

MEHER BABA, THE AWAKENER
A THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION
OF MEHER BABA AS THE AVATAR

Approved for the Department:

Adviser

Date

Accepted:

Dean of the Graduate School

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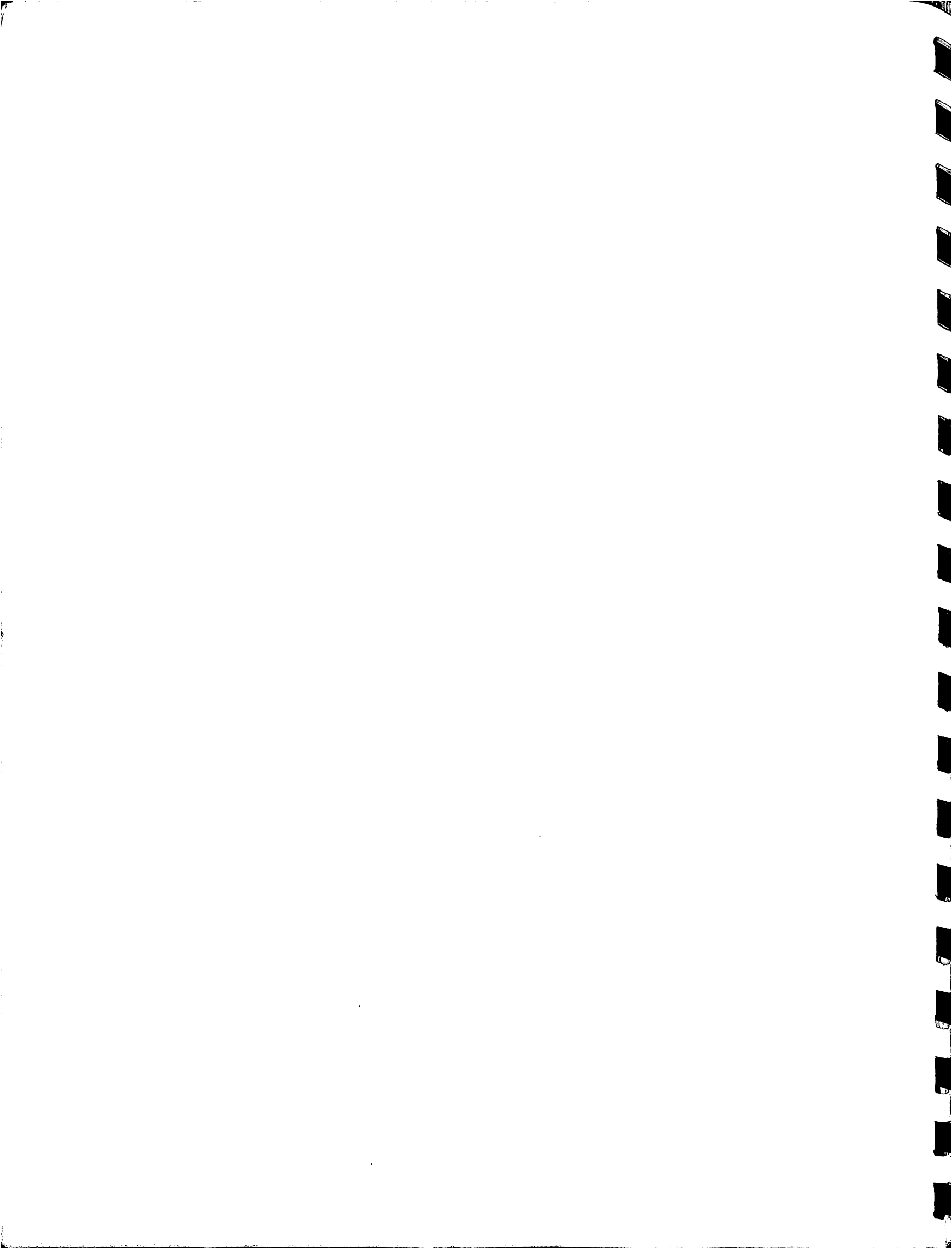
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OF MEHER BABA AS THE AVATAR

By

Charles C. Haynes
B.A., Emory University, 1971
M.T.S., Harvard Divinity School, 1975

Adviser: Professor John Fenton

An Abstract of
A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
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Doctor of Philosophy

Division of Religion

1985



ABSTRACT

Meher Baba (1894-1969) declared that he was the Avatar, the manifestation of God in human form, and that he had come to awaken the world through an unprecedented release of divine love. This dissertation examines Baba's claim of divinity by exploring the meaning of his life and work, and the dynamics of the awakening he promised.

To accomplish his mission Meher Baba lived an active life, serving, among others, the sick, the poor, and the mentally disturbed. He observed oral silence for the last forty-four years of his life, communicating through the use of hand gestures and a board with the letters of the alphabet printed on it. He indicated that he would break his silence by speaking the Word of God within every heart. Today thousands of people throughout the world love and follow Baba, believing that his work of awakening is now transforming the consciousness of all living things.

A central aim of this study is to make Meher Baba accessible by explicating as clearly as possible what he himself intended by his life and work. The theological interpretation offered here seeks to remove some of the barriers to understanding in order that his message of love may speak for itself.



Chapter I examines Meher Baba's cosmology in an effort to establish the metaphysical foundation necessary for further consideration of his mission of awakening. Chapter II correlates the theology with the known biography in order to present a coherent picture of how Baba saw himself as the embodiment of divine love. The last two chapters focus on two inter-related dimensions of the transformation of consciousness Baba claimed to bring: For the world, he promised a universal release of divine love that will give all of life a spiritual push forward and thereby usher in a "new humanity." For individuals, he offered himself as the divine beloved who will guide aspirants on the inner path of love. The study concludes with a detailed consideration of the lover-beloved relationship, and the dynamics of the inner connection with Meher Baba experienced by his followers both during his lifetime and today.



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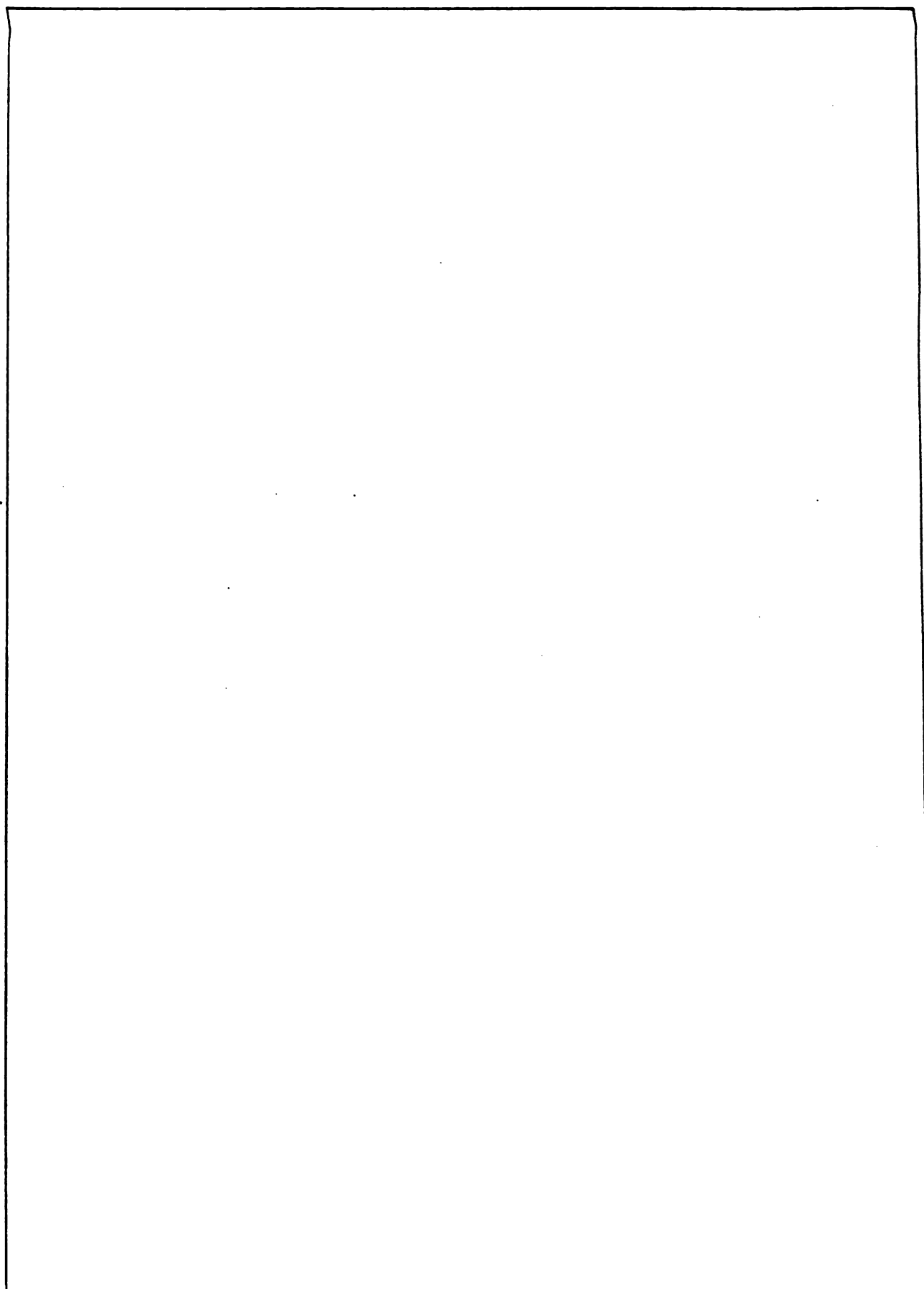
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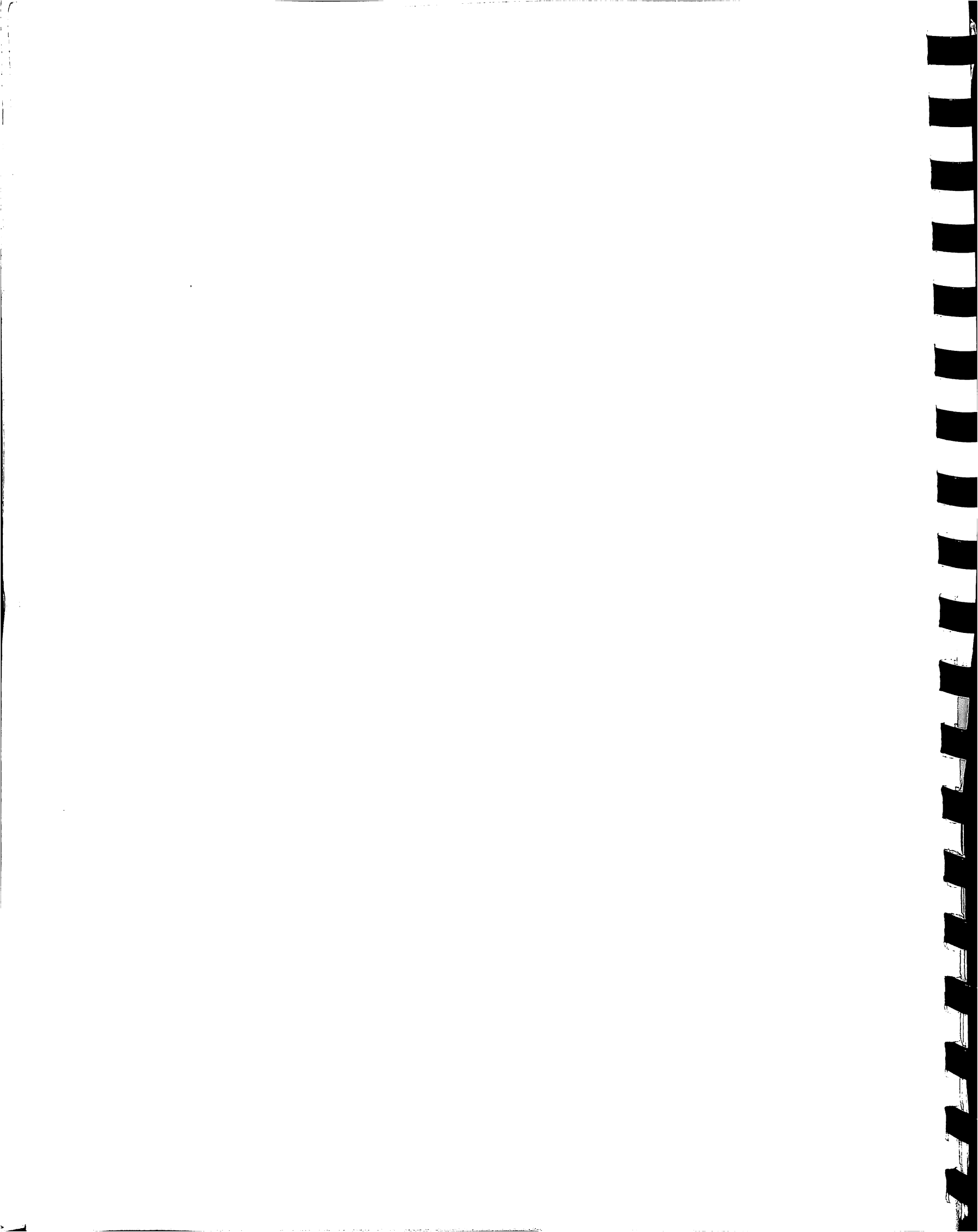






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INTRODUCTION

MEHER BABA, THE AWAKENER

Meher Baba declared that he was the Avatar, the manifestation of God in human form, and that his only message was of divine love. "I have come not to teach," he said, "but to awaken." He indicated that his message would not be given in words, but through an awakening of the heart brought about by his presence in the world.¹

For nearly fifty years Baba worked to accomplish his mission of love. He lived an active life serving, among others, the sick, the poor, and the mentally disturbed. These activities, however, were considered by him to be only the visible signs of the real work he came to do. God, he asserted, is within everyone, and God's work as the Avatar would be to awaken a sleeping world to the inner reality of divine love.²

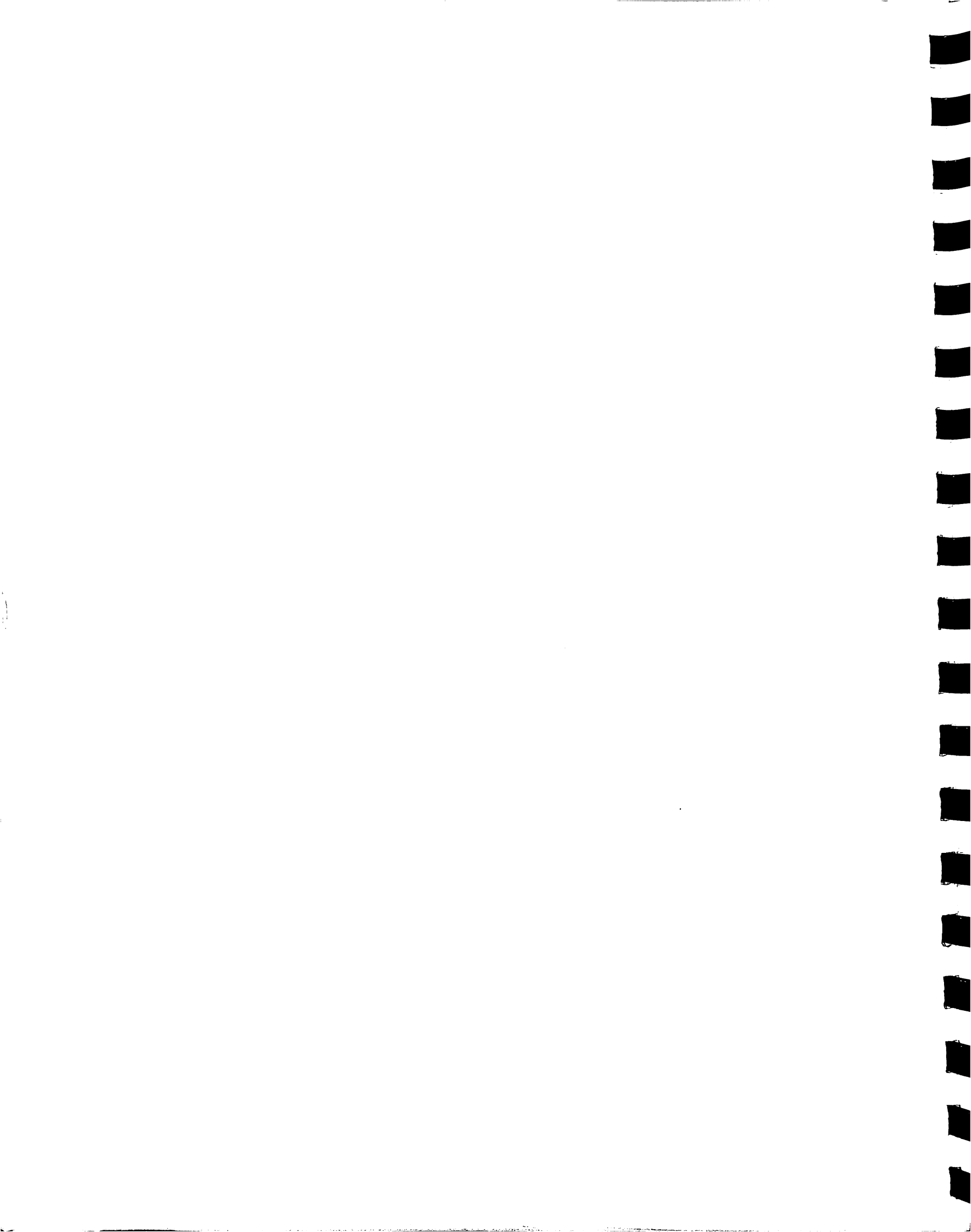
Symbolic of his intention to awaken humanity from within, Baba spent forty-four years of his life in silence. When necessary, he gave explanations and statements through hand gestures and by spelling them out on a board with the letters of the alphabet painted on it. He promised that he would "break" his silence by speaking the Word of God within every heart.³



Baba announced to his disciples a few months before his death in 1969 that his work was finished and that the results would unfold in time.⁴ Since 1969 thousands of people have come to love and follow him, believing that his work of awakening is now transforming the consciousness of the world. His followers claim to have established a direct, personal relationship with him despite his physical absence. For those who love Baba, he has no successor; he remains their guide and master. They envision the impact of his love spreading throughout the world.⁵

In light of the growing interest in Meher Baba, how are we to understand his claim to have been the awakener of divine love? What was his mission, and how did he intend to accomplish it? This dissertation undertakes to answer these questions by exploring both the meaning of Baba's work as the Avatar, and the dynamics of the transformation of consciousness he promised.

What follows is the first comprehensive theological interpretation of Meher Baba as the Avatar. My aim is to indicate, as clearly as possible, what Baba himself meant by his mission of awakening. Thus the interpretation offered here is an attempt to make him accessible without substituting anything for him. In my examination of his



life and work I intend to remove some of the barriers to understanding so that his message of love may speak for itself.

My perspective has been shaped by a personal experience of Baba's love that spans a twenty-seven year period of close association with him and his work. This analysis of his message, therefore, may be viewed as faith seeking understanding of who he was and is. These pages contain a sympathetic exposition of Baba as I move from faith to understanding and back again to faith, revealing, it is hoped, something new about the object of faith.

The most important sources for this study have been Baba's own sayings and actions as well as the stories and reflections of the close disciples I have interviewed during my last four trips to India. I also draw considerably on the many diaries, stories and personal experiences published by various followers of Baba.

At present, Baba is felt by his lovers to be so immediate that their theological thinking is, for the most part, a natural and spontaneous by-product of their devotional life. Nevertheless, a more systematic examination of faith in Baba is beginning to emerge as his lovers seek to understand more fully the implications of his life and work for their lives. The need for a shared understanding



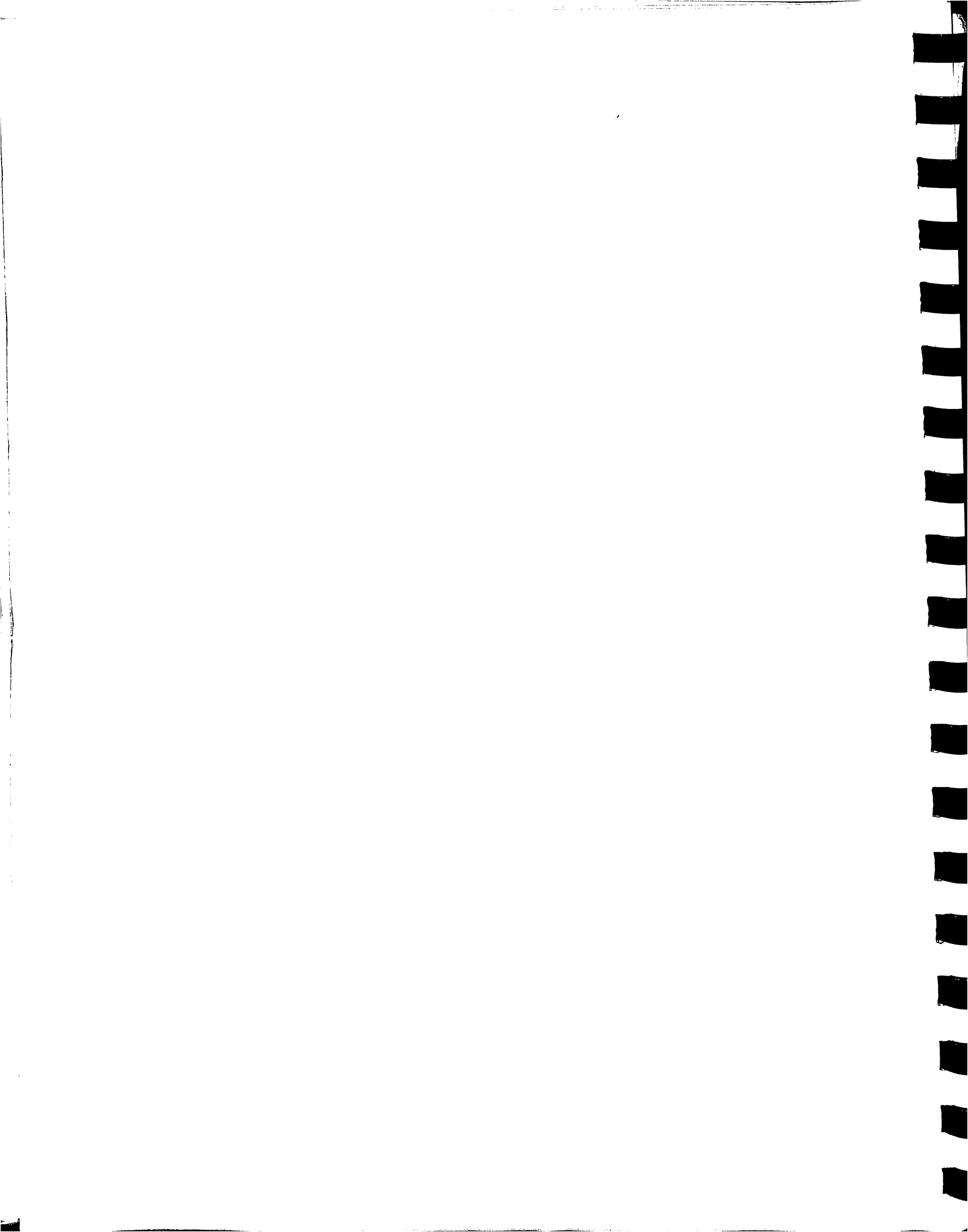
of faith is further heightened by the interaction of followers in the growing number of informal groups who gather to discuss Baba, read his discourses and share music, drama, and poetry dedicated to him. Each year more and more people, especially in the United States, Europe, Australia and India come to accept him as the Avatar and their personal master.⁶

The primary focus of Baba's followers is on the individual relationship with him. Consequently, one finds many approaches to Baba among his lovers who share no creed and maintain little formal organization. This emphasis on a personal connection with the master may be traced to Baba's own statements about the importance of discovering him in the heart and not through religious structures:

I am not come to establish any cult, society or organization; nor even to establish a new religion. The religion that I shall give teaches the Knowledge of the One behind the many. The book that I shall make people read is the book of the heart that holds the key to the mystery of life.⁷

To affirm religious faiths, to establish societies, or to hold conferences will never bring about the feeling of unity and oneness in the life of mankind, now completely absorbed in the manyness of illusion. Unity in the midst of diversity can be made to be felt only by touching the very core of the heart. That is the work for which I have come.⁸

By stressing the awakening of the heart, Baba guided



his lovers away from reliance on externals, including, toward the end of his life, contact with him in his physical body. He wished to be encountered directly with nothing in between. The dynamic of this inner awakening to his presence is a central theme of this study. I demonstrate that he intended for the love relationship he offered to be experienced within the lover where he claimed to dwell as the true Self. We will discover how his writings and life story are instrumental and provisional in that they are given by Baba only to provide avenues of approach to him as the inner beloved. In all that he did, Baba pointed beyond himself to the ultimate reality he claimed to embody.

