous technical articles and he serves as a member of the Board of Sufism Reoriented. Mr. Stevens is typical of the increasing number of technically trained individuals who search for a "bridge" between science and mysticism.*

(NCS) Sufi mystics, Sufi poets and Sufi artifacts are interleaved with the residues of great civilizations through thousands of years of antiquity. The very name itself, Sufi, has elicited a series of theories on its origin, from the generally accepted *sophia* or "wisdom" of the Greek and Persian tongues, to *safa* or "purity of the Arabic, and *suf* or "wool" of the Persian. Regardless of its exact origin and the original intent of its name, it is apparent that in each Messianic age the Sufis seem to have recognized and associated themselves with the focal point for God's message for that time. They knew Abraham, bowed before Christ, were revitalized by Mohammed, and have continued to this day as a concentrated nucleus for the remembrance and practice of God's name. The essence of their inner discovery is captured in the timeless literary jewels of the great poets Hafiz, Rumi, Sa'adi, Attar, Al Ghazzali, Ibn Al Arabi, Hujwiri and many others. Their technique is preserved in the close master-disciple relationship as practiced today in small, intimate groups of Sufis in the four corners of the world.

The central structure of the Sufis' belief has always been a simple one: belief in one God for all people, one Message given by a succession of Messengers, and the fact of unity with God to be realized by the individual. The process of achieving unity with God continues to be the central fascination for the Sufi. The key for him is implicit trust in, and love for, the Master who knows the way. Generally, the Sufi forges ahead through the lessons provided by an active life

in the world. This is his laboratory, the great incubator provided by God for the development and perfection of consciousness. He may withdraw from the world from time to time to digest his intake of experience, but over-all he looks upon it as the positive tool for fulfilling the will-to-consciousness, rather than as the source of sin to be rejected.

Believing as he does that a constant key to Truth is provided in the world at all times for those whose inner time-table calls for conscious search for his own meaning, the Sufi always keeps open the possibility that he will be destined to meet a Perfect One. This is

one who has not only progressed along the path of perfecting consciousness, but has achieved the entire distance. Such a one has completed the arduous job of ridding himself of the by-products of the coming to consciousness, and in so doing has rediscovered his identity with God. His is in a particularly potent position, for he knows. God, creation, evolution, involution, consciousness, man, his purpose—all are laid out as a map through his inner realization. But more! The very fact of his continued presence on earth is an indication that he has elected to assist others in the self-same process of completing the job. Therefore

he is certainly the key of all keys.

It is a part of the Sufi tradition throughout the centuries to look for and be willing to accept the presence of such a **Perfect One** in any guise. There are no rules for judging his external characteristics. It is only his inner state which reveals him for what he is. The recent history of the Sufis, in particular those in America and Australia, has been intimately tied to this concept. The inception of the story is 1910, when a fine appearing young Indian from Baroda set sail for the New World, carrying his sacred vina for music and his Murshid's instruction to spread the Sufi message of love in the Western World. Hazrat Inayat Khan was then only twenty-eight years old, but already one of India's most famous and distinguished musicians and, more important, a product of its four major schools of Sufi traiping.

Landing in San Francisco he soon met Rabia A. Martin who was well prepared to know that she had found her guide. Lecturing and playing his beloved vina along the West Coast, he soon solidified a devoted nucleus of followers. Continuing to the East, and then on to Europe, he spent seventeen years carrying out the instructions of his Master. Returning to India to recoup, he meditated all night in Ajmer (at the tomb of India's greatest Sufi Saint, Moinuddin Chisti) contracted a deep chill and died of pneumonia within a few days.

His work was carried on in many locales by the same devoted Rabia Martin, who knew the spiritual law that the true student must have a living teacher who knows through his own experience. In 1945 she was drawn to stories she heard of Meher Baba, a Perfect Master of India. For months she studied his background and his words. Convinced at last that he was the great spiritual Master of the day, she communicated with him and placed herself and her Order under his guidance. Waiting for the arrival of her new Master on a projected trip to America, she dropped the body and passed on the reins of control of the Sufi Order to her student Ivy O. Duce.

With characteristic vigor and forthrightness, the New Murshida set out promptly for India to meet Meher Baba. Convinced at once that Meher Baba was all that her Murshida had believed him to be, she reconfirmed herself and her Order under his guidance, and returned to America. She preserves her headquarters in San Francisco.

It is well to state here that while Baba accepted this role of spiritual guide, he made it clear that in so doing he was not thereby becoming a Sufi, nor limiting himself to the guidance of one "ism". Nor was it necessary for an individual to become a Sufi in order to come to Baba. His is a truly universal role in which all, regardless of creed or origin, might look to him for enlightenment.

While these events took place in 1947, it was not until 1952 that the next readily recordable event occurred. At that time Meher Baba travelled through Western Europe to America and, among many other activities, reoriented the Sufis under his guidance. Many extraordinary and dramatic events occurred during this visit, but to the historian of the spiritual epic the combination of the old with the new embodied in this reorientation is of greatest interest. Meher Baba had already prepared in India the form of the reorientation he visualized. He entitled this *"Chartered Guidance from Meher Baba for the Reorientation of Sufism as the Highway to the Ultimate Universalized"*. Obviously the title is crammed with significance, and perhaps most intriguing is the statement that this is to be a universalized highway to the Ultimate. Baba clarifies and expands on this in the body of the document. He states that he is primarily concerned with the five principal highways to God: **Sufism, Vedantism, Christian Mysticism, Dasatirian Zoroastrianism, and Broad Buddhism.**

Further, in the process of reorientation, Baba says it is his aim to enlarge the scope of the Sufism to make it all-embracing in its knowledge and practice, while maintaining intact the original value and purity inhering in its recognition of and striving for divine knowledge and divine realization of Truth through active pursuit of the divine Path.