This study begins in Chapter I with the messages and explanations that Baba gave from his silence. While his words are not his message of love, they do reveal the framework for understanding how he worked to bring about an inner transformation through love. I focus in particular on the key images found in Baba's world view: the ocean-drop relationship; the journey of consciousness; and the divine romance. These metaphors appear to govern the conceptions of God and the individual in Baba's thinking, and thus they provide us with the grammar of the relationships he sought to establish as the "awakener."



The cosmology, therefore, enables us to begin to grasp what Baba meant by his actions. In Chapter II the biography is correlated with the theology in an effort to present a coherent picture of how Baba saw himself working to awaken the world. We will see that in a number of significant ways his actions define his title "Avatar."

Together, the cosmology and the life story give the parameters for discussing the awakening Meher Baba claimed to bring in its two basic dimensions: the universal transformation of consciousness, and the relationship of the lover and the beloved. The last two chapters consider in some detail the process of inner transformation, collective and individual, Baba sought to initiate as God in human form. I suggest that Baba intended his work in the world, all that he said and did, to be in service of the love he came to awaken within every heart. The outer Baba existed, in his view, only so that the inner divine beloved may be experienced and realized.



CHAPTER I

SPEAKING FROM SILENCE: MEHER BABA'S COSMOLOGY

Meher Baba declared that from his silence he would speak within the human heart, breaking God's silence in our age.¹ His message of love was not a teaching or explanation, but an awakening that would transform the world:

Today the urgent need of mankind is not sects or organized religions, but love. Divine love will conquer hate and fear. It will not depend upon other justifications, but will justify itself.

I have come to awaken in man this divine love. It restores to him the unfathomable richness of his own eternal being and will solve all of his problems.²

About Meher Baba's "awakening" little can be said directly; by its very nature it must speak for itself. Nevertheless, he gave messages and explanations about the nature of the cosmos and the shape of his work, if for no other reason than to encourage humanity to go beyond words in preparation for the reception of his love.³

Words, then, play a role in the Avataric mission, alerting us to who he was and how he intended us to see the world. In a more prosaic sense, his words provide the necessary framework for a theological exposition and interpretation of the awakening he came to bring. The present chapter seeks to outline the cosmology of Meher



Baba as given in the writings published under his name, and, in so doing, to establish the metaphysical foundation for considering further his life and message.

The Story of Consciousness

Meher Baba saw his own work of awakening as part of the larger story of awakening taking place throughout the cosmos. As told by Baba, primarily in his book God Speaks, the theme of the story is the movement in Ultimate Reality, God, from a state of unconscious divinity to one of conscious divinity. This movement in consciousness is described by Baba in metaphorical language as a journey in which God awakens to Himself through the multifarious experiences of the illusory universe.⁴

In telling the story of consciousness Meher Baba "spoke" as one who had absolute knowledge of the workings of the universe; he appealed to no scripture or authority other than his own. He did not, however, consider his explanations to be without precedent; he saw his words as new revelations of ancient truths.⁵ As C.B. Purdom indicates, the language of God Speaks points to those traditions closest to Baba's vision of the universe:

The language (of God Speaks) is mainly Vedantic suffused with Sufi terminology with some regard to Christian mystical terms. The first part might be thought of (though it is nothing of the kind) as a



commentary upon the Brahma Sutra, taking account of Samkara and Ramanuja. I am reminded of the Enneads of Plotinus, also of the fifth century Dionysius the Areopagite, the teacher of St. Thomas Aquinas, and always with great advantage of the fourteenth century Dominican, Meister Johannes Eckhart, as the reader may discover.⁶

Baba's story of how Reality comes to know Itself through the experience of the phenomenal universe may be likened to a "map of consciousness" that serves to guide one's thinking about the journey of consciousness.⁷ The journey is indeed reminiscent of the Plotinian "flight of the One to the One," and of the Advaita goal of Self-realization, but unlike those versions of divine emanation, Baba's view places emphasis on the consciousness acquired in the course of the journey:

Due to His own infinite whim God acquires the consciousness of His reality and realizes His infinite, eternal, unlimited Self to experience His unbounded, and infinite trio-nature (infinite knowledge, power bliss: sat-chit-ananda).⁸

What follows is an overview of how this divine acquisition takes place.

According to Meher Baba, there is only one Reality, God, and ontologically there can be no distinctions within that Reality. There are, however, differences of consciousness within God, a difference which originates in what Baba termed the "Beyond the Beyond" state of God:



To begin with the beyond the beginning, there is the original state of God or Paramatma Parabrahma. This is the original state of God-Is. In Sufi terms this is said to be the state of Wara-ul-wara.⁹

The only descriptions that can be applied to the "God-Is" state are the metaphorical images of God in "the original divine sound sleep state," or negatively as "unbounded absolute vacuum." In this state there is no consciousness, though all consciousness is latent within God.¹⁰

Latent also within God before consciousness sprang into existence was the divine Lahar, defined by Baba as the "so-called whim" of God. At some "point" beyond reason and description, the Lahar of God expressed itself:

The unitarian Beyond is an indivisible and indescribable infinity. It seeks to know itself. It is of no use to ask why it does so. To attempt to give a reason for this is to be involved in further questions and thus to start an unending chain of reasons for reasons, reasons for those reasons and so on ad infinitum. The plain truth about this initial urge to know itself is best called a whim (Lahar). A whim is not a whim if it can be explained or rationalized. And just as no one may usefully ask why it arises, so no one may ask when it arises. "When" implies a time series with past, present and future. All these are absent in the eternal Beyond. So let us call this initial urge to know a "whim." You may call this an explanation if you like or you may call it an affirmation of its inherent inexplicability.¹¹

All that is called creation emerged as a consequence of the spontaneous expression of the divine "urge to



know." For the sake of consciousness, therefore, God imagines Himself to be limited in countless forms:

Manifested life arises out of the impetus in the Absolute to become conscious of itself. The progressive manifestation of life through evolution is ultimately brought about by the will-to-be conscious inherent in the infinite.¹²

Though no ontological change occurs within God, the Lahar gave rise to an apparent duality: infinite consciousness and infinite unconsciousness. Metaphorically speaking, when God awoke from His sound sleep state He simultaneously did and did not know Himself:

The (apparent) duality strives to overcome itself and to restore the apparently lost unity: the infinite unconsciousness tries to unite with infinite consciousness. Both aspects are precipitated by the whim. This whim of the Infinite is in a way comparable to an infinite question calling forth an infinite answer.¹³

Thus the Lahar set in motion God's lila, a divine play of Self-discovery.¹⁴ God allows Himself to be limited in order to experience Himself as unlimited:

To reach out towards infinite consciousness the infinite unconsciousness first has to fathom its own depths. It must experience itself first as infinitely finite, and gradually evolve into limited and limiting consciousness. With the evolution of the limited and limiting consciousness, there is also the evolution of the illusion which limits this limiting consciousness. The two processes keep pace with each other.¹⁵

The "Original Question" ("Who am I?") continually seeks the "Original Answer" ("I am God"), and in between are all

the false answers provided by the illusory forms of evolution ("I am stone, I am man" etc.).¹⁶

The movement from unconsciousness to consciousness necessitates the emergence of all forms in creation.

"Forms" in Baba's cosmology refers to all thought, energy, and matter (mental, subtle, and gross). Although these forms appear to be real, they are all within the finite universe and are therefore, in themselves, absolutely nothing.¹⁷ Yet the "Nothing" must also be included within the "Everything":

Meher Baba has told us that there is no Creation in the literal sense of the word. What we call Creation is a manifestation of countless forms of the Nothing. This Nothing is really "no-thing" - but it exists in its own field of illusion. It cannot be denied, but it is not beyond the Everything, that is, God. Although the Everything includes this Nothing, the Nothing never does and never can include or mean the Everything. The Almighty alone is the Everything, including the Nothing; and before Creation manifested itself, there was literally and absolutely "no-thing" but the Almighty as the Everything.¹⁸

God creates, so to speak, ex nihilo; He includes within Himself the possibility of projecting unending forms in order that He may reflect His true nature. In this sense, one may say that He continuously creates, sustains, and destroys the countless universes which exist in time and space. It is important to note here that when Baba referred to the creation as "illusory" or "unreal" he was



speaking of the forms projected from God into finite categories of time and space. The Ultimate Reality behind all forms is God, and only in that sense may the universe be called "real." For, as Baba put it, "God alone is real."¹⁹

What is called the creation is, according to Meher Baba, a projection of the divine imagination. As such its origin and purpose defy our finite imagination. "God alone is" Meher Baba repeatedly asserted, and the entire cosmos has made its appearance solely for the realization of this truth.²⁰

The Myth of Meaning

While the Lahar of God must remain inherently inexplicable, it does produce a "story of consciousness" about which something meaningful can be said. The achievement of consciousness which reaches its ultimate goal in God-realization is the myth of meaning found in Meher Baba's cosmology. The story of consciousness provides a construct for entering into the mystery of life's meaning by affirming the world as the arena of divine Self-discovery. This world-affirmation is echoed in Baba's dedication to God Speaks: "To the Universe - the Illusion that sustains Reality."²¹

Baba's myth of meaning closely parallels images found in the writings of Ibn'Arabi, the foremost exponent of the Wujudiyyah school of Sufi thought. Influenced by gnosticism and Neo-Platonic thought, Ibn'Arabi centered his teaching on the unitary state of God (Tauhid). In the following quote from Ibn'Arabi we can see the similarity between the Wujudiyyah school and Baba's myth of meaning:

We ourselves are the attributes by which we describe God; our existence is merely an objectification of His existence. God is necessary to us in order that we may exist, while we are necessary to Him in order that He may be manifested to Himself.²²

Tempering the Vedantic strains of absolute non-dualism, it is the Sufi elements of Baba's cosmology, made explicit in God Speaks, that stress the meaningfulness of the universe. Although in itself the world of forms is not ultimately real, it may be said to have a purpose as the mirror of God. Further, as we shall see in later sections of this paper, the divine lila may be seen as a divine romance, another central Sufi theme. Thus the cosmos has meaning as a game of love in which God as the lover seeks to know Himself as God the beloved.²³

The Relationship of God and the Individual

For Meher Baba, to speak of differences within Ultimate Reality is to speak of differences in

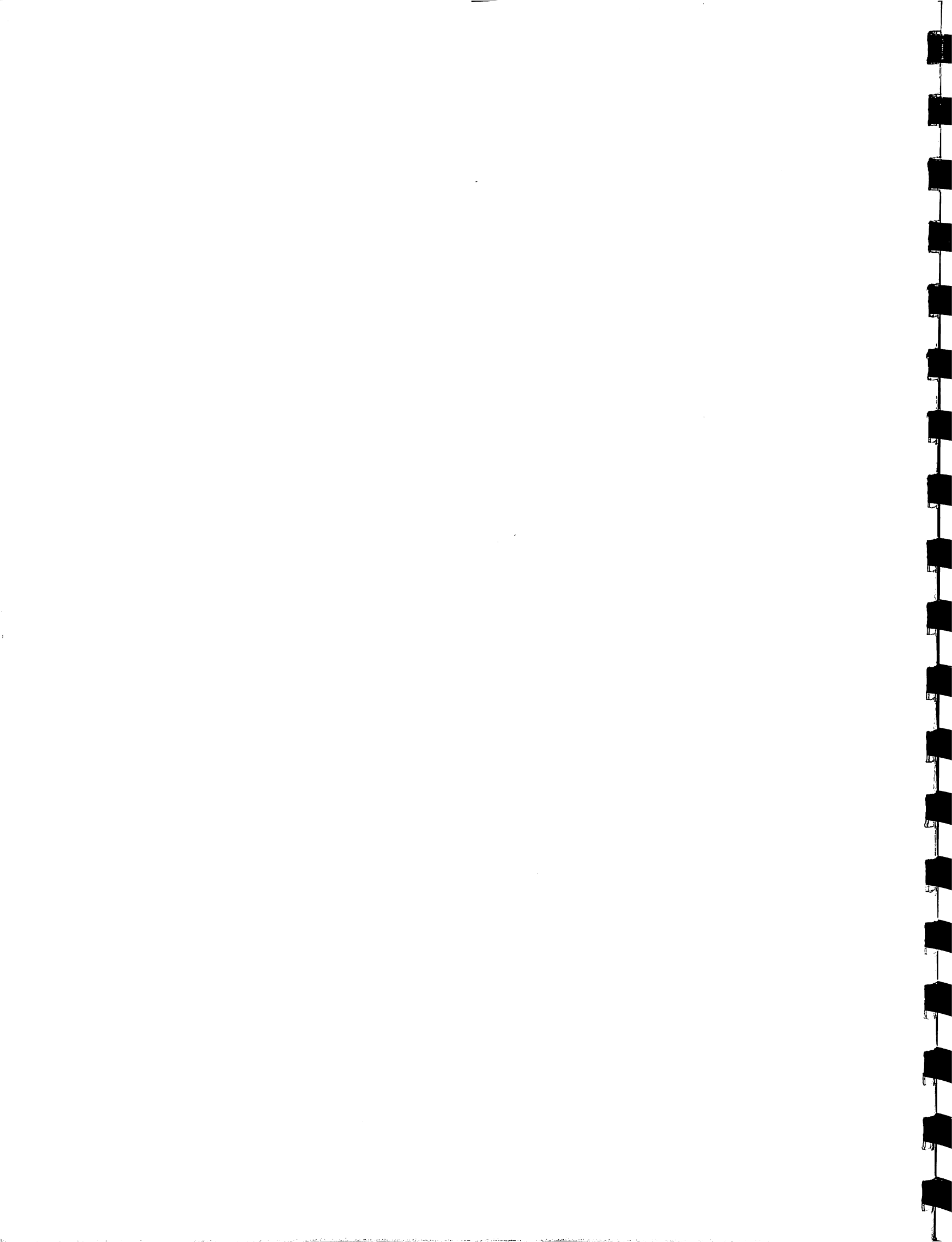
consciousness. There is only one Reality, which may be called the Oversoul (Paramatma), that is only apparently differentiated in creation. This, as we have seen, is what Baba termed the purpose of the universe:

The sole purpose of creation is that the soul should be able to enjoy the infinite state of the Oversoul consciously. Although the soul eternally exists in and with the Oversoul in inviolable unity, it cannot be conscious of the unity independently of the creation, which is within the limitations of time. It must therefore evolve consciousness before it can realize its true status and nature as being identical with the Infinite Oversoul, which is One without a second.²⁴

From this statement and many others similar to it, we can conclude that Baba posited an individualized soul in relationship and at the same time identical to the Oversoul. To elucidate this paradoxical relationship Baba employed the ocean-drop metaphor.

Paramatma as the ocean and the individualized soul or atma as the drop is actually a metaphor within a metaphor. Ocean-drop language appears in Baba's cosmology in the context of the metaphorical journey of consciousness. Appeal is made to the image of the ocean and the drop in the writings when other explanations seem to reach their limit:

Before the world of forms and duality came into existence, there was nothing but God, i.e. an indivisible and boundless ocean of Power, Knowledge, and Bliss. But this ocean was unconscious of itself.



Picture to yourself this ocean as absolutely still and calm, unconscious of its Power, Knowledge, and Bliss and unconscious that it is the ocean. The billions of drops which are in the ocean do not have any consciousness; they do not know that they are drops nor that they are in the ocean nor that they are a part of the ocean.²⁵

The images of the ocean and the drops within the ocean are given to indicate the possibility of individuality within absolute oneness.

God as the ocean suggests an all-inclusive and all-absorbing reality: a beautiful, mysterious force with potentially great creative and destructive powers. The metaphor asks us to picture how some notion of individuality makes an appearance within this ocean. In God Speaks the reader is asked to imagine the beginningless beginning:

A puff of wind then stirred the tranquil uniformity of this ocean, and immense waves, countless drops of water, and innumerable bubbles appeared from out of the uniformity of the limitless, infinite ocean. The puff of wind that set the ocean into commotion may be compared to the impulse of the infinite, original urge-to-know originating with the infinite, original whim of God, surging in God to know Himself through His infinite God State...²⁶

This "disturbance" stirs the ocean and every drop within the ocean. Note that there are no divisions in the ocean, yet the image of drops presents the idea of latent individuality:

The Paramatma in His infinitely unconscious state being urged to know Himself, simultaneously bestirs

the tranquil poise of every atma in Paramatma with an urge to know itself. This could only be understood when Paramatma is compared to an infinite ocean and the atmas to the drops of that infinite ocean. But it must be well noted that every drop of the ocean, when in the ocean, is the ocean itself, until the drops inherit individuality through bubble formations over the surface of the ocean.²⁷

The ocean-drop metaphor governs the conception of individuality found in Baba's writings. Individual drops may be viewed as separate centers of consciousness, each undertaking a "journey" back to the ocean. But drops in the ocean are not unique in themselves; as drops they are identical to one another, and they are related to the ocean in the same fashion. The ultimate goal is not individuality, but rather the individual experience of conscious oneness with the ocean.²⁸

Bestowal of individuality by the Lahar of God creates the delusion of separation:

When this urge makes the still water move, there immediately spring up numerous bubbles or forms around the drops; and it is these bubbles which give individuality to the drops. The bubbles do not and cannot separate the drop from the ocean; they merely give to these drops a feeling of separateness or limited individuality.²⁹

The drop-bubble experiences itself to be separate from the ocean and asserts its separative existence as a drop. The atma thus begins its journey in consciousness by identifying with progressively higher forms (bubbles) as

necessitated by the expansion of consciousness. While such identification allows for the development of consciousness, it also creates a false notion of separateness, the ego, which eventually must be overcome for the complete liberation of the atma.³⁰

Drawing further on the language of the metaphor, Baba termed the false identification of the drop-soul with its many forms the "bubble of ignorance." Ignorance, in this instance, is not merely a state of unknowing; it is a condition of separative existence rooted in ever-expanding consciousness. Once gained, consciousness continues to identify itself with the forms acquired during its development. The drop, so to speak, believes itself to be a bubble when in reality it is the ocean itself. In this sense, ignorance may be said to be a turning away from God by God for the sake of consciousness. And, as the image of a bubble on the surface of the ocean suggests, the separation is only apparent and temporary.³¹

The drop-soul remains in ignorance as long as it identifies with its separative existence as a bubble. Only the ocean is real, lasting, and unchanging. When the bubble bursts for the last time and the drop returns to the ocean, real "knowledge" is gained:

A drop in an ocean is not separate from the ocean. It is a bubble over the drop that gives it an appearance of separateness, but when the bubble bursts the drop is not, and the indivisible ocean is. When the bubble of ignorance bursts the self realizes its oneness with the indivisible Self.³²

In the beginningless beginning the drop in the ocean did not know itself to be either a drop or the ocean. Through apparent separation the drop experiences itself to be an individual drop until consciousness is fully attained and re-directed toward its source. Then, the drop falls back into the ocean no longer experiencing separative existence ("I am a drop"), but knowing itself to be one with the ocean ("I am the ocean"). Just as the individual drop in the ocean experiences itself to be one with the ocean, so the individual atma knows itself to be one with the Paramatma.³³

The ocean-drop metaphor was used by Baba to direct our attention to his vision of salvation as a return to the source of our being. It is, however, a return with a difference:

If salvation means reverting to the original state of the ocean, then all the trammels and travails of the bubble through the long and laborious stages of evolution have been to no purpose.³⁴

Consciousness is gained and this achievement gives meaning and value to the entire lila.

The ocean-drop metaphor as used by Baba presents a particular deliniation of the relationship between God and the individual. God is One, and our notions of individuality are false as long as they are rooted in our separative existence. Nevertheless, the final realization of God, the "I am God" state, is an individual experience which shatters all previous states:

Thus, when each individual drop sheds its false awareness of being other than the ocean, it proclaims itself as the Infinite, Indivisible Ocean. At the instant its falseness, its very own falseness, is removed, the drop asserts its Infinite Individuality.³⁵

The Journey of Consciousness

As we have seen, "consciousness" in Meher Baba's cosmology is a term used to designate the emergence of the myriad forms and the resulting differentiation caused by this emergence. The process of acquiring consciousness was likened by Baba to a journey which every atma must undergo and complete. The journey is said to have three basic states: evolution, reincarnation, and involution.

Evolution, as explained by Baba, is the first leg of the journey, the "descent" of the atma from the original sound-sleep state of God. In evolution, consciousness gradually evolves through identification with stone, metal, vegetable, worm, reptile, fish, bird, animal and

human forms successively. This process parallels in some respects Darwinian theories, though it is a fundamentally different notion of evolution: Evolution in Baba's view is necessitated by the development of consciousness. Thus form follows consciousness, and not, as in Darwin's theory, the other way around.³⁶

The full flower of evolution is achieved in the human form when full consciousness is attained. Then commences the second leg of the journey, reincarnation, during which the atma lives out the impressions (sanskaras) gained in evolution and acquires new impressions by experiencing the countless varieties of human life. Finally the atma wearies of the world and is ready to begin the third leg of the journey, involution, which may be seen as the "ascent" back to God.³⁷ In order to understand the dynamics of Meher Baba's life and work, something more needs to be said about each stage of the journey.

In evolution consciousness expands by associating with increasingly complex forms. The impressions gathered in each form push consciousness forward to the next highest form:

Owing to the arising of the bubble, the drop-soul which was completely unconscious is invested with individuality (or a feeling of separateness) as well

as with very slight consciousness. This consciousness, which has sprung up in the drop-soul, is not of itself nor of the ocean; but it is of the bubble of the form, which in itself is nothing. This imperfect bubble at this stage is represented by the form of a stone. After some time, this bubble bursts and there springs up in its place another bubble of form. Now, when a bubble bursts, two things happen: (1) there is an increase in consciousness and (2) there is a twist or consolidation of impressions or sanskaras accumulated during the life of the previous bubble. The consciousness of the drop-soul is still conscious only of this new bubble or form and not of itself nor of the ocean.³⁸

Form after form arises as consciousness expands and seeks the next most appropriate form for expression. The impressions gathered in the stone form compel the emergence of a higher form, metal, and the impressions gathered in metal form compel the emergence of a still higher form and so forth.

As each individualized atma journeys through evolution it associates with the various forms evolved for the development of consciousness. "To view things in their right perspective," Baba indicated, "we have to see all forms, including human forms, as evolved for the fulfillment of the one eternal Divine life."³⁹ The urge-to-know goes forward as consciousness moves through the rudimentary stone and metal forms in which energy is dormant, to the more advanced vegetable forms:

In the vegetable kingdom, consciousness realizes itself as half animate and half inanimate. The

increased consciousness of the vegetable-form asserts its existence in the gross world through an upright or erect stand. The vegetable-forms have to take the help of some other things such as earth or rock for maintaining an erect position. They can neither stand by themselves nor move voluntarily from place to place since they are rooted in one spot.⁴⁰

Not only does the atma experience ever-increasingly complex physical impressions, but also impressions having to do with energy and mind:

Emergence of a still more developed form of consciousness becomes possible when the absolute seeks manifestation through the instinctive life of insects, birds and animals, which are aware of their bodies and respective surroundings, which develop a sense of self-protection, and aim at establishing mastery over their environment. In the higher animals, mind or thought appears, but its working is limited by such instincts as those of self-protection and the care and preservation of the young. So even in animals, consciousness has not its full development, with the result that it is unable to serve the purpose of the Absolute to attain Self-illumination.⁴¹

These impressions of energy and mind comprise what Baba termed the subtle and mental bodies. The subtle body consists of all impressions having to do with energy and the mental body of all impressions having to do with instinct, intellect, emotions and desires.⁴²

The atma is thus said to associate with three bodies simultaneously: gross, subtle and mental. Though the atma may associate and disassociate with countless physical or gross forms, it can never separate (until God-realization) from its subtle and mental bodies. It is

these latter two bodies that supply the atma with the continuity of consciousness that runs through its entire journey. Consequently, it may be said that there is only one life in the journey, though there are innumerable births and deaths in gross forms.⁴³

The subtle and mental bodies become the centers for assimilation of the complex impressions garnered in evolution. The fullest expression of all three bodies is possible in the human form, the crown of evolution. The taking of the human form, therefore, completes the evolutionary leg of the journey. There is no need for the development of a higher physical form once full consciousness is attained as exhibited in the self-consciousness of the human being. Tragically, perhaps, the atma at this point, though it has full consciousness, is still not aware of its true nature.⁴⁴

The impressions of evolution veil the atma from its true identity as God causing it to associate itself with countless human forms. This is the second leg of the journey, called by Baba reincarnation:

The soul with full consciousness is still unconscious of its original state because of the unwanted (though necessary) burden of the gross impressions of the human-form from which the consciousness of the soul dissociates as that form drops dead. These impressions, of the human form now dead, still cling to the full conscious^{ness} gained; and, as usual, the

consciousness of the soul centralizes itself in these gross impressions of the human form just dropped.⁴⁵

Once the human form is attained the resulting self-identity is rooted in the impressions acquired during evolution. The atma attempts to eliminate these impressions through the experience of opposite impressions, and this in turn gives rise to new impressions. Baba described the cycle this way:

In trying to unburden consciousness of these impressions, the gross consciousness of the soul tends the soul to experience and exhaust these impressions through innumerable opposite experiences taken through a series of reincarnations. In this process of reincarnation the consciousness of the soul, while trying to liberate itself from the burden of impressions gets still further entangled at every stage of reincarnation. When a complete balance of opposite impressions is just about to be attained, it is just then disturbed by the consciousness of the soul associating itself with the next new human form. Absence of this association would otherwise have neutralized the effect of the impressions by an equal balance of respective opposite experiences and would thus have liberated the consciousness of the soul from all impressions of opposites.⁴⁶

In seeking to achieve a balance, impressions create new impressions in a seemingly unending round of births and deaths. Thus the atma repeatedly alternates between the opposites of existence (pleasure-pain, male-female, good-bad, etc.) striving for the "coincidence of opposites" needed for the liberation from all impressions.⁴⁷

The process of working out the gross, subtle and mental impressions of the atma is contained within the cosmic law of karma. In Baba's cosmology, karma is the spiritual law of cause and effect in which the experience of every impression creates the demand for the experience of its opposite. The heavy load of impressions acquired in evolution becomes a considerable karmic burden in the human form. Nevertheless, once the individual is aware of the karmic law it is possible to begin to determine the shape of future lifetimes:

The successive incarnations, with all their particulars, are closely and unfailingly determined by a rational law, so that it becomes possible for the individual soul to mold its future through intelligent action. The actions of past lives determine the conditions and circumstances of future lives. The successive incarnations yield their full significance only in the light of the operation of the law of karma.⁴⁸

The karma of each atma consists of the repository of accumulated impressions which are organized around a central identity or ego. In evolution, as consciousness began to differentiate and take on individuality, an organizing principle emerged so that each atma has an axis for the assimilation of impressions:

Human consciousness would be no more than a repository of the accumulated imprints of varied experiences did it not also contain the principle of ego-centered integration in the attempt to organize and understand experience. The process implies the capacity to hold different experiences together as parts of a unity and

the capacity to evaluate them by mutual relation. The integration of the opposites of experience is a condition of emancipating consciousness from the thralldom of compulsions and repulsions which tend to dominate consciousness irrespective of valuation; and the early attempts at securing such integration are made through the formation of the ego as its center.⁴⁹

According to Baba, the consciousness of each person includes all of the cumulative experience of the individualized atma. Once gained, consciousness is not lost. Thus the ego is the "I" or false notion of individuality which pervades both the conscious and subconscious mind of the reincarnating atma. In evolution and in the initial stages of reincarnation the ego functions as the necessary integrating and stabilizing factor for consciousness. But the continued identification of consciousness with the ego prevents the atma from directing consciousness towards its true Self. The ego, therefore, may be called a "necessary evil."⁵⁰

The nature of the ego symbolizes the dilemma of human existence: selfishness rooted in a false idea of self. On a cosmic scale this false valuation is called maya, that power which allows the world of forms to appear as real. On a personal level maya is the "principle of ignorance" which is exemplified by ego-centered consciousness.⁵¹

The ignorance of the ego is far more than an intellectual misunderstanding; it is a fundamental misorientation of the human mind. What once was needed for the development of consciousness, becomes, in the ego, a source of suffering. Separation from the Paramatma or Real Self is most acute as ego awareness asserts itself in life after life. Ultimately this separation could be seen as a "happy fall," for it is the necessary instrument for the production of consciousness. Eventually the ego is weakened through endless expression of itself, and this leads to a restoration of a relationship with the Self. Finally the ego disappears completely in full Self-realization.⁵²

The misery caused by the ego arises from the fact that the life of the ego feeds on those impressions which tend to strengthen the feeling of separateness:

Every thought, feeling or action that springs from the idea of exclusive or separative existence binds the soul. All experiences--small or great--and all aspirations--good or bad--create a load of impressions and nourish the sense of the "I..."

The ego is implemented by desires of various kinds. The failure in the fulfillment of desires is a failure of the ego, and success in the attainment is the success of the ego. Through fulfilled desires, as well as through those that are unfulfilled, the ego gets accentuated.⁵³

The separative existence of the ego moves from life to life bounded by karmic determination. Every experience

is binding and must be worked out at some future time. In what we do we determine the shape of our future:

Pleasure or pain experienced in life on earth, the success or failure which attend it, the attainments and obstacles with which it is strewn, the friends and foes that make their appearance in it, are determined by the karma of past lives.⁵⁴

The operation of karma is the "moral law of the universe," holding each individual accountable for his or her actions.⁵⁵ It follows, then, that the fabric of the universe has an inherent rationality, and the law of karma is not an oppressive law, but the self-created condition of responsibility.⁵⁶

Eventually, after countless lives, the karmic wheel begins to slow down as the individual begins to tire of life in the world. Figuratively speaking, the impressions formed in evolution were tightly wound around a center of consciousness which falsely identified itself with illusion. In reincarnation the impressions are spent and new ones created over and over again, a process which begins to shake loose the previously tightly wound impressions. Finally, the repeated shakings of reincarnation push the individual inward and the process of unwinding the impressions begins.⁵⁷ This unwinding is what Baba called involution or the spiritual path, and it is the final leg of the journey:



During this process of unwinding, the sanskaras become fainter and fainter; and at the same time, the consciousness of the drop-soul gets directed more and more towards itself; and thus, the drop-soul passes through the subtle and mental planes till the sanskaras disappear completely, enabling it to become conscious of itself as the ocean.⁵⁸

Commitment to the spiritual path grows out of a profound dissatisfaction with illusory existence and a deep longing to realize God. Involution is an inward journey marked by seven levels or planes of consciousness. For the pilgrim traversing these planes, there results an ever-increasing refinement of impressions as the gross world gives way to a direct experience of first the subtle and then the mental worlds (spheres of consciousness). The first three planes are of the subtle world, the fourth links the subtle and the mental, and the fifth and sixth are of the mental world. The seventh plane is God-realization.⁵⁹ Though it is beyond the scope of this paper to detail the experiences of each level of consciousness, the whole process was summarized by Baba as follows:

The soul has to emancipate itself gradually from the illusion of being finite by (1) liberating itself from the bondage of sanskaras, and (2) knowing itself to be different from its bodies--gross, subtle and mental. It thus annihilates the false ego (i.e., the illusion that "I am the gross body, I am the subtle body," or "I am the mental body"). While the soul thus frees itself from its illusion, it still retains full consciousness, which now results in Self-knowledge and



realisation of the Truth. Escaping through the cosmic illusion and realising with full consciousness its identity with the Infinite Oversoul is the goal of the long journey of the soul.⁶⁰

The journey cannot be completed without the intervention of a God-realized master. No matter how far the aspirant travels without the aid of a master, even to the sixth plane, the final step of entering the seventh plane requires grace.⁶¹ The enormity of the final adjustment in the process of ego elimination is such that the atma cannot do it without the help of a Perfect Master (Sadguru).⁶² We will consider the various approaches to the path and the role of the master in later sections.

With God-realization the journey of consciousness comes to an end; the drop-soul falls back into the ocean to experience with full consciousness the "I am God" state. Because it is beyond the ego-mind, and therefore radically different from all other states of consciousness, God-realization defies description. What can be said is that the soul at last discovers its true nature:

After the attainment of God-realization, the soul discovers that it has always been the Infinite Reality, and that its looking upon itself as finite during the period of evolution and spiritual advancement was an illusion. The soul also finds that the infinite knowledge and bliss that it enjoys have been latent in the Infinite Reality from the beginning of time and that they became manifest at the moment of realization. Thus the God-realized person does not become different from what he was before realization.

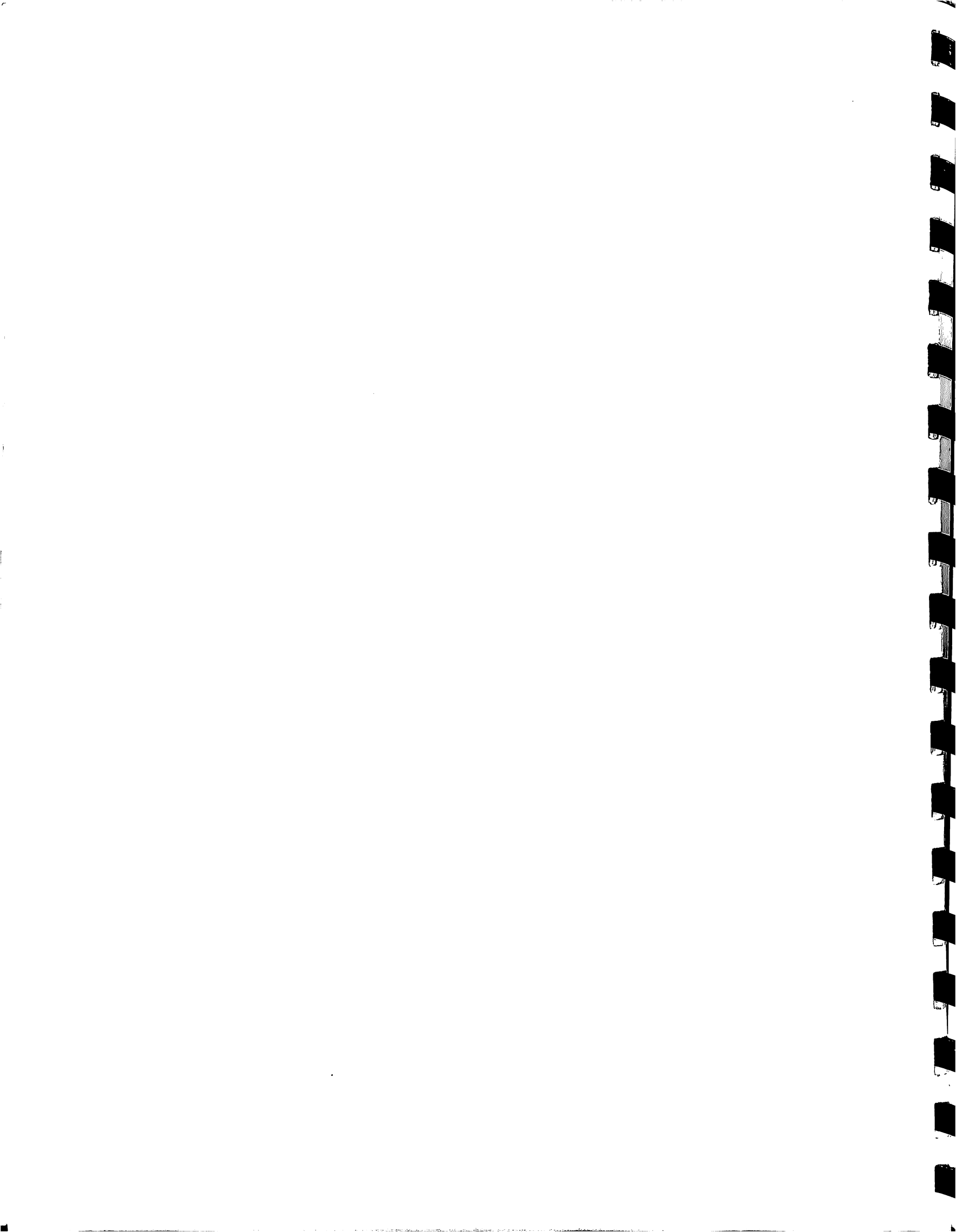
He remains what he was; the only difference that realization makes in him is that while previously he did not consciously know his true nature, he now knows it. He knows that he has never been anything other than what he now knows himself to be, and that he has been through a process of self-discovery.⁶³

According to Baba, not all souls drop their bodies immediately after God-realization. Some, called Majzubs in Sufi terminology, remain in the body though they are wholly unaware of the world. Others remain in the body and are simultaneously conscious of God and the illusory universe. These souls, called by Baba Perfect Masters or Sadgurus, may be viewed as the presence of God in the world, and, as such, they are a source of unending aid to all those who remain in bondage:

The Sadguru knows himself to be infinite and beyond all forms. He remains conscious of the creation without being caught in it. The falseness of the phenomenal world consists in its not being understood as an illusory expression of the Infinite Spirit. Ignorance consists in taking the form as the thing. The Sadguru is conscious of the true nature of God, as well as of the true nature of creation without consciousness of duality, because for him creation is the changing shadow of God. The Sadguru, therefore, remains conscious of creation without loss of God-consciousness. He continues to work in the world of forms for the furtherance of the primary purpose of creation, which is to create self-knowledge or God-realization in every soul.⁶⁴

The Divine Romance

Throughout Meher Baba's discourses the journey of consciousness is enlivened by the constant use of the



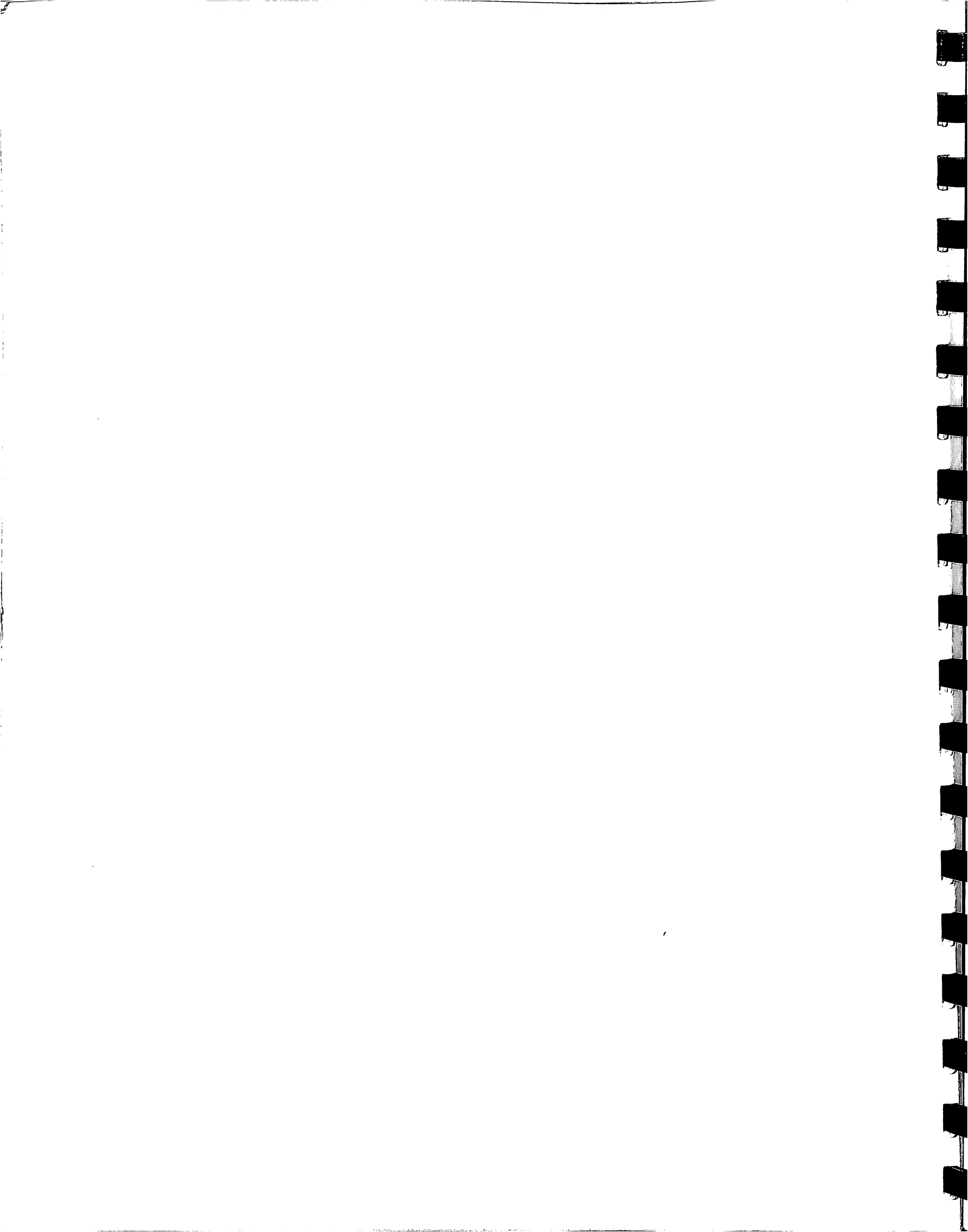
language of love. The journey is often pictured as a divine romance in which the lover (atma) seeks union with the beloved (Paramatma):

God as Infinite Love first delimits himself in the forms of creation and then recovers his infinity through the different stages of creation. All the stages of God's experience as a Lover culminate in his experiencing himself as the sole Beloved. The sojourn of the soul is a divine romance in which the Lover, who in the beginning is conscious of emptiness, frustration, superficiality and the chains of bondage, attains an increasingly fuller expression of Love and finally merges into the unity of the Lover and Beloved in the supreme and eternal Truth of God as Infinite Love.⁶⁵

The lila, then, may be seen as a play of love that comes into existence so that love may be consciously expressed and experienced. In this section we will explore the meaning of this metaphor which has so central a role not only in Baba's cosmology, but also in his life and work.