He outlined, among other things, a pointed course of study of God and His attributes, the lives of the great Messengers and Saints and certain of his own basic writings. Underlying all this is the constant reiteration of the potency of love in accomplishing the impossible. With several deft strokes he eliminated even the faint traces of secularism that had crept into the Sufi tradition and defined a pure and essential technique for the achieving of the goal, which is conscious realization of God.

While Baba has outlined several responsibilities for the aspirant, there are three pillars which are required to support the attitude of one requesting initiation: **belief in God, absolute honesty, and faith in and trust in the Murshid.** Belief in God, or the willingness to believe in God, must be the base for any discipline as active and demanding as that of the Sufis. There is no place for self-doubts, social doubts and universal doubts, and their self-neutralizing drain on the individual's psychic energy. The Path must be able to call on the concentrated focus of every erg of energy that the aspirant possesses.

Absolute honesty seems at first glance impossible of achievement. How does the individual possess the standards for judging absolute honesty? Moreover, how is it possible to practice even the limited standards one already recognizes, without losing job and friends?

Yet any sincere seeker, on reflection, recognizes the necessity for the simplification of life that a sincere effort towards honesty will bring. Many Sufis have faced this challenge and found surprising solutions and elasticity within the personalities of those close ones whose reactions they had feared most. The resulting gains in time, energy and attitude in turn are ploughed at once into the vast demands upon psychic energy made by the emerging Self.

The Murshida once related to Baba that a number of prominent men had told her that they would like to study Sufism, but were absolutely stumped by the requirement for absolute honesty. On hearing this Baba appeared to draw back in astonishment and rapidly gestured, **"But God has never approved of dishonesty!"**

Faith and trust in the Murshid is peculiarly difficult for the Western man. He glories in a tradition of freedom, self-determination, equality. The unconditional acceptance of another's guidance implicit in the Guru-chela relationship knocks sharply against a pillar of his sacred temple of tradition.

If this were a one-way challenge, then in truth there would be little probability of achievement in any except the very unusual case. Then Sufism with or without Baba's re-orientation would stand little chance of success as a broad highway to the Ultimate—certainly in Western civilization. However, this is a two-way challenge, and in this lies its resolution.

In observing Meher Baba himself in action, one is struck by the infinite pains, sensitivity and courtesy that even the Highest uses in winning the trust and affection of one whose present destiny is to become a pilgrim on the Path.

While the foregoing is only the briefest accounting of the essential relation between Meher Baba and Sufism Re-oriented, it seemed desirable to give some description of that vital link. Following the act of reorientation, the Sufis spent approximately ten years in infolding. On numerous occasions there was opportunity to be with Meher Baba, sometimes in America, sometimes in India, on occasion in large groups, surprisingly often in individual interview. The planted new seed was germinating in a favorable environment. During this period the Sufis were preparing themselves for the day when Meher Baba had said it would be required to perform to its utmost.

Meanwhile Baba was also intensely active with many other non-Sufi individuals and groups. Always making gently clear his point that he was above all **"isms"**, he continued to focus an important segment of his attention on the Sufis. During recent years it has become apparent that the period of gestation was drawing to a close. Engaging in a number of important publication projects for Meher Baba, the Sufis became increasingly involved with people in far-flung corners who were attracted by the vitality of belief and action that were evident, and who felt a need for an organized discipline.

For them, Sufism Reoriented seemed in truth to be a dynamic way to the Ultimate in which they sacrificed none of the specialized point-of-view of their religious experience.

Recently Meher Baba has become deeply concerned by the rapidly expanding use in America of the "mind-expanding" drug LSD, and the belief by many that this and other psychedelic drugs produced experiences qualitatively comparable to the inner experiences of the great mystics. With astonishing attention he instituted and directed from his seclusion in India a concerted move outlining the dangers of use of psychedelics, and the lack of perspective evidenced in assuming the experiences to be of spiritual importance.

For this activity Sufism Reoriented became one of several major springboards. Almost automatically, to Sufism Reoriented and other

Baba groups came many of those who heeded Meher Baba's warnings. With the scent of something both real and exciting in their nostrils, they asked where then was the true way, and how might they proceed? As a principal vehicle for his corrective action Meher Baba chose four young students in Boston universities. The relation between them and Sufism Reoriented in certain situations became closely symbiotic. Within weeks all the inbuilt experience of Baba's guidance and of thousands of years of preserved tradition, was called into play. Day after day saw its own small and large human miracles generated through the insight and support of the silent Master in India.

The Sufis have not at any time in history been a major segment of the faithful. Their cardinal procedural principle of waiting until the soul's own inner alarm clock rings in it-

self is not conducive to great numbers. But further, their technique of transmission—in small classes and private interviews—is so intimate and time-consuming that there is little opportunity for mass conversion. Instead, they have been catalysts in all periods of civilization. What they have said has been listened to respectfully, and often revered as the direct word of God. Theirs is the way of the true individualist, who recognizes the ultimate in individualism in one mighty stroke of Love.







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