The assertion of God's absolute oneness is also, in Meher Baba's cosmology, the fundamental definition of love. Love is equated with non-duality; the ocean of Divine Reality is the ocean of love.⁶⁶ The Lahar is, therefore, the primordial expression of divine love as it gave rise to the actualization of God's essential nature. The urge-to-know is the urge-to-love:

God is love. And love must love. And to love there must be a Beloved. But since God is Existence infinite and eternal there is no one for Him to love but Himself. And in order to love Himself He must



imagine Himself as the Beloved whom He as the Lover imagines He loves.⁶⁷

The illusory or apparent separation brings about the actualization of love as a universal experience which gives meaning to the lila, and consequently a meaning to all life:

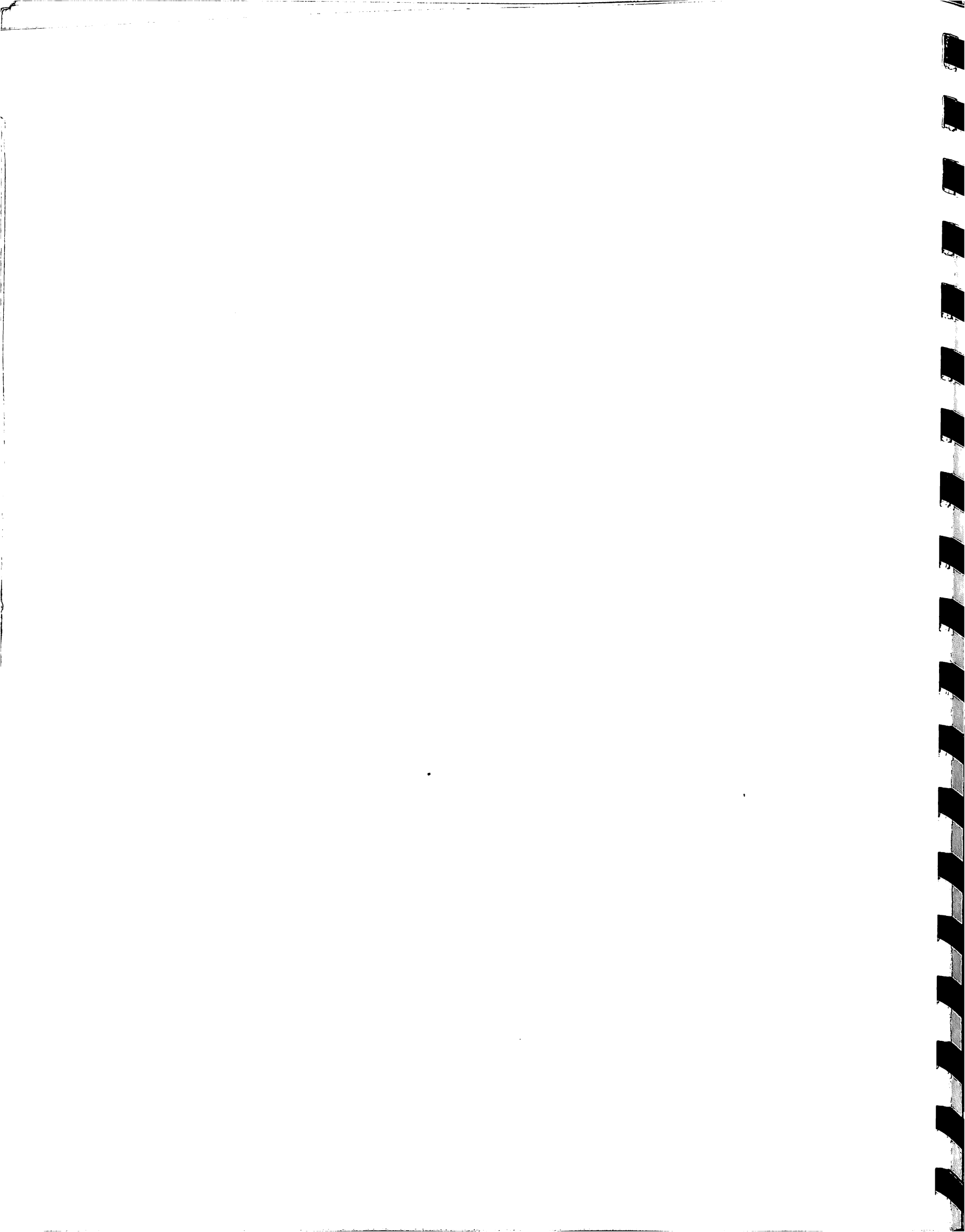
It is for the sake of Love that the universe sprang into existence, and for the sake of Love that it is kept going. God descends into the realm of illusion because the apparent duality of the Beloved and the Lover is contributory to his conscious enjoyment of His own divinity... Although the entire world of duality is but an illusion, it has come into being for a significant purpose.⁶⁸

The impersonal images of the ocean-drop language are paralleled by the more personal images of the lover-beloved metaphor. Both aspects are integral to the picture of the relationship of the universe to God conveyed in Baba's writings.

Baba defined love as expressed in duality in the broadest possible terms:

Life and love are inseparable. Where there is life, there is love. Even the most rudimentary consciousness is ever trying to burst its limitations and to experience unity with others.⁶⁹

Love is the fundament of all life, the universal magnetism, as it were, holding the cosmos together. The movement of consciousness as it strives to achieve unity or



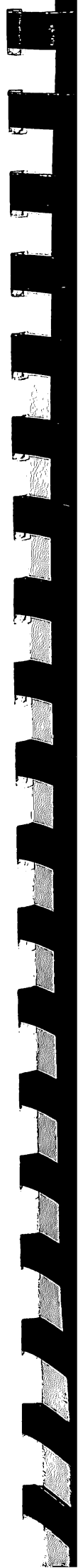
wholeness is a movement of love towards absolute union with God.

The reflection of the movement toward oneness may be seen on all levels of consciousness:

At the inorganic stage, it (love) is expressed in the form of cohesion or attraction. It is the natural affinity that keeps things together and draws them to each other. The gravitational pull exercised by the heavenly bodies upon each other is an expression of love. At the organic state, love becomes self-illuminated and self-appreciative, even from the amoeba to the most evolved human beings.⁷⁰

When consciousness becomes full in the human form, love becomes a self-conscious activity with possibilities for complete expression. Baba distinguished between lower and higher stages of human love, measured by the relative degree of ego-entanglement. In the lower stages love is self-centered and possessive as in infatuation and lust: the object of love is obscured by ego-craving. As the atma advances spiritually, the lower forms of love give way to higher expressions in which the object of desire is appreciated for itself and not merely for the gratification it may give.⁷¹

The diminishment of ego involvement is seen as the road to higher love. This may be understood as a form of detachment in the sense that it is non-attachment but not lack of concern. According to Baba, one who lives without



self-interest is able to be truly concerned about the other, and in a position to offer selfless service.⁷² Though human love inevitably contains elements of both lower and higher expressions of love, it can be purified with the aid of a Perfect Master who, having realized God, is the embodiment of divine love:

Human love is so tethered by limiting conditions that the spontaneous appearance of pure love from within becomes impossible. So, when pure love is first received as a gift from the Master, it is lodged in the consciousness of the aspirant as the seed in a favorable soil, and in the course of time the seed develops into a plant, then into the full-grown tree.⁷³

Once awakened, the individual gradually becomes the lover more and more conscious of a longing for union with the divine beloved. This longing leads to self-forgetfulness in remembrance of the beloved, a process during which the ego gets extinguished in the flame of love.⁷⁴ We will deal with this theme in more depth in the last chapter.

The goal of all life and the fulfillment of all love is divine love, the conscious realization of God. This love is qualitatively different from all expressions of love in creation, including the highest forms of human love:

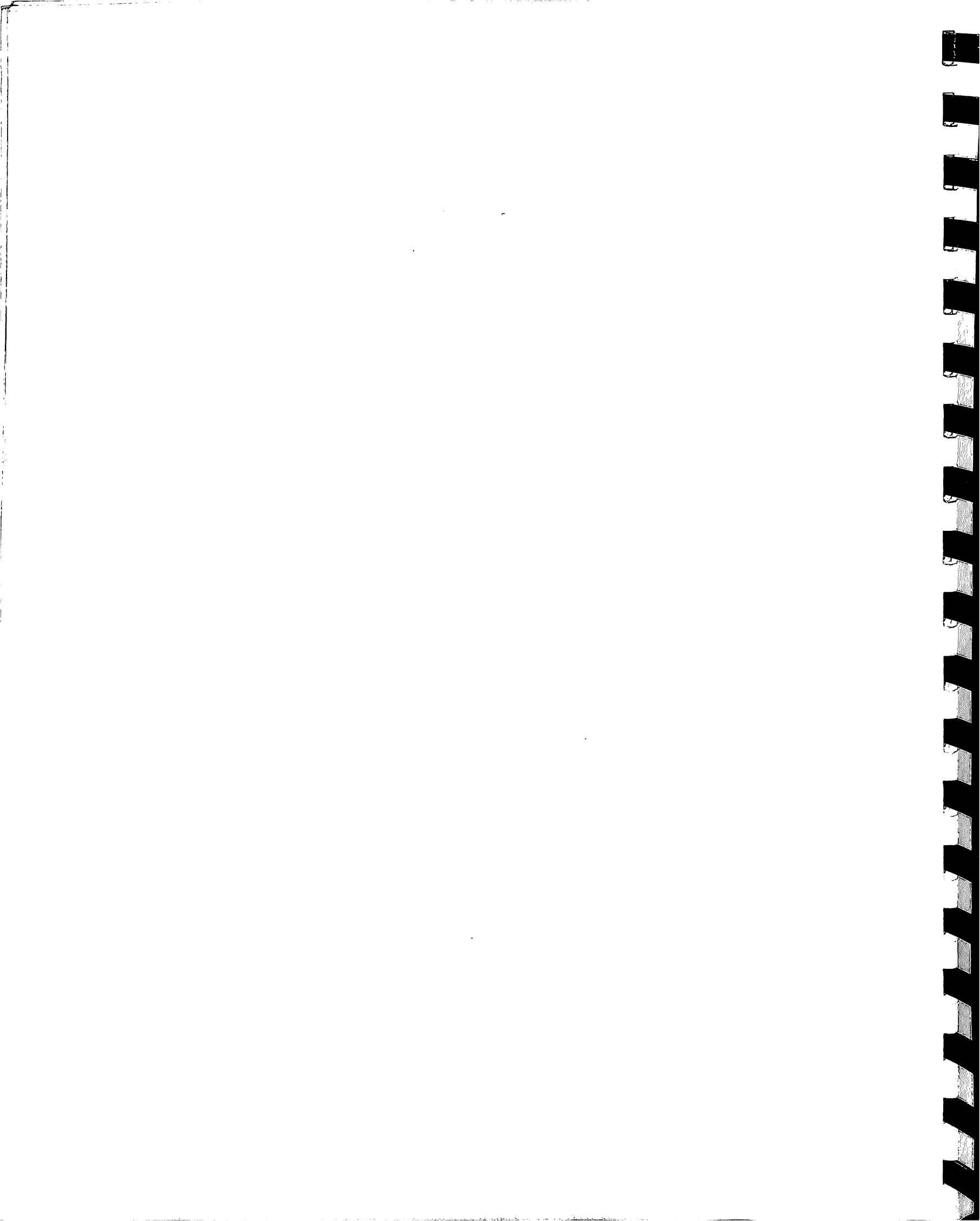
Even the highest type of human love is subject to the limitation of the individual nature, which



persists until the seventh plane; but Divine Love arises after the disappearance of the individual mind and is free from the trammels of individual nature. In human love, the duality of the lover and the Beloved persists; but in Divine Love, the lover and the Beloved are one. At this stage, the aspirant has stepped out of the domain of duality and become one with God--for Divine Love is God. When the lover and the Beloved are one, that is the end and the beginning.⁷⁵

Apparent separation is the condition for the conscious realization of love, a state of absolute oneness. Or, to put it another way, God's love for Himself in duality, produces the non-dual state of God's conscious enjoyment of His nature. This final state is incomparably greater than all other states of love; it is "pure love."⁷⁶

In Baba's cosmology, the metaphor of the divine romance serves to indicate the meaningfulness of the universe. Duality is pictured as the manifestation of the divine whim to experience the essence of Ultimate Reality which is love. The original separation gives rise to the seemingly infinite variety of forms striving on all levels of consciousness towards a greater and more complete realization of love, the unifying principle of all life. The suffering of the universe is rooted in this separative existence, described by Baba as the pain of the lover longing for the beloved. "The entire creation," he said, "is a 'game of love' or 'lila' which God enjoys at His own cost."⁷⁷ In Baba's vision of things, the pain is worth



the price, though only when love is finally fulfilled can this be known:

When true love is awakened, it is the realization of God. The happiness obtained through realizing God is worth ⁷⁸all the physical and mental suffering in the universe.

The Avatar

By proclaiming himself to be the Avatar, Meher Baba was not merely adding a traditional Hindu title to his name; he was defining the nature of his authority and the scope of his work as he understood it. It is important, therefore, to be clear about the role of the Avatar in Baba's cosmology.

The word "Avatar" has a particular, if unsystematic, meaning in Hindu literature: the descent of a deity into the world, often, but not always, appearing in human form. For the most part, the Hindu tradition, drawing largely from commentaries on the Bhagavad-Gita, has come to view the Avatar as periodic appearances of Vishnu come to restore righteousness in the world. A number of recent Indian masters, Aurobindo and Ramakrishna for example, mention the Avatar without offering anything in the way of a fully developed doctrine. Some, including Gandhi, have been called Avatar by their followers. In much of this recent discussion of the term, Christian influence on

Indian thought is discernable, especially with reference to the new emphasis on the historical reality of the Avatar and the redemptive possibilities of his descent.⁷⁹

Meher Baba was not a Hindu and, unlike many other contemporary Indian masters, he made no attempt to harmonize his views with Hindu (or any) scripture. Baba did, however, appear to be in agreement with much of the traditional Avatar doctrine, and, in concert with recent trends, tended to see the Avatar in incarnational terms. Within a non-dualist framework, Baba saw the Avatar as the central expression of God's love in the world.

To grasp how Baba used the term "Avatar" we must again begin at the beginning and recall the Lahar of God. When the divine urge-to-know first manifested itself, infinite consciousness and infinite unconsciousness simultaneously emerged, resulting in the progression from unconscious divinity to conscious divinity. The first atma to complete the journey of consciousness through evolution, reincarnation and involution realized infinite consciousness. As the first to realize God, the first atma functioned from that time forward as the Avatar:

This Avatar was the first individual soul to emerge from the evolutionary process, and is the only Avatar who has ever manifested or will ever manifest. Through him, God first completed the journey from unconscious divinity to conscious divinity, in him he



first unconsciously became man in order to consciously become God. Through him periodically, God consciously becomes man for the liberation of mankind.⁸⁰

According to Baba, the first atma to realize God had a unique experience resulting in the Avataric or Christ conscious state within God. In this state God remains eternally conscious of everything in illusion, and from this state God periodically becomes a human being for the benefit of humanity. Though every atma eventually realizes God, only this "first" atma functions as the God-man or Avatar. And only the Avatar returns to the world; after death all other God-realized atmas merge in the divine reality forever.⁸¹

From the point of view of the human intellect these distinctions appear to indicate some sort of division within Ultimate Reality. Baba insisted, however, that in God there are no divisions, though it can be said that there are various states of consciousness within Reality. One such state, Avataric consciousness, emerged when the first atma realized God. For descriptive purposes, it may be said that these states function differently and the Avatar is one such function.⁸² It is thus eternally part of the cosmic lila for God to return to the illusion by taking human form:

The Avatar is always one and the same because God is always one and the same. This eternally one and

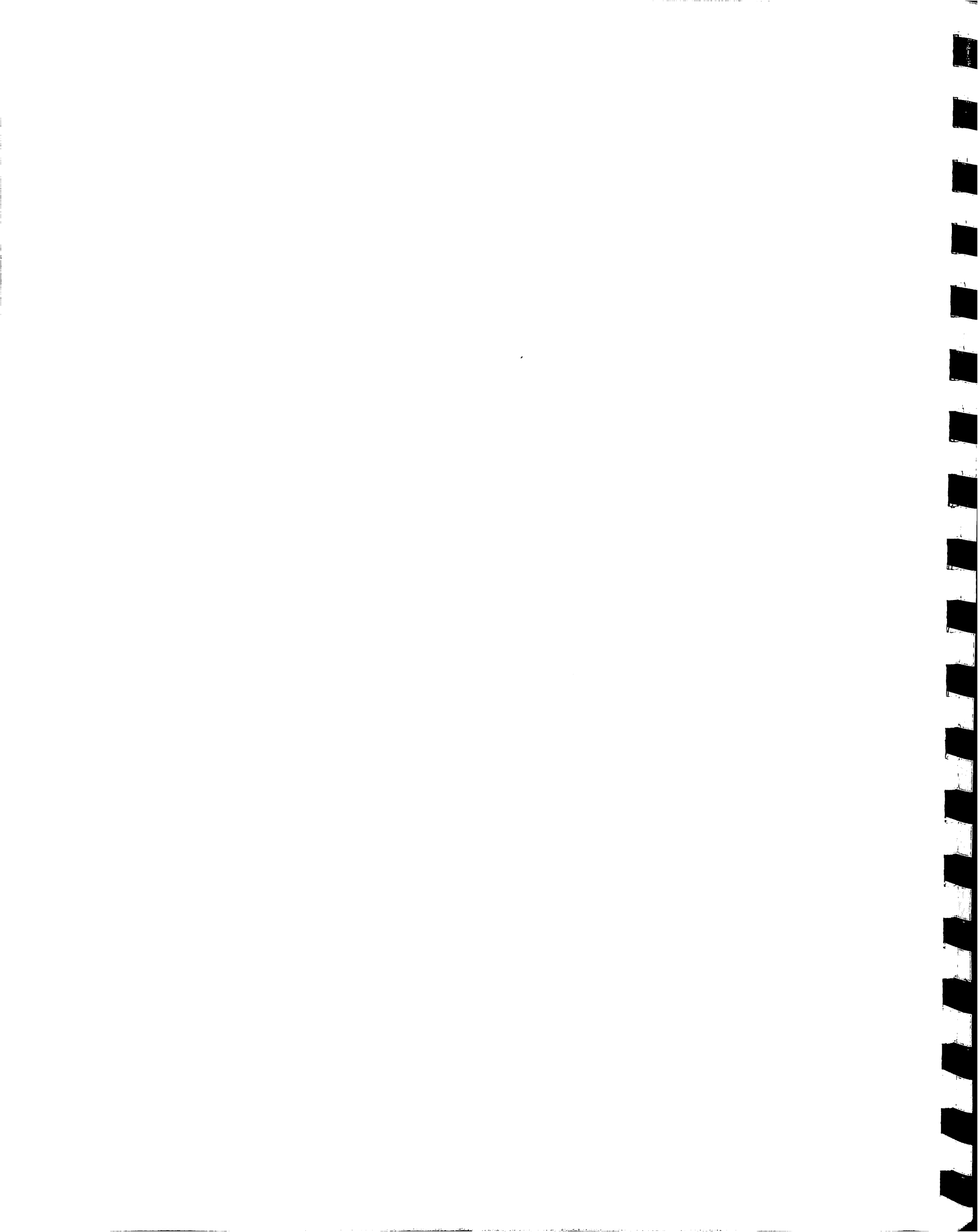


the same Avatar repeats His manifestation from time to time in different cycles. He adopts different forms and different names, coming to different places to reveal truth in different clothing and different languages. This He does to raise humanity from the pit of ignorance and help free it from the bondage of delusion.⁸³

In this view of the Avatar, God must become fully human; Infinite consciousness must limit Itself as a finite human being. The process of limitation begins with the birth of the Avatar. It is a normal birth and the Avatar comes into the world veiled to his true identity. At the right moment, this veil is removed:

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 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.⁸⁴

To live as a human being the Avatar must "take on" a personality and a pattern of life in order to carry out his mission. Therefore, special impressions are given the Avatar by himself, and the working out of these impressions constitutes the life of the God-man in the world. In this way, the Avatar voluntarily limits himself and "his work becomes subject to the laws of time, space and causality."⁸⁵



The self-imposed limitations of the Avatar in no way alter his true nature as being one with God, no more than the limitations of any atma disturb the essential unity of being. The Avatar willingly returns to the dream state, so to speak, to awaken God in those who remain asleep. All the while he retains the awareness that the creation is but a dream and God alone is real.⁸⁶ This act of compassion enables the Avatar to give a spiritual push or transformation to every level of consciousness. As he is one with God, the Avatar is consciously alert to the needs of all living things. Consequently, he works not only for the benefit of humanity, but also for the benefit of atmas still in evolution:

It would be more appropriate to say that the Avatar is God and that God becomes man for all mankind and simultaneously God also becomes a sparrow for all sparrows in creation, an ant for ants in creation... etc. for each and everything that is in creation.

When the five Sadgurus effect the presentation of the Divinity of God into Illusion, this Divinity pervades the Illusion in effect and presents Itself in innumerable variety of forms--gross, subtle and mental. Consequently in Avataric periods God mingles with mankind as man and with the world of ants as an ant, etc. But the man of this world cannot perceive this and hence simply says that God has become man and remains satisfied with this understanding in his own world of mankind.⁸⁷

As the periodic advent of the Avatar must be carried out on every level of consciousness, Baba asserted that it is necessary for God to consciously involve himself in the



workings of the universe. In the sphere of human consciousness, which is all we can say much about, the actions of the Avatar are said by Baba to have universal ramifications because he is consciously one with all life:

At each moment in time He is able to fulfill singly and together the innumerable aspects of His universal duty because His actions are in no way constrained by time and distance and the here and now of the senses. While engaged in any particular action on the gross plane He is simultaneously working on all the inner planes.⁸⁸

The actions of the Atavar are, therefore, transformative; they create new possibilities for the further development of consciousness; a theme we will explore further in Chapter III. The outward example of the Avatar is only the visible sign of his work; the inner changes he brings about are his real work.⁸⁹ Yet this inner work must be accomplished by taking a physical form so that God can fully identify with the consciousness he has come to change. For these reasons he must work on the gross plane:

Unlike the actions of ordinary men, the Avatar's every action on the gross plane brings about numberless and far-reaching results on the different planes of consciousness. His working on the inner planes is effortless and continues of itself, but because of the very nature of grossness His work on the gross plane entails great exertion.⁹⁰

The God-man, then, becomes human by fully identifying with the finitude of human existence, an identifica-



tion which causes the Avatar to suffer. The suffering of God for humanity is thus inherent in the lila as the highest expression of the nature of divine love. God as infinite consciousness never abandons Himself in each atma which is limited by the conditions of finitude.⁹¹

Speaking of himself as the Avatar, Baba described the God-man's suffering this way:

As the eternal redeemer of humanity, I am at the junction of Reality and Illusion simultaneously experiencing the infinite bliss of Reality and the suffering of Illusion.⁹²

From this statement it follows that the Avatar suffers because he experiences himself to be eternally free in himself, and, at the same time, eternally bound in those still in ignorance. In critical periods of history (the history of consciousness), the suffering of God becomes a necessity for the further movement of consciousness into what humanity calls a new age.⁹³ Baba explained how the Avatar can be God-realized and yet "become" a human being:

This is because God incarnates as man and goes through universal suffering and helplessness in order to emancipate mankind from its ignorance of suffering and helplessness. If the Avatar were to use his infinite Power, how could he experience helplessness? If the Avatar were to use his infinite Bliss, how could he suffer? He therefore does not use either his infinite Bliss or his infinite Power. Such is his infinite love and compassion for his creation. Jesus Christ, who had infinite Power, let himself become helpless and suffered the humiliation of letting the people spit on him and jeer at him. He suffered



crucifixion on the cross, but did not help himself from the Power and Bliss that were his.⁹⁴

The Avatar is also fully human in the sense that physically he is subject to illness and pain, and spiritually he allows himself to become identified with the suffering of the world. This suffering is said by Baba to be redemptive inasmuch as the Avatar takes upon himself the suffering of the world. The Avatar does not alter the world's karma, except in extraordinary circumstances, nor does he take the karma of the world on himself; his suffering is the suffering of the world that results from the world's karma. In this sense, he enables the world to pass through destructive and critical periods and enter into a new era with a changed consciousness.⁹⁵

Although in the cosmic process he outlined there have been innumerable Avataric manifestations, Baba mentioned a list of well-known religious figures as the Avatar: Zoroaster, Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, and Mohammed.⁹⁶ All of these individuals were the same Ancient One⁹⁷ who takes human form at the moment when he is most needed:

The Avatar appears in different forms, under different names, at different times, in different parts of the world. As his appearance always coincides with the spiritual birth of man, so the period immediately preceding his manifestation is always one in which humanity suffers from the pangs of the approaching



birth. Man seems more than ever enslaved by desire, more than ever driven by greed, held by fear, swept by anger. The strong dominate the weak; the rich oppress the poor; large masses of people are exploited for the benefit of the few who are in power. The individual, who finds no peace or rest, seeks to forget himself in excitement. Immorality increases, crime flourishes, religion is ridiculed. Corruption spreads throughout the social order. Class and national hatreds are aroused and fostered. Wars break out. Humanity grows desperate. There seems to be no possibility of stemming the tide of destruction.

At this moment the Avatar appears. Being the total manifestation of God in human form, he is like a gauge against which man can measure what he is and what he may become. He trues the standard of human values by interpreting them in terms of divinely human life.⁹⁸

In spite of the fact that the teachings he gives and the circumstances of his life vary greatly from advent to advent, Baba asserted that the primary mission, to release divine love in the world, is always the same:

In those that contact him he awakens a love that consumes all selfish desires in the flame of the one desire to serve him. Those who consecrate their lives to him gradually become identified with him in consciousness. Little by little, their humanity is absorbed into his divinity and they become free.⁹⁹

In answering questions about the differences between the Avatars, Baba explained that it is necessary for the Avatar to adapt to the time and place in which he appears. Thus his work is oriented to the particular needs of the people in each age, and his message is couched in language that can be understood by the prevailing attitudes and cultures to which it is given. Baba repeatedly



claimed that these differences are not essential, and that underlying them all is the same message of love.¹⁰⁰ In the next three chapters we will explore the nature of this message as expressed by Baba in his life and work.

The Function of the Cosmology

Meher Baba did not intend the "message of love" he came to give as Avatar to be confused with precepts or explanations. When asked once by an interviewer, "Have you a Scripture, a Bible, a Koran, an inspired book?", Baba answered, "No, I awaken. I am an awakener."¹⁰¹ The answer is re-enforced by the fact that he dictated it from his silence.

Yet, as we have seen in this chapter, many words were given by Baba: explanations, discourses, messages, and daily communications. They obviously serve a purpose for without them nothing could be said of his mission to awaken. How, then, did Baba view the function of the words he gave?

In the first place, Meher Baba's words are indications of his identity and what he came to accomplish. Just as the Avatar must embody himself in order to change consciousness, so he must on occasion use words in order to point beyond words to his inner work. Because they are



his words, Baba stated, they have the capacity to aid in the process of awakening:

Only those who have gone beyond the mind know the Truth in its reality. If they sometimes explain what they know, which they rarely do, those explanations also being in words are limited, but these words illumine the mind; they do not fill it with novel ideas.¹⁰²

In spite of their limitations, therefore, the Avatar's words have a transformative power because they come from one who is consciously one with all life.¹⁰³

Baba further indicated that the Avatar's words are instrumental in stilling the mind and clearing the way for further spiritual advancement. They are in no way meant to be taken as a substitute for the "truth" the Avatar brings which has to do with the direct experience of divine love. These points are made in the final chapter of God Speaks, after many pages of cosmological explanations:

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.

Nevertheless, all that is said here and explained about God to appease the intellectual convulsions of the mind of man, still lacks many more words and further explanations because Truth is that Reality which must be realized and the divinity of God must be attained and lived.

To understand the infinite eternal Reality is not the goal of individualized beings in the Illusion of Creation, because Reality can never be understood; it is to realize the Reality and attain the "I am God" state in human form.¹⁰⁴



The extended use of the ocean-drop and lover-Beloved metaphors suggests the instrumental and provisional use of language in Baba's work. These metaphors offer conceptualization of "individuality" and "love" which are meant to govern and guide the aspirant's understanding of the spiritual Path. Thus the metaphors not only offer a framework for Baba's world view, they point beyond words to the experience of divine love and the ultimate goal of God-realization. The knowledge imparted by the Avatar's words may be said to be the highest expression in words of that which cannot be known at all through words. Understanding Baba's words may help the aspirant, but this cannot be confused with the Real Knowledge of God-realization:

Do not give undue importance to explanations and discourses. Words fail to give any meaning to Reality because when one supposes that one has understood, one has not understood: one is far from understanding so far as Reality is concerned. Reality is beyond human understanding (Samaj) for it is beyond intellect. Understanding cannot help because God is beyond understanding. The moment you try to understand God you misunderstand Him; you miss Him when you try to understand Him. Intellect must go before knowledge dawns.¹⁰⁵



CHAPTER II

LIVING THE MESSAGE: MEHER BABA'S LIFE STORY

Meher Baba's actions, like his words, point to his mission of awakening. Beginning in 1921, when the master Upasni Maharaj declared him to be the Avatar, Baba saw himself as working to transform the world through divine love.¹ In this chapter we will discover how the life story defines and shapes Meher Baba's work as the Avatar who has "come to awaken." The cosmology discussed in the last chapter will provide the conceptual framework necessary for understanding the events of a complex and active life of nearly seventy-five years. My intention, therefore, is to examine the known biography in light of Baba's claim to be the Avatar, and taking into account his explanations about the function of the Avatar within God's divine plan.

Just as Baba's cosmology gives a theological basis for grasping his Avataric mission, so the life story suggests how his actions serve his work of "awakening." In this sense, the writings and the story support and interpret one another. Taken together, the words and the actions will give us the foundation for probing in the



last two chapters the collective and individual dimensions of Baba's mission.

There are two complete biographies of Meher Baba, The God-Man and Much Silence, both written by followers of Baba, and there are partial accounts given in various other works. The chief sources for the events depicted in these biographies are Baba himself, his mandali and other lovers who were present during the different periods of his life. What we are drawing on, then, is primarily an autobiographical and theological rendering of Baba's life. We will explore the ways in which these accounts point to the message of love Baba claimed to be giving in all that he said and did. Through his actions Baba appeared to be defining the Avatar and living out his mission to awaken. This agrees with what we know of his intention not to give mere words, but to live God's truth.²

In India, an individual's degree of illumination is considered to be the source of spiritual authority. The life story and discourses of a master may not be definitive proofs of his status, but they are often taken to be significant clues in determining whether or not he is a Sadguru.³ Indian Sufi stories as well as the Hindu epics have the recurring theme of the true teacher as the one who lives a life of love and truth.⁴ In this context it



is not difficult to understand why from the very beginning of his mission Baba's activities were of great importance to those who approached him seeking the Avatar.⁵

As we begin a detailed look at Baba's activities, it will be helpful to reiterate a number of key points found in Baba's explanation of Avatarhood. The Avatar, according to Baba, is a "divinely human example" who demonstrates the "possibility of a divine life for all humanity."⁶ By this Baba meant that the Avatar is not only an example to the world of love and service, he is also a visible symbol of the true Self in everyone.⁷ His actions are meant, therefore, to awaken people to their spiritual potential. Speaking of his own work as Avatar, Baba said:

I have come not to teach but to awaken. Understand therefore that I lay down no precepts... Because man has been deaf to the principles and precepts laid down by God in the past, in this present Avataric form I observe silence. You have asked for and been given enough words--it is now time to live them.⁸

By living the truth that he brings, the Avatar has a transforming impact on all life. The Avatar's actions, because he is one with all living things, reverberate on every plane of consciousness:

An ordinary physical action of the Avatar releases immense forces in the inner planes and so becomes the starting point for a chain of working, the repercussions and overtones of which are manifest at all levels and are universal in range and effect.⁹



The Avatar's actions, therefore, have hidden, silent meanings, beyond the immediate comprehension of those who observe him. Only so much about the Avatar is available to the intellect; a deeper knowledge of him must be sought through participation in his love:

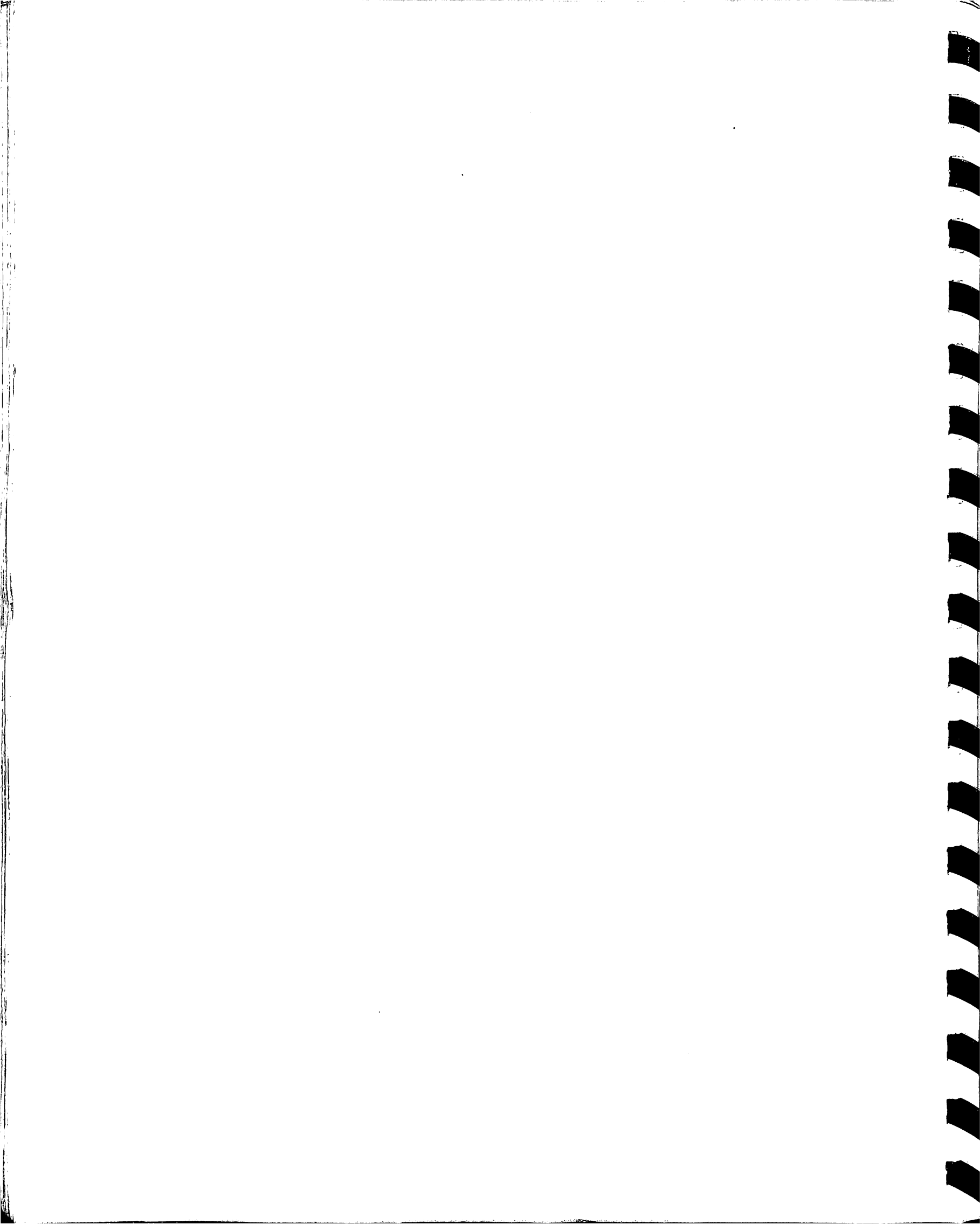
I am the One so many seek and so few find. No amount of intellect can fathom me. No amount of austerity can attain me. Only when one loves me and loses one's self in me am I found.¹⁰

Meher Baba's vision of the Avatar reveals the importance he placed on his own actions as Avatar. He understood his life to be the locus of divine activity in our age.¹¹ With this in mind, we turn now to the story itself.

In his later years, Meher Baba viewed his life as having four distinct phases:

The role, which God has willed for me, has had several phases. The pre-realization ordinary state, the old life state of realized divinity, the new life state of perfect humility and intensive seeking of God as Truth through the achievement of manonash, and the tripartite Free Life... The consuming of freedom and bindings means that there is a complete blending of the God-state and the man-state...¹²

These phases identified by Baba accord well with what we know of his activities and the various roles he played over the years. Consequently, they provide a useful schema that allows us, for the purpose of discussing his



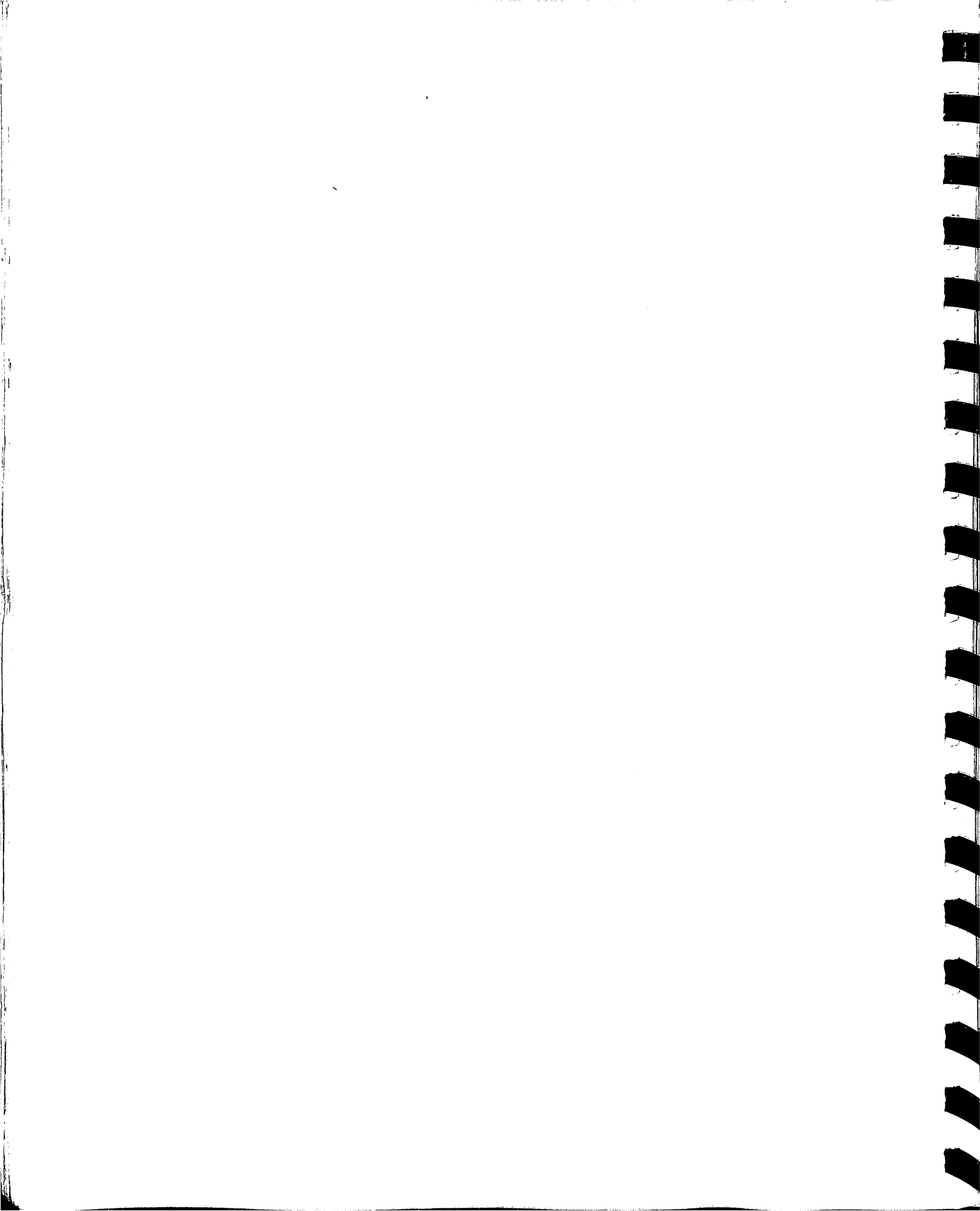
Avataric work, to divide Baba's life into four parts: veiled youth; Sadguru; seeker of God; God-man.

Veiled Youth (1894-1921)

Baba indicated that before 1921 he was unaware of his divinity. His young life as Merwan Sheriar Irani was of an ordinary nature, with little happening to foreshadow a spiritual vocation. Later in his life, however, Baba explained that he was the Avatar from birth:

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 Avatar.¹³

What are we to make of this veiling and unveiling of God by God? What does it mean to say that God becomes an ordinary human being in order to unveil himself as Avatar? First we must keep in mind that in the background of these statements about "unveiling" are the states of God discussed in the previous chapter. God or Reality, though



essentially One, becomes many for the sake of love. In epistemological terms, Reality seeks to know Itself through the development of consciousness. God must consequently exist on all levels of consciousness simultaneously. The expression of God's essential loving nature gives rise to the universe, necessitating the appearance of difference or separation.¹⁴

At certain critical junctures in the story of consciousness, the divine, which is conscious of its divinity, enforms Itself in the realm of unconscious divinity. From the human perspective, God becomes a human being by participating fully in the limitations of human life. That is to say, Reality subjects Itself to the limitations of duality in order to help atmas still caught in the world of maya.

When the divine voluntarily enters into the world a profound revolution in consciousness takes place. God has acted directly to change the awareness of all life by identifying with and working through the laws of the universe. God becoming human is that outpouring of love that enables the human to become God.¹⁵

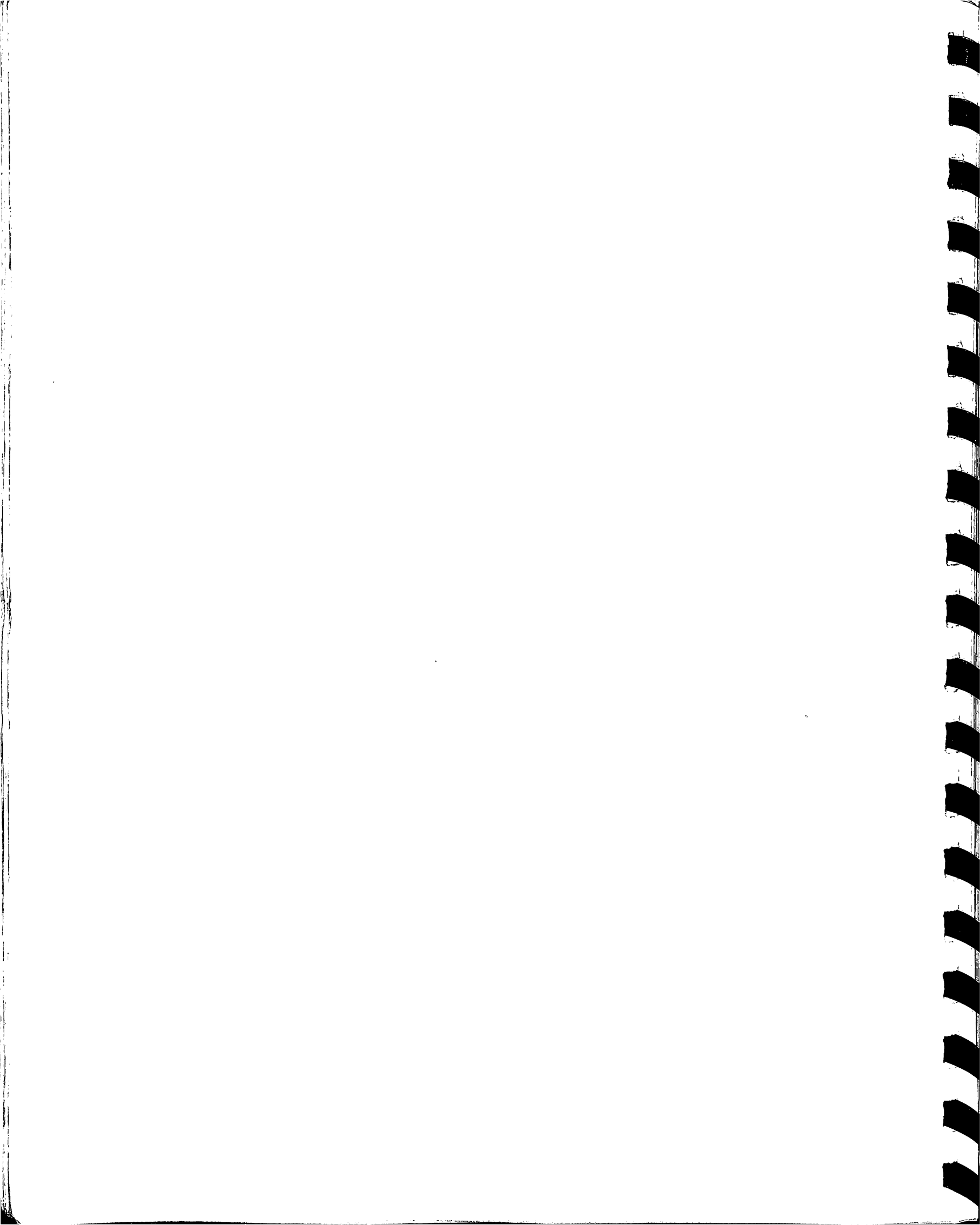
In the birth of the God-man, "the existing balance between reality and illusion" is not disturbed because the divine takes form within the laws of the universe and not



miraculously. As we saw in our earlier discussion of the Avatar, God takes on certain impressions which form the basis for the human personality present in the incarnation. These impressions are given not produced; they are not of the limited ego-mind. God enters the world in human form with human impressions, but he is not bound by the limitations of the ego.¹⁶

In the Avatar, God may choose not to use the power and bliss essential to the divine nature. God remains God in all of the divine states, including when limited by ignorance, and God can consciously subject himself to the limits of time and space without ceasing to be God.¹⁷ This conception of the Avatar is not drawn simply from the dictations on Baba's board, but is also reflected in Meher Baba's actual life story. At this point, theory and story interpret one another. It is evident, for example, that the foundation for understanding the unveiling of Avataric consciousness is grounded in Baba's own "unveiling" by his masters, a process we will now explore.

The unveiling of Meher Baba began in the birth of Merwan Sheriar Irani, the name given Baba by his parents, on February 25, 1894. From what has already been said, it is apparent that the birth is to be considered as resulting from a natural conception. In Baba's view, Merwan



was one with God but veiled temporarily from this state. Why veiled? Baba insists that God must become human, and this translates to mean that God must establish a human personality in the world of duality. During the veiled period of childhood and youth, the Avatar unfolds a fully human personality. This personality allows the Avatar, once unveiled, to enter into a new relationship with humanity. Thus the parentage, childhood, and youth of the Avatar are not incidental to his "universal work"; they mold the personality through which that work must be expressed.

Viewing Merwan Irani as the Avatar gives significance to the ordinary. Merwan's parents were Persian and were part of the small but influential Zoroastrian community in India. Later in his life, Baba and some of his biographers emphasized this fact, suggesting that Persian heritage was necessary to place the Avatar between the East and West.¹⁸ Everything about the Avatar, in other words, is part of the divine mission that will make Meher Baba a universally accessible Avatar.¹⁹

The special impressions "taken on" by the Avatar create a personality through which God works in human form. From this perspective, the childhood of Merwan reflects the development of the human personality needed

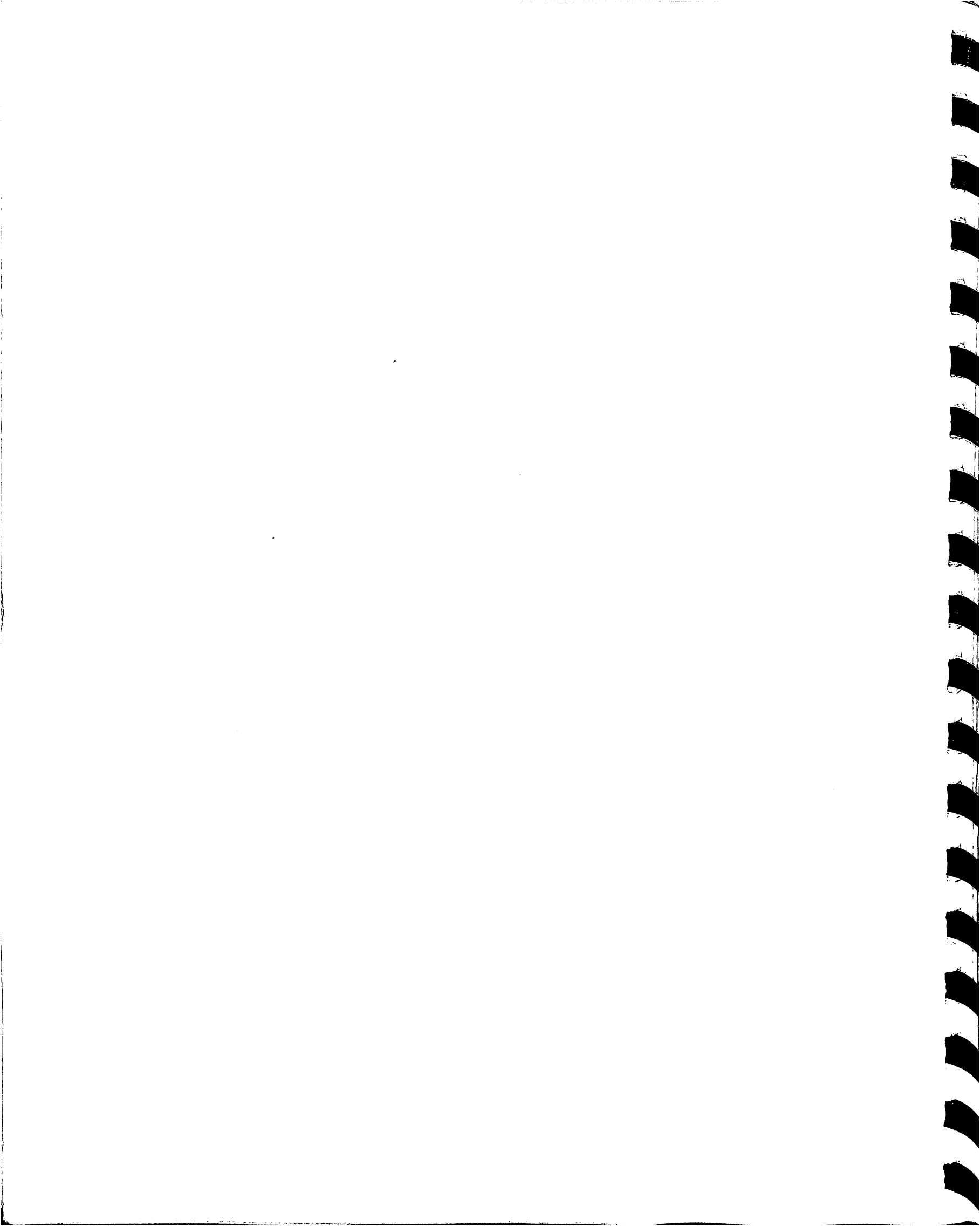


by the Avatar in this incarnation. In other words, when Baba was unveiled to his identity, he retained many of the personal traits he had as a young man. These included his mischievous sense of humor, an enthusiasm for games, particularly cricket, and a love of poetry and music.²⁰

The actual unveiling that made Merwan Irani aware of his mission as Avatar began suddenly and unexpectedly. One day while cycling home from Deccan College in Poona he encountered an old woman by the name of Babajan. As Baba later described it, from that moment his life radically changed:

Babajan called me one day as I was cycling past her tree; she kissed me on the forehead, and for nine months, God knows, I was in that state to which very, very few go. I had no consciousness of my body or of anything else. I roamed about taking no food. My mother thought I was mad and called the doctor. My father understood, but said nothing. The doctors could not do anything... I took no food but tea, which my elder brother Jamshed, who loved me very much, gave me.²¹

From the time of this kiss in 1913 until the end of 1921, Merwan was consumed by the process of realizing his spiritual identity and mission. Babajan and the four other masters he subsequently contacted worked together to bring Baba into an awareness of his Avatarhood.²² Because these eight years are foundational for understanding the claim for Meher Baba's Avataric authority, they must be



given special attention. We start with a brief account of the five masters responsible for Baba's unveiling.

We have already seen that in God Speaks Baba states that there are always five Sadgurus or Perfect Masters in the world. As individuals who have achieved God-realization, these masters represent the conscious presence of the divine in the world at all times. When one dies another fully realized individual becomes a Sadguru. When God takes human form, it is the function of these five to veil and unveil the God-man. This is an expanded way of saying that God veils God and God unveils God.²³ Baba identified five masters as the Sadgurus who unveiled him. They were: Hazrat Babajan of Poona, Sai Baba of Shirdi, Upasni Maharaj, Tarjuddin Baba, and Nara~~j~~an Maharaj. The last two were contacted only briefly by Baba, and there is little we can say about their role. Of the other three something should be said.

Babajan was reported to be over one hundred and twenty years old when Baba first met her in May of 1913. Many legends surround her life, but it is well-established that she rejected a life of wealth and family to seek God. Though a Moslem, she came to know herself as one with God, a claim not unknown among Indian Sufis. For her boldness

she was reportedly buried alive only to survive and later receive homage from her tormenters.²⁴

Those people living today who knew Babajan speak of the unforgettable radiance of love and power emanating from her frail body sitting under a tree. In all kinds of weather and for years at a time, she remained under her tree, giving darshan to those who came to her. In spite of her living conditions and her refusal to bathe, she was always clean and fresh in appearance.²⁵

Sai Baba of Shirdi, Baba's second master, is today the object of great veneration throughout India. Though he died in 1917 and left behind no writings, Sai Baba is perhaps the most popular of recent masters in India. A Moslem by birth, he adopted Hindu practices and had a Hindu master. Both religions are still well-represented among his following. He is best known for the countless miracles attributed to him during his lifetime and at his samadhi in Shirdi.²⁶

The third of Meher Baba's masters, Upasni Maharaj, was himself a disciple of Sai Baba before receiving God-realization. Born into a Brahmin family, Upasni evidenced a spiritual vocation from an early age. For a number of years he remained near Sai Baba undergoing strict spiritual disciplines. Eventually Sai Baba is said to have made



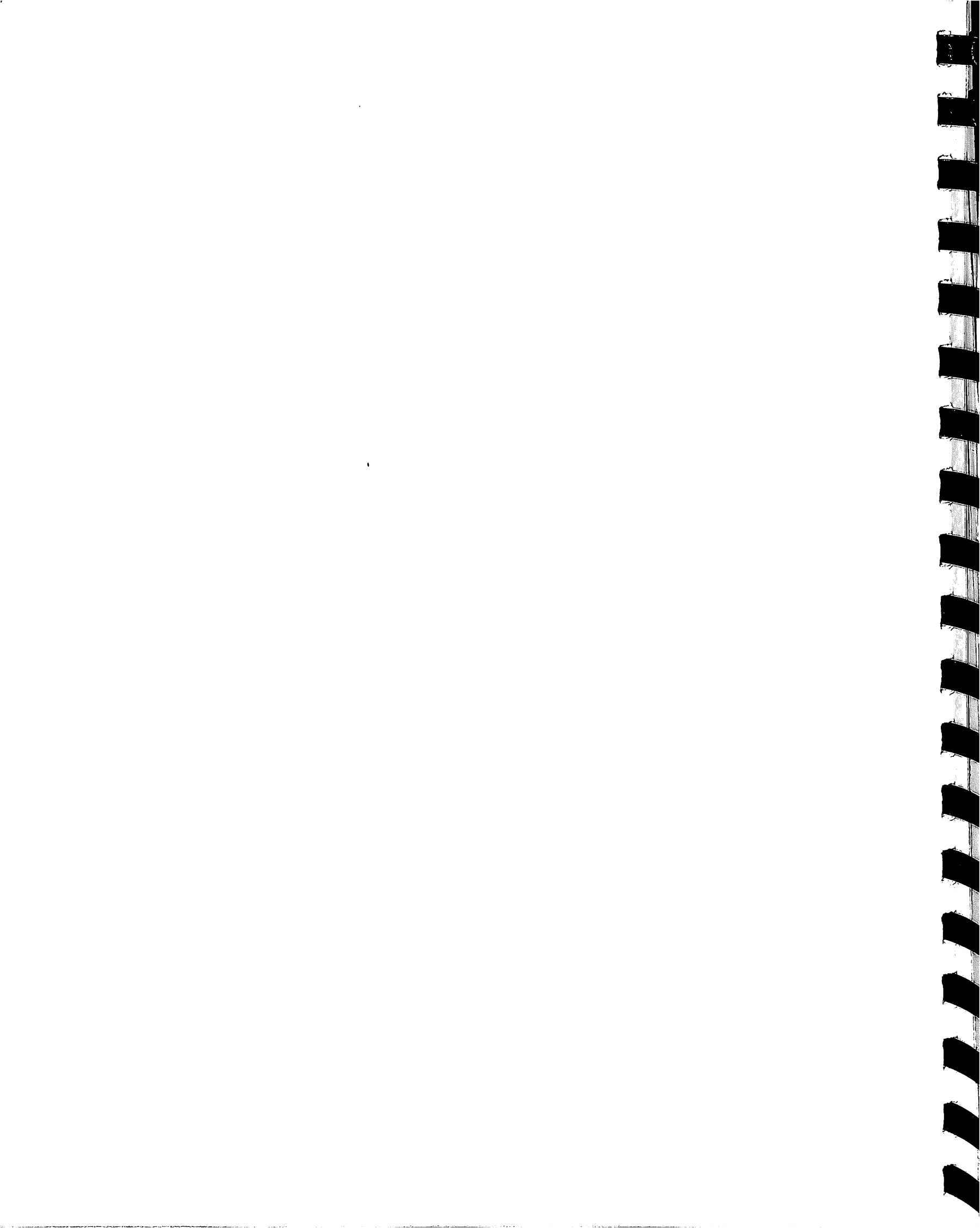
Upasni perfect. Moving to Sakori, Upasni began to gather a following of his own, some of whom were to be the first disciples of Meher Baba.²⁷

These three individuals are examples of what Meher Baba called "Perfect Masters." Though Perfect Masters become one with God and are in fact expressions of God's presence and guidance in the world, they only rarely become well-known. In their personal behavior they appear oblivious to standards of morality in terms of socially acceptable actions. Unpredictable and eccentric, these masters seem purposely to shock those who approach them. Sai Baba, for example, was fond of taking money from those who came for darshan, and then later distributing it to someone else.²⁸ Upasni was renowned for his crude language and sudden temper fits.²⁹ In general, according to Baba, Perfect Masters have no need of a following, they leave behind few writings, and they are attached to no one religious orientation.³⁰

In the Perfect Master, the human becomes aware of God; in the Avatar, God becomes consciously human. Unlike the Sadguru, the Avatar is always one who will appeal to the entire world by offering an example of love and service and by taking on human suffering.³¹

What can be said about the experience that dramatically transformed the life and consciousness of Merwan Sheriar Irani? Though any claim of an ultimate encounter with the divine is in some sense beyond expression in language, something must be said of this pivotal moment in Baba's life. Without passing judgment on the genuineness of Baba's transformation, we must ask a key question that suggests itself at this point: what part does Baba's awakening-to-himself play in his self-understanding as Avatar? That is really to ask, what are the experiential grounds for Baba's own claim to divinity? For answers we look first to a description of what actually happened.

A Sufi woman, Hazrat Babajan, called Merwan Irani to her one day and kissed him on the forehead. After leaving her, Merwan entered into what can only be called an altered state of consciousness. Refusing to eat, unable to sleep, he appeared dazed for months. In January of 1914, after many silent meetings with Babajan, she embraced Merwan and the intensity of his state increased. He began to suffer great agony which he attempted to relieve by banging his head on a stone in the floor of his room and smashing his head through glass. His forehead was permanently scarred and his teeth loosened.³²



As one might expect, Merwan's mother sought to cure her son of what she saw as a form of mental illness. She pushed him to do things that would re-establish his connection to the world around him. In a dazed state he taught a friend Persian and took various jobs for short periods of time.³³ Eventually Merwan felt drawn to visit Sai Baba of Shirdi. According to one who was there, and according to Baba's own account, Sai Baba, on seeing Merwan for the first time, looked at him and shouted "Parvadigar" which means "Almighty God" or "God with us."³⁴

Immediately following his encounter with Sai Baba, Merwan went to Upasni Maharaj who was living near-by. As Meher Baba was later to describe it, Upasni played a crucial role in returning him to "ordinary consciousness":

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 (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.³⁵

It took the next seven years under Maharaj's guidance for Baba to return to complete awareness of the "world of



duality." At the end of this period, in December of 1921, Upasni declared Merwan Irani the Avatar saying: "This boy will move the world. Humanity at large will be benefited at his hands." Upasni directed many of his disciples to follow Merwan.³⁶

These, then, are the events that led to Merwan Sheriar Irani's assumption of the Avataric mission. This unveiling process suggests several insights into Meher Baba as Avatar. In the first place, Merwan's transformation began suddenly. There was little in his life prior to the first encounter with Babajan that indicated a spiritual vocation. God-realization came to Merwan unsought.

Meher Baba's absolute conviction that he was the Avatar of this age was rooted firmly in his direct contact with five masters. They did not teach him anything as far as we know; they awakened him by their very presence. Without words or explanations, these masters completely re-oriented Merwan's life.

Apparently, the process of unveiling entailed great suffering. As we saw in Baba's conception of the Avatar, for God to become human involves infinite consciousness limiting itself within the realm of finite consciousness. This entrance of the divine into the world as a human



being is, according to Baba, painful. After his initial contact with Babajan, the suffering began:

Although the infinite bliss I experienced in my superconscious state remained continuous, as it is now, I suffered agonies in returning towards normal consciousness of illusion... In reality there is no suffering as such--only infinite bliss. Although suffering is illusory, still, within the realm of illusion, it is suffering. My reality, although untouched by illusion, remained connected with illusion. That is why I suffered incalculable spiritual agonies.³⁷

God becoming human, according to Baba, "withholds" his infinite bliss in order to identify with the limitations humanity experiences in the world of forms. By this, Baba meant to suggest that in the Avatar God voluntarily re-enters the "illusion," simultaneously conscious of divinity and humanity. This serves God's purpose of working for the transformation of human consciousness by participating in it.³⁸

It is significant that Meher Baba was awakened to his Avatarhood in the physical world and through human activity. The story of his unveiling is one of outward, direct encounters with five individuals who gave a tremendous jolt to his conscious mind. The implications of Baba's own experience are revealed in his writings where he frequently affirmed the world as the arena for the transformation of consciousness. To put it in its



broadest sense, God works in and through the laws of the universe to effect the movement from unconscious divinity to conscious divinity.³⁹

In 1922 Merwan Sheriar Irani was ready to begin his mission as Avatar Meher Baba. Though in many ways he remained the same person, he now experienced himself as one born to live the divinely human life of the God-man. He told his early disciples: "I have a great mission to perform during my life to the whole world."⁴⁰ They, in turn, witnessed a profound change in Merwan that inspired them to leave everything and enter his service. One who was there later recalled Merwan at this pivotal juncture in his life:

He was fair, but looked tanned with the tremendous force of having to contain the fire of Absoluteness of God in the limitedness of human nature. He was sharp, quick, forthright and vibrant. His eyes were penetrating and aglow with divine fire. His body was lean and wiry, but strong and active. There was an air of deep drunkenness of spirit--the intoxication which was ever conscious, that flashed out in his lightening words of knowledge and wisdom and acts of deep, affectionate and tender love, The selflessness that pervaded his doings and words was simple and unsophisticated. Inwardly, he seemed to live as God for God's work; and outwardly, he lived as man for all men except for himself.⁴¹

Sadguru (1921-1949)

The first disciples of Merwan began to call him "Meher Baba" or "Compassionate Father," for they accepted



him as a God-realized master or Sadguru. Some were boyhood friends, others came because of connections with Baba's masters, and many were attracted by the growing reputation of Merwan in the Poona area.⁴² They did not know, as Baba had not explained, the distinction between Sadguru and Avatar. The understanding of Baba as the Avatar came gradually during their years of training under Baba's guidance. In the beginning, at least, he was their master who lovingly cared for them, worked with them, and included them in his work.⁴³

The definition of Avatar that I have outlined in Chapter I is a concept that emerged over the course of Baba's life through his statements and actions. Eventually those around Baba came to see him as more than a Sadguru or Perfect Master. By the 1950s, when he indicated publicly his Avatarhood, his circle of disciples knew what this meant.⁴⁴ Baba did not simply fulfill for them a picture of the Avatar inherited from Hindu tradition; he expanded and re-created that picture in the events of his own life. All of the roles Meher Baba assumed during the course of his nearly seventy-five years, veiled youth, Sadguru, seeker of God, God-man, combined to define the title "Avatar."

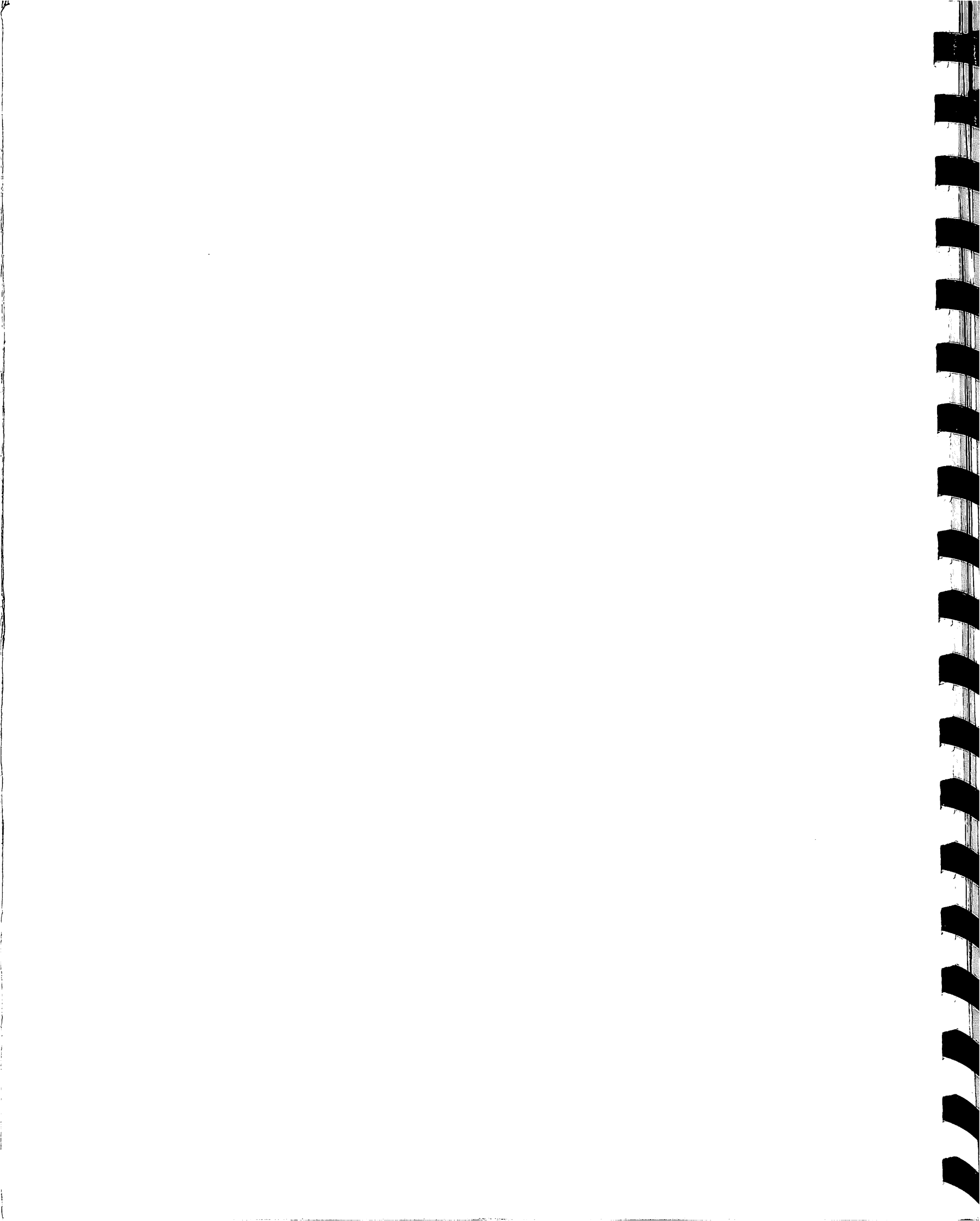


Labeling twenty-eight years of Baba's life

"Sadguru," therefore, is not meant to suggest that during this period he was "only" a Perfect Master, or that he saw himself as a Perfect Master and no more. There is much evidence in his statements to indicate a very early distinction between a man-God or Perfect Master and the God-man or Avatar.⁴⁵ The label is given rather as a general characterization of the "old life state of realized divinity," a role Baba played from 1921 until the "New Life" in 1949.⁴⁶

Without giving a full account of this period, it is necessary to ask in what way his many activities as a Perfect Master contribute to our understanding of Meher Baba as the Avatar who has come "to awaken." How are we, in other words, to make sense of what Baba did during these active years in light of his claim to be the divine awakener for this age? There are five aspects of his work during this time that bear directly on this question: gathering of disciples; silent communication; acts of service; world travel; and contact with the God-intoxicated. We will examine each of these dimensions of his work in turn.

Baba called those who were close to him mandali, a Sanskrit word meaning a group or company.⁴⁷ Though the



first mandali gave Baba the name "Meher Baba," they called him by the familiar "Baba." In the early stages of their training the disciples lived in an ashram setting with Baba. This required of them strict obedience to a long list of orders having to do with work, diet, even play and exercise. The men and women Baba drew to him were from a variety of religious and economic backgrounds. Though they were allowed to follow the practices of their respective religions, they also had to live in close harmony and cooperation with those of other faiths. Everyone was required to work hard, often at a job in the world as well as in the ashram. In addition, they had to join Baba in providing services for the sick, the poor, and others in need.⁴⁸

The gathering of the mandali was seen by Baba and those who followed him as part of the gathering of the "circle." According to Baba, each time the Avatar comes (and in the case of each Perfect Master) there is always a circle of disciples closely connected with his work. The Avatar works through these individuals to benefit the whole of humanity. The circle must be representative of many personality types in order to be instruments in the Avataric mission. Because consciousness was seen by Baba as fundamentally one, the training of the mandali by the



Avatar was believed to affect all of humankind. Therefore, as with much in Baba's life, the circle had a symbolic function.⁴⁹

In July of 1925 Meher Baba announced to the mandali that he would remain silent for a year. On July 10th he gave instructions concerning the thriving colony that had grown up around the ashram that included a school for boys and a hospital. He ended by telling them: "Think of others more than of yourselves; use up your bodies in service. This is absolutely necessary if you want to realize God." As he left to retire to his room he said: "Always carry a lantern when you go out or about at night." That was the last the mandali heard of Meher Baba's voice.⁵⁰ He remained silent for the rest of his life.

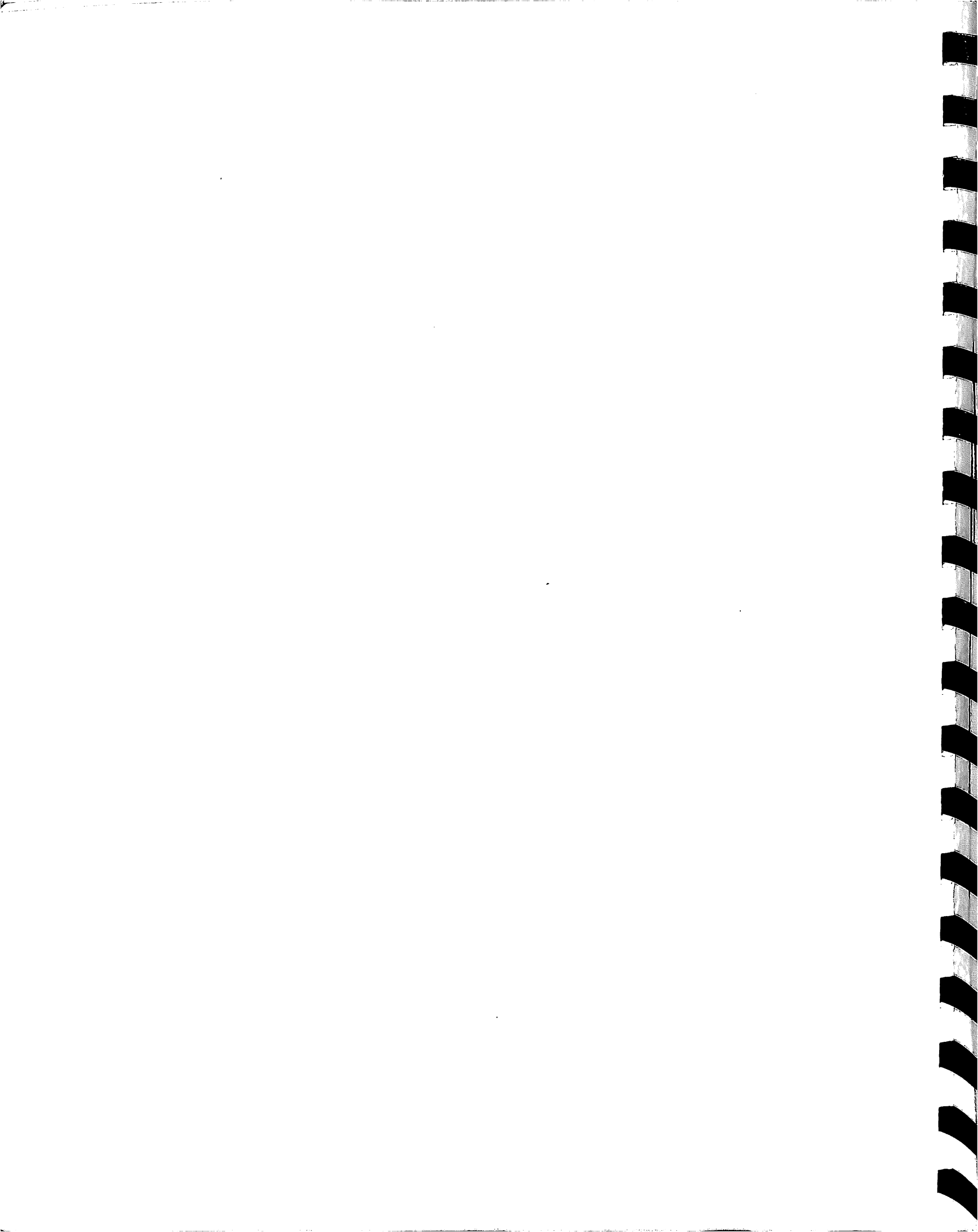
In the first months of his silence Baba used a slate on which he wrote and hand gestures to convey something in words. Soon the slate was replaced by an alphabet board on which the letters of the English alphabet were printed. Pointing to the letters Baba rapidly spelled out what he wished to say. The silence deepened further in 1954 when Baba ceased to use the board and relied solely on gestures.⁵¹



Aside from not speaking orally, Baba maintained silence in other ways. Often he would alternate periods of intense activity with seclusions in which he said he did his "universal work."⁵² At these times he worked alone or with a few close companions. Not long after beginning his silence, in 1927, Baba also ceased to write except to sign his name (M.S. Irani). The one book written in the 1920s by Baba's own hand has not been read by anyone and its present whereabouts are unknown.⁵³

The reasons for Baba's silence are perhaps known only to him. Nevertheless, he gave a number of indications as to why he choose to speak through silence. In Chapter I we explored the ramifications of giving writings and discourses through the medium of a third person. I concluded that through this method Baba directed attention away from the written word as a source of authority, pointing instead to the inner experience described in the written word.

In the life story we discover another dimension of Baba's silence: not speaking orally focused on who Baba was more than on what he said. The symbolic meaning of keeping (and breaking) silence will be discussed in depth in Chapter III. At this point it is important simply to



indicate that Baba viewed his power to act as Avatar as being grounded in his silence:

If my silence cannot speak, of what avail would be speeches made by the tongue? The very moment when he thinks my speaking should be heard universally, God will make me break my silence.⁵⁴

The silence was not a spiritual vow or discipline. It was undertaken by Baba in order to transform humanity from within.⁵⁵

In silence Baba remained extremely active, a fact which amazed those around him:

Many men have remained silent for even a lifetime--but under special conditions solitude and seclusion, taking no part in worldly affairs. But who except God Almighty could engage in all the activities he (Baba) had taken part in: the detailed supervision of the ashram and the colony surrounding it, bathing the boys and washing their clothes, writing a book, grinding flour, giving darshan to tens of thousands, and interviews to hundreds, as well as dictating more discourses than the previous year when he was speaking, dispensing justice and healing the villagers' quarrels, helping the untouchables to stand up as human beings, playing cricket and football and other boys' games; and in the midst of all this, assuming anger, displeasure, joviality, seriousness, mirth, pity and sorrow without once being heard to utter a sound.⁵⁶

Most of Baba's activities in the 1920s centered around institutions of service established primarily near Meherabad, his headquarters for many years. At various times there were schools for students of different ages, castes, and nationalities, facilities for the mentally



ill, free hospitals and dispensaries for the poor, and a school for training individuals in the spiritual life. The mandali helped to run these services as well as cope with the hundreds who came each day for Baba's blessing.⁵⁷

As the Avatar, Baba saw himself attacking the problems of the many through direct contact with a few. Because the Avatar's consciousness is said to be at one with all consciousness, every act of the Avatar affects all. For example, Baba worked "universally" to break down the caste system by personally bathing the untouchable boys attending his school. When some Brahmins came for Baba's darshan, he had them join in the work saying, "I am bathing untouchable boys. It is no use thus having darshan unless you are prepared to do the work I do."⁵⁸

In his acts of service Baba did not appear to be primarily interested in founding institutions of service, though he did not object to their being established in his name.⁵⁹ From Baba's perspective, the God-realized individual is able to render true selfless service because he or she is able to see God in each person.⁶⁰ Baba's ultimate aim in service was not, therefore, merely to remedy physical suffering, though that was involved. His intention was to transform the consciousness of humankind:

Those who are inspired by the spirit of selfless service are quick to render unto humanity all possible



help through the provision of the necessities of life like clothes and shelter, food and medicine, education and other amenities of civilization... All these types of service are great and good; but from the ultimate point of view, the help which secures spiritual freedom for humanity, surpasses them all; and it is insuperable in importance... Regardless of whether a man is wealthy or poor, highly educated or illiterate, the only real help is to give him the perfect hope that everyone has a really equal opportunity to achieve everlasting freedom from all bindings. There is no gift greater than the gift of spiritual freedom and there is no task more important than that of helping others to attain it...⁶¹

The "freedom" Baba pointed to in his acts of service results from the "awakening," individual and collective, that he claimed to bring as Avatar. For this work he needed no permanent institution or organization. Those he did establish he compared to the scaffolding temporarily erected to build the real building that must be built in the consciousness of humanity. Once the inner change is accomplished the scaffolding is dismantled.⁶² In this way, Baba explained the constant opening and closing of his various ashrams and centers of service. They were meant as outward signs of the actual inner work.⁶³

By way of anticipating the discussion in Chapters III and IV on the symbolic significance of Meher Baba's actions, it should be noted that Baba's service work was intended by him to be transformative of consciousness in at least three ways. Firstly, the actions of the Avatar



stand as an example for others to follow. Secondly, these actions transform the individuals connected with them as recipients or helpers by awakening each one to the spiritual reality within. And thirdly, Baba asserted that the possibility for a new humanity is created when God in human form performs true acts of selfless service. The Avatar clears the path, as it were, in the consciousness of humanity for others to follow. The actions of the Avatar thus signal a fundamental change in the preceptions of human beings, and a broadening of human possibility.

In 1931 Baba carried his work to the Western world, travelling to Europe and America. At other times during the 1930s he also visited China, North Africa and the Middle East. Although on most of these trips Baba remained incognito, on occasion he publicly declared his presence and agreed to meet with people interested in him. This was particularly true in England and the United States where he issued statements about his mission.⁶⁴

In one of his first public statements to the West, he said:

I am not come to establish any cult, society, or organization--nor to establish a new religion. The religion I shall give teaches the knowledge of the One behind the many. The Book which I shall make people read is the book of the heart, which holds the key to the mystery of life. As for ritual, I shall teach



humanity to discriminate, express, and live rather than observe it. I shall bring about a blending of the head and the heart.⁶⁵

This statement and many others given during Baba's travels express the central theme of his "work": he comes to awaken individuals to the truth within their hearts. For this to happen, he insists, no external organization is necessary. The result of this inner work will be a "spiritual push forward" for individuals who come into his contact, and for humanity at large.⁶⁶

As he travelled, Baba gave the appearance of one confidently carrying out his mission. He refused to found any sect or religious society, and he detailed no particular method of spirituality. On occasion he met with the press, but much of the time he avoided publicity. When unfavorable or sensational reports appeared in the media, he never allowed his followers to respond.⁶⁷ Baba seemed to have his own purpose, taking great pains to contact certain people and visit particular places, following a time-table known only to him.⁶⁸

Baba contacted a number of people in England and America who became his disciples. Simply coming into Baba's presence had a lasting affect on his first Western followers. One later wrote:



My most outstanding impression of the first meeting is one of peering into bottomless pools of infinite love and tenderness, as my eyes met his. My heart pounded with tremendous excitement and for a while I could not speak. I felt that in an inexplicable way he was the reason for my very existence; that I had never really lived until this moment; that he was deeply familiar and precious to me, even as I was no stranger and very dear to him.⁶⁹

This response to the initial silent meeting with Meher Baba is typical of many reported throughout Baba's life. He was able to inspire immediate love and familiarity that frequently developed into life-long commitment.⁷⁰

From the reports we have, it might be concluded that to travel around the world with Meher Baba was to enter into his world. Each place and person was invested with significance; deliberation by Baba somehow ordered the apparent chaos of his movements. This purposefulness is illustrated by stories of his visits to places where large numbers of people gather or walk. He would simply walk through the crowds or sit in their midst, insisting on the importance of these encounters for his work.⁷¹ An example of this is recorded by a disciple who showed Baba Shanghai:

Immediately we had had tea Baba said that he wished to go round the city and mix with the Chinese crowds. I had had very little experience of Baba's ways and was still rather awkward in his presence. I took them along the Bund, and from the French settlement by tram through the British to the war-stricken districts near the North station, thinking it would



interest them. Not at all. There were not enough people. We took a tram back and saw Nanking Road, the now brightly lit Chinese stores... The Streets were densely packed with long-gowned clerks and short-coated coolies... Baba was delighted...⁷²

On many occasions Baba would visit a particular place in order to contact individuals he called his "agents." Though unknown to those travelling with Baba, these agents seemed to recognize Baba and receive some kind of instruction from him. One of many examples is the following description of an encounter between Baba and an agent in New Mexico (1934):

Baba has explained that this is one of the very rare direct agents; he is the direct agent of America. In 1934, when Baba and a few of his disciples were on their way to California, the train stopped at Albuquerque for a short time. Baba spelt out the word "Indian" on the palm of his hand, and went with Ruano away from the station into a small street near by. At a street corner they noticed two American Indians; one was selling bows and arrows, and he walked away as soon as Baba approached. The other, a tall, impressive figure with a red band tied round his head, stayed where he was, and for a few moments Baba and he stood facing one another, each looking intently into the other's eyes. Baba then abruptly walked back to the station.⁷³

Once when asked about the "exterior and interior work" of the Avatar, Baba referred to agents and travels through various countries:

His (the Avatar's) interior work is executed for the good of humanity by the means of his spiritual body and divine will, on the spiritual and the subtle planes directly, or through the intermediary of his



agents. The exterior work is accomplished through his physical body by personal contact with individuals. By passing through different countries, he turns their minds towards spirituality; he enhances their progression towards the subtle planes and from this towards the spiritual (mental) planes.⁷⁴

Seen through Baba's world view, visits to special places, gathering disciples, anonymously weaving through crowds all form part of the pattern of his Avataric mission. Baba termed these travels "laying cables" for his universal work by preparing the ground for the awakening he had come to bring.⁷⁵ From this we may conclude that for Baba any radical change in consciousness must come from within. No amount of publicity, organization, explanations, or preaching can bring it about. The statement being made in all that Meher Baba said or did is that by his every action and through his very presence he was shaking the world into a new way of seeing.

The esoteric pattern of Baba's actions as Avatar is nowhere better highlighted than in ^{his} this work with the God-intoxicated or masts. For many of his seventy-four years Baba searched for, contacted, and worked intensely with these peculiar individuals. The statistics alone are staggering: from 1941 until 1946, the years of his most extensive mast "tours" in India, Baba personally contacted some 20,000 people in 75,000 miles of journeys.⁷⁶



So important is this mast work in Baba's life, we must be clear on just what or who is a mast. The term "mast" was coined by Baba from the Sufi term "mast-Allah" which may be translated to mean "one who is overpowered by God or God-intoxicated."⁷⁷ There are, of course, many types of spiritually advanced souls recognized in both Sufi and Vedantic lore, and India is famous for the many varieties of these souls within her borders. We will not pause here to describe in detail the typology of spiritually advanced souls given by Meher Baba. Suffice to say, there are five major categories: God-merged; God-intoxicated (masts); God-absorbed; God-communed; God-mad.⁷⁸

While Baba worked with each of these types, he gave special attention to the masts. William Donkin, an English medical doctor who chronicled Baba's mast work, described in the following passage Baba's explanation of a mast's intoxicated state:

All masts are God-intoxicated. They are intoxicated by Divine Love. When anyone is intoxicated by alcohol or drugs, he enjoys this sensation as long as the intoxicant is in sufficient concentration in his tissues: he feels happy, cares a rap for anyone and anything, and has one dominant sensation of drunkenness, in which time, past, present, or future, have practically no meaning.

But as soon as this ordinary intoxication passes away, the drunkard suffers the reverse of the coin--



the hangover. His intoxication is inescapably temporary, for a limit is set to it by the conditions of the world, the depth of his pocket, and resilience of his constitution.

Now a mast, who is God-intoxicated, experiences just the same sensation that a drunkard enjoys, and cares for no one and nothing, in proportion to the extent of his intoxication; the difference is that his intoxication is continual, that it may increase but can never decrease, and it has no physical or mental reaction. It is a state of permanent and unalloyed intoxication.

The principal sensation of a mast is this permanent enjoyment of divine intoxication. He may, however, in inverse proportion to the extent of his intoxication, be also vaguely aware of the particular spiritual plane he is on; but he pays little heed to it... A mast may be on any plane.

Seen on the streets of India, these masts are to most observers indistinguishable from mad-men. In Baba's view, however, these strange men and women are not only sane, but they are more sane than people with so-called "normal" consciousness. Masts, according to Baba, deviate for a number of reasons from the usual development in the spiritual search. Their deviation is pronounced because they have not received direct guidance from a master advanced on the path. For this reason a mast takes to "unconventional patterns of life." Baba outlined what then happens:

The result is that the person often lands himself into confusing side-tracks and by-paths, and sometimes into regressive channels of life. Once the average pattern of life is surrendered, it makes room for infinite varieties of self-created and provisional patterns of life and action. These patterns may deviate considerably from normality, and the ways of life



that follow from such patterns may even seem to be insane, to the extent to which they deviate from the average mode of life. But they do not necessarily mean real insanity, or even retrogression on the path of inner search.

Such a person is often, in his own individual way, in earnest search of God, or Truth, as the unfailing inward directive power. In and through his waywardness, there is a logic of his own; and all his idiosyncrasies and aberrations can be understood only if they are viewed in light of their inner motive power... They are sincerely and wholeheartedly devoted to Truth as it comes to them; they are divinely mad in search of eternal values. They have decided to take their stakes in their desire to realize God. Such persons are not mad in the ordinary sense; they are desperately in love with God, and are known as masts.⁸⁰

"Ordinary" insanity, as defined by Baba, is the inability to adjust to the world; God madness is the refusal to do so. The mast in his "madness" is closer to the divine Reality, and, in this sense, is actually more sane than others. In this understanding, the closer one gets to stilling the mind, the nearer one is to God-realization. Masts, having slowed the working of the mind through their absorption in God, are close to the God-state.⁸¹ This point was summarized by Baba this way:

Mind stopped is God.
 Mind working is man.
 Mind slowed down is mast.⁸²
 Mind working fast is mad.

In his typology of spiritually advanced souls, and particularly in his understanding of masts, Baba challenged accepted notions of spirituality. It is a challenge not



unlike that posed by the actions of the Sufi Shams Tabriz, or the eccentricities of some medieval Christian mystics.

Dr. Donkin put it bluntly:

Are these ragged and eccentric men and women spiritually advanced, who pass their lives in filth and squalor; who talk nonsense; who often roam around naked; who may abuse others and strike them; who do no worldly work; who smoke, drink tea, and chew pan and tobacco in unnatural quantities; who have, it seems, perverted tastes in anything and everything--are we to believe that these people are closer to God than intelligent, cultured, civilized, normal men and women?⁸³

Baba answered with an emphatic "yes":

Compared with the ordinary man of the world, the mast may seem to have less balance of mind; but it is important to remember that the average man himself has not really any balance of mind. The average man of the world has only an appearance of balance, because he can often effect a provisional adjustment between the warring elements in his mind... This working compromise enables the average man to bring his outward behaviour into conformity with the established conventions of society; and because he fits into the average pattern of responses and reactions, he gives the appearance of balance... The mast is seeking a higher and a more lasting balance of mind, that would be securely based upon true values. He has taken in his own hands the task of intelligent psychic readjustment and new experimentation. This task is very different from the theoretical manipulation of ideas. It involves the courage to face oneself with unfailing honesty of purpose. It involves also the necessary intense ardour for bringing about the practical overhauling of the contents of the mind. The spiritual yearning for lasting Truth brings about in masts a complete unsettlement of the working balance of compromise that is characteristic of the average man of the world.⁸⁴



Though the mast has attained a certain spiritual advancement, he or she has done so without proper guidance. Baba did not, therefore, endorse the mast-path for those who seek to enter the spiritual path. As we will see further in Chapter IV, Baba encouraged love for God in and through a practical life in the world. While affirming and praising the intense love of God found in the masts, Baba worked hard to focus and channel this love for the benefit of others. Baba exempted no one, not even those who have achieved great heights spiritually, from helping the world through love and service. With the help of a Perfect Master the mast can continue to advance spiritually through a re-integration into the affairs of the world:

The Master has a direct and unerring insight into the exact working of the mind of masts. He knows the true genesis and the nature of the unusual mental state in which the mast has landed himself... He gives masts effective guidance and a spiritual push, and he facilitates their onward march on the path, so that they become more and more fit as vehicles for the expression of the Divine Will... When masts receive the right sort of help from a Perfect Master, they emerge into a supra-normal state of new integration and harmony... The mast states have in them an immense potentiality for contacting and releasing divinity, with an ever-increasing thoroughness and fulness, but they need to be delicately handled by one who has attained spiritual perfection.⁸⁵

To awaken the masts to their responsibility to love and serve others, Baba worked with them in various ways.⁸⁶ Several of the mandali were expert "mast-finders" who would



scour remote areas of India for masts. Frequently Baba would then visit these places, making his inner contact through an external meeting. The mast might also be brought to a special mast ashram established by Baba for that purpose. In the ashram setting, Baba saw personally to the needs of masts, washing, feeding and shaving them. It should be noted that Baba also worked with the poor, other advanced souls, and those he termed "the ordinary mad" during these mast trips and at the ashrams.⁸⁷

Masts are not easy to locate, nor are they easily coaxed into abandoning the comfort of their situation (physical and spiritual) for an unsettling jolt from a Sadguru. Often they avoid or even fear such an encounter--a difficulty that constantly plagued Baba and his men. This was always complicated by the fact that Baba insisted on remaining incognito during much of the mast work. To make matters more difficult, Baba had everyone, including himself, give in to every whim of the mast in order to create the right atmosphere and conditions for the inner work.⁸⁸

In spite of the trials and tribulations of mast work, Baba appeared to be happiest when with them. He called them his special children, and he loved them deeply. As



the following description suggests, no effort was too great in the work to contact each mast:

And in the evening, after a shave, a bath, a meal, and a few hours of rest, you see Baba join the mandali, and you listen to the witty and fascinating review of the tour just completed. It is now that you hear of the incredible hardships; of the sleepless nights; of the tedious vigils in trains, tongas, and bullock carts; of the rides upon camels, ponies, and asses (and once to cross a river, of a ride upon an elephant!); of the treks on foot over leagues of dust or mud; of the vicissitudes of rain and sun, cold and heat--in short, you hear something at least of what Baba and his men went through, and of the qualities and oddities of the best of the masts whom they met, word pictures of the brief encounters between Baba and these strange, God-intoxicated souls.

And when the mandali who went with him add their tribute of description, you hear how, throughout all these hardships, Baba remained freshest of all, and how, after each contact with a really good mast, he seemed particularly radiant, as if some great work had been achieved, or some heavy burden lifted.⁸⁹

Though Baba took great pains to keep his identity hidden, he was invariably recognized by the mast. Baba's meetings with the masts provide a unique record of reaction to him through direct encounter. It appears that the masts saw something in Meher Baba that not even the mandali could see. Their vision of Baba had to be based on something other than familiarity with his life and teachings of which they knew nothing. It is worth quoting a few examples recorded by Dr. Donkin in The Wayfarers:

Azim Khan Baba: When Baba contacted him, he (Azim Khan Baba) said, "You are Allah; you have brought forth the creation, and once in a thousand years you come down to see the play of what you have created."



Dada Mian: Chhagan tried to bring this mast to Baba in Jubbulpore. He refused to come, and said, "He (Baba) is the Emperor, how can I come?"

Gulab Baba: When Baba entered the room Gulab Baba told Kaka, pointing to Baba, "He (Baba) is God Himself, and you have tricked me." A few moments later, when Baba asked Gulab Baba to sit beside him, he protested, "I am not fit to sit beside him."⁹⁰

Of the inner work Baba accomplished with the masts, little can be said. In particular cases it is possible to measure outward change in behavior, though the inner changes are difficult to comprehend. Mohammed, one of Baba's favorite masts, is an example of outward change:

No one would maintain that the Mohammed of today is normal, but there is, nevertheless, a radical change in his behaviour. In the old days, his explosive and irritable temperament gave one a feeling that he was wrestling with some inner problem, and that when you tore him away from his preoccupation with this problem, he became so confused that he burst into an uncontrollable tantrum... Every day when Baba came, it was as if a brilliant flame were kindled in the depths of Mohammed's being, that for a moment lit up the dark and tangled ways, and slowly these fleeting moments of inner radiance have grown more and more sustained, so that Mohammed today is, for the most part, a harmonious and agreeable inmate of the ashram. He now radiates something unusual and charming, he has a perspicacity that missed little of what goes on in the ashram, and he adopts a kind of avuncular interest in everyone's welfare.⁹¹

What Baba was actually doing with the masts during the hours he spent with them in silence, we can only hint at. He claimed to be awakening them to a higher love for God, thereby enabling them to be channels for God's work.

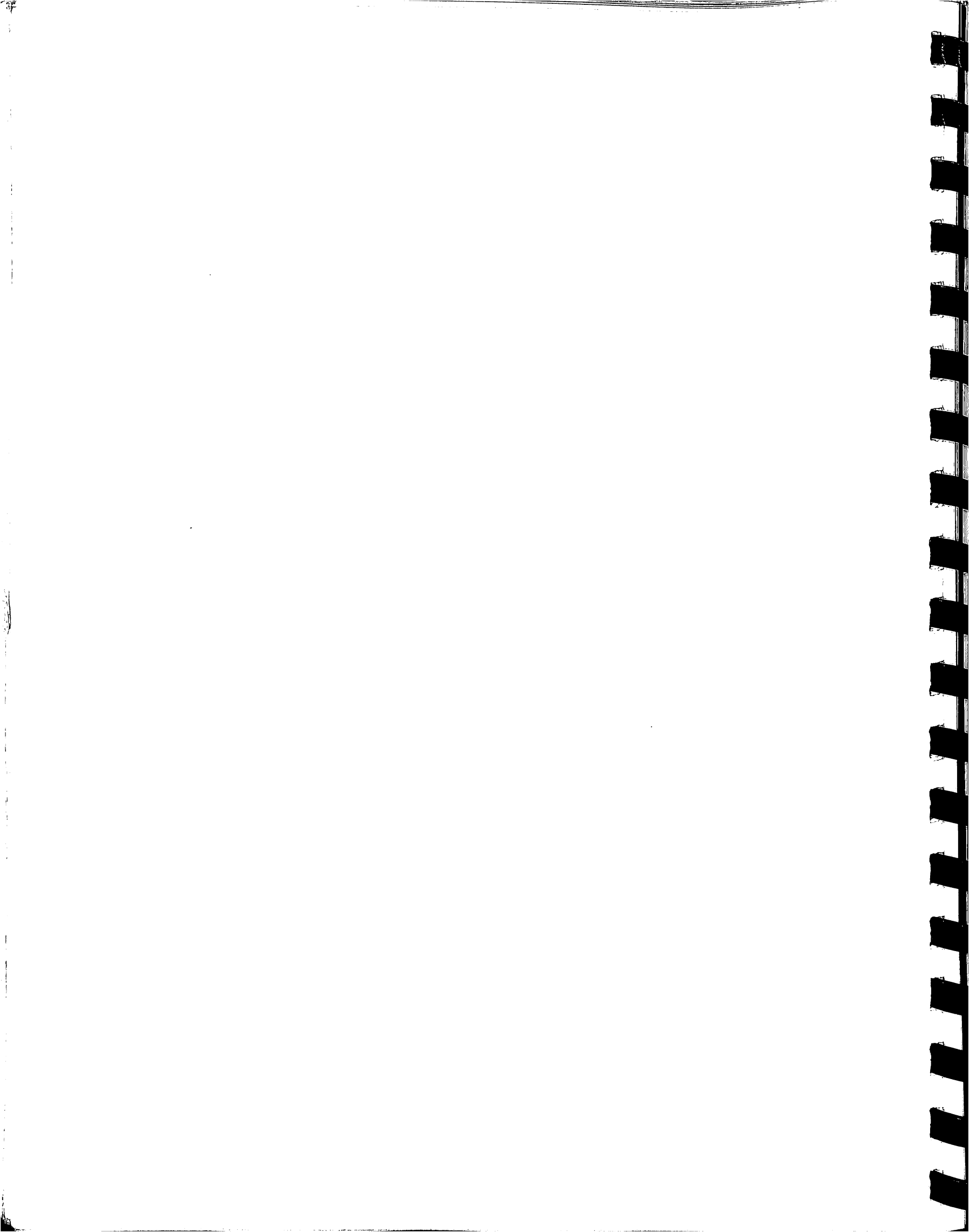


There are hints in Baba's statements suggesting that the love of the masts for God was used by him to help accomplish his mission as Avatar.⁹² Baba's mast work is an example of Baba's conviction that it is through the world and through those living in the world that God accomplishes his purposes. We are also told by this work that the least likely candidates for true love and service may be in fact among those closest to God.⁹³ Those who seem most without power to transform themselves or others, may be the highest agents of transformation.⁹⁴

The seemingly endless journeys to find and contact masts, the years of caring for them, has much to do with Baba's purpose as Avatar. He made it clear that he had to contact them in order to fulfill his mission.⁹⁵ As with much of Baba's work, there was usually a sense of urgency and deliberateness about each mast trip and every mast ashram.⁹⁶ Just as Baba claimed to be working individually and collectively in the gathering of disciples, and in the acts of service, so he claimed to be helping each individual mast along the spiritual path while at the same time working through the mast to help the entire world.

Seeker of God (1949-1952)

In 1949 Meher Baba, accepted by his followers as a God-realized master, became a "seeker of God" in order to



enter what he called "the New Life of helplessness and hopelessness."⁹⁷ He left his ashrams at Meherabad and Meherazad, gave up all possessions in his name, dispersed all but a handful of his mandali and began to live the life of a humble devotee of God. The activities of Meher Baba as Sadguru gave way to the activities of a common seeker.

Not surprisingly, those connected with Meher Baba were startled by Baba's sudden new course. They were told that Baba would be leaving and that they might never see him again. In announcing all this, Baba warned that he was serious about this New Life, and that they must be prepared for a complete change:

All of the proceeds from the sale of my properties are to be used in paying off promised sums and to provide for the immediate needs of those whom I have myself made to depend upon me. Nothing is required for me and those who will go with me. The question about spiritual benefits does not arise... Do not get misled on account of my apparently eccentric habits up to now. For example, I have definitely decided to give up Meherazad in October, yet I have given instructions to Padri to fix up the lighting as early as he can. That is because of my custom of maintaining an old order of things up to the moment that I start upon anything new. It may be madness, it may be method, but that has been my habit. Now I am also going to put an end to my habits and customs. Therefore when I say the "end" it will mean nothing but an end. Do not remain any more under the impression that it will be otherwise. I want to be absolutely free from everything and everybody. There will be no compromise now about anything. I am becoming ghutt (hardened), naffat (callous) and penniless. Remember the



proverb Nanga-se-Khuda bhi darta hai (even God is afraid of the "naked").⁹⁸

All those who loved Meher Baba were given the opportunity to join him in the New Life. Several plans were developed by Baba that provided various alternatives for living the life Baba envisioned. A small number of people were given the choice of saying yes to a list of stringent conditions and thereby were permitted to accompany Baba personally. These companions were to share directly in Baba's daily work by becoming helpless and hopeless with him. They were prohibited from approaching Baba as a Realized Master. No homage could be paid Baba and no spiritual help could be sought from him. At the same time, the companions had to agree to obey Baba wholeheartedly as the "elder brother" or chief companion.⁹⁹

Those who said yes to the conditions and were selected by Baba agreed to take full responsibility before God for whatever might happen to them. Baba insisted that he would not be responsible for their spiritual or material welfare as he had been in the past. Baba also emphasized that there would be no spiritual gain or benefit for those who chose to accompany him. Cheerfulness was expected of all companions; moods would not be allowed. Baba summarized the trials of the New Life by saying in part:



It is not merely a question of hardships and difficulties such as those encountered in mast trips. The most difficult thing now is the need to control emotions and feelings and to have absolute readiness for split-second obedience to whatever I ask you to do or not to do. I do not expect anyone of you to be free from your respective reactions of good or bad impulses such as anger, displeasure, likes and dislikes, but I expect you not to give any direct or indirect expression to feelings and reactions. I shall be free in every way and you will be bound in every respect. I shall live amongst you as one of you like a brother. I may even fall at your feet and ask you to spit upon me. That is why I have been saying that the conditions will be such that very few would remain with me to the end.¹⁰⁰

On October 16, 1949 Baba and twenty companions set out on what was to be an extraordinary journey across India. The change in Baba's work was made apparent by the prayer he uttered to initiate the New Life:

May God help Baba to definitely make this step, which he is taking to give up everything and to go away, irrevocable, so that from 16 October when he enters the New Life, there will be no turning back.

The commentator adds:

This was the first prayer for help ever before heard from Baba to God during the past twenty-eight years, and the mandali were so taken aback and confused that no one could think of saying, Amen!¹⁰¹

Baba did indeed become a companion in the New Life. All who left with him joined together to share the work of sweeping, cleaning, washing, cooking. Everyone, including Baba, had their duties. No thought was given to spiritual life or religious discussions. Spontaneous living in the



present moment was emphasized. During certain periods of the New Life all the companions had to beg for their food. There were times when they had no place to sleep but in the open. Whatever the circumstances, all were required to remain cheerful and detached.¹⁰² Under Baba's direction, one of the companions, Dr. Ghani, wrote a song to express the spirit of the New Life. In part it reads:

Listen to the silent words of Meher Baba;
The life of all lovers of God is in these words.
You are serious to follow the New Life
Will renounce your ephemeral existence.

We have taken to this life in which we rely only upon
God;
Our will is strengthened by our oath.
We merrily sing the song of hopelessness;
We invite all calamities and difficulties.

Even though your heart be cut to bits, let a smile be
on your lips.
Here I divulge to you a truth:
Hidden in your empty hands is treasure untold;
Your beggarly life is the envy of kings.¹⁰³

Another important aspect of the New Life was the contact Baba made with masts, sadhus, and the poor. In his role of "servant" Baba sought out thousands of these individuals so that he could wash their feet, bow down to them and give them a gift of money. During this work Baba was referred to as "elder brother" and the name "Meher Baba" was never mentioned.¹⁰⁴

The wanderings of the New Life culminated in a four month period of seclusion. Having lived as a seeker and a



servant, Baba entered seclusion in order to achieve manonash, the annihilation of the ego-mind. As we saw in Chapter I, elimination of the ego through love is the condition for God-realization. The limited ego-mind must vanish if ignorance is to be overcome and the unlimited true Self experienced fully. In manonash Baba took the journey to God to its final conclusion. At the end of 1951 he announced the results:

For these last four months, according to ordinary human standards, and by ways and means known to me, I have tried my utmost for the achievement of manonash, and I can say in all truth that I feel satisfied with the work done. This satisfaction is due to the feeling I have, of having regained my old life Meher Baba state--yet retaining my New Life ordinary state. I have regained the Knowledge, Strength and Greatness that I had in the Old Life, and retained the ignorance, weaknesses and humility of the New Life. This union of the old and the new life has given birth to Life that is eternally old and new.¹⁰⁵

Meher Baba emerged from the New Life to declare himself to be fully God and fully man, the Avatar of the Age. The New Life and manonash were dramatic expressions of Baba's insistence that the Avatar must become a human being in order to chart a new course for the liberation of humanity. The conditions of the New Life symbolized in many ways the journey of the Self as it attempts to discover its true nature through love, obedience, and surrender to God.¹⁰⁶ Manonash signals the Self's ultimate



destiny because, in Baba's words, it "results in this glorious state in which plurality goes and Unity comes, ignorance goes and Knowledge comes, binding goes and Freedom comes."¹⁰⁷

The New Life may also be taken as a living statement of the Avataric participation in the struggles of human life. As one "hopeless and helpless," the Avatar identifies completely with human suffering in order to help in overcoming it.¹⁰⁸ Once again we meet the concept that the Avatar affects the consciousness of all life as he is one with all life. Baba made it clear that he intended his New Life to forge a new path in consciousness. And this path would be available for all time:

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

This New Life will live by itself eternally, even if there is no one to live it.¹⁰⁹



Not only can the New Life be seen as a new possibility for individual spiritual life, it is also a sign of the "New Humanity" Baba proclaimed. A recent biography of Baba puts it this way:

The New Life, in which all are companions, loving and serving one another, and dependent for each day's food and shelter upon God and the Charity of fellow-men, has provided, perhaps, a glimpse into that New Age which Baba foretold will succeed the present one. This is an age in which intuition has superseded reason; love has conquered fear and greed; sharing has replaced competition and self-seeking; and all men--whether as individuals or nations--depend confidently on one another's generosity and love.¹¹⁰

The God-Man (1952-1969)

Meher Baba entered the last phase of his life by publicly declaring that he was the Avatar.¹¹¹ Though this declaration was in itself no surprise to the mandali, it signaled a new and unprecedented release of love by Baba as Avatar. This love was expressed in basically three ways: darshan to the masses; continual suffering; and universal work in seclusion. Each of these aspects of Baba's work as the God-man are indications from Baba about what it means to be both God and man consciously.

As God-man, Baba linked clearly his mission to awaken with his message of love. The "free life" of Baba's last seventeen years was the freedom to give and receive love without obligation or condition.¹¹² The



Avatar, Baba proclaimed, is the embodiment of divine love. Precisely because he is fully human his divine love is able to awaken the world to God. Only for the sake of love does the Avatar come and only for love should he be approached.¹¹³ If we understand Baba on this point, we can grasp how he intended all of his actions to be seen in this last period of his life. Baba expressed this conception of Avatarhood in his actions and in certain statements such as the following message given in 1953:

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 fulfill and satisfy mundane desires, to them I once again declare that, as I am not a sadhu, a saint or a mahatma, mahapurush or yogi, to seek these things through me is but to court utter disappointment, though only apparently; for eventually the disappointment is itself instrumental in bringing about the complete transformation of mundane wants and desires...

The question therefore arises that if I am not a sadhu, not a saint, not a yogi, not a mahapurusha nor 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...

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 they should not expect supernatural help from me in the form of miracles and spiritual guidance; and to approach me to fulfill their desires would also be 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 effort could ever understand my ways or judge my infinite state.¹¹⁴

To know the "Highest of the High" is to love him and find him on every level of consciousness:

I want you to feel that I am one of you and that is why I am now sitting here on the ground with you all. I am on the level of each one of you. Whether poor, rich, small, big, I am like each of you, but I am approachable only to those who love me.

Only those who can lose themselves in my love will find themselves in me. This is not idle talk, but an authoritative statement that eternally I have been, and will be, always the slave of my lovers.¹¹⁵

This last statement was made during one of the mass darshans Baba undertook in the 1950s. Baba travelled publicly, meeting with those who sought his blessing. Thousands in a single day lined up to see him and receive from his hands prasad, usually a gift of fruit symbolizing his love. Baba told the mandali that he did not need to linger with each one because he had come to "touch their hearts" and not convince their minds.¹¹⁶ To the gathered crowds Baba explained that he had not come to give them words, but to inspire in them love for God:

In the spiritual path, these messages and addresses mean nothing. Without actual experience, all philosophical statements are idle talk and all the ceremonial phenomenon is further addition to the existing illusion.

If, instead of performing ceremonies and rituals mechanically as age-old customs, people were to serve their fellow beings with the selflessness of love, taking God to be equally residing in one and all, and



that by so serving others they are serving God, my work will have been fulfilled.

I give you all my blessings so that, if not all, some of you, few of you or one of you, could love God honestly and find me in everyone and everything.

Now I give my prasad of love, which you accept with love. No one should bow down to me or offer fruits and flowers. Only take with love, what I give with love.¹¹⁷

I have quoted Baba at length here to illustrate the "free and obligationless" life he embarked on during this period.¹¹⁸ The "blessing" he sought to give was love for the sake of loving. He did not want homage, nor did he have a teaching to expound. Those who approached him were to do so out of love expecting only to be awakened to a greater love for God.

Baba took this "release of love" to the West three times in the 1950s; he also invited groups of Westerners to visit him in India for short periods of time. With them he stressed the same theme he declared to the Easterners: he had come to awaken them to love for God.¹¹⁹ To do this he said that he must be free from all bindings; there was time now only for love. He told one group: "I now wish to be outwardly what I always am inwardly: living solely in love, for love, and with love."¹²⁰

The manifestation of the Avatar's love, according to Meher Baba, requires that he share in the sufferings of the world. In his early years Baba indicated that before



he died he would have to spill blood in the East and in the West.¹²¹ In 1949 he prepared the mandali for a "personal disaster" that would befall him, explaining that his work might necessitate his physical helplessness.¹²² It appears that these predictions were realized in two car "accidents," one in the United States (1952) and one in India (1956). In both Baba was injured.

The American accident occurred in the middle of the country (Oklahoma) while Baba was being driven from one coast to the other. The entire left side of his body, from head to toe, sustained injury.¹²³ The accident in India caused damage to Baba's entire right side, again from the head to the toe. In both accidents mandali members were also hurt and there was one fatality.¹²⁴ Though Baba was told by doctors that he would not walk again, he exercised until, by the mid-sixties, he could walk unaided once more.¹²⁵ Baba explained that his physical suffering was part of the Avatar's universal suffering, for the Avatar must suffer for "one and all beings and things."¹²⁶ "You are Bliss itself," he remarked on one occasion, "to make you aware of it, I come amongst you and suffer infinite agony."¹²⁷

The last period of Baba's life was marked by his urgency to complete his mission. For the purposes of this



"universal work" he entered into what might be termed a deeper silence. In 1954 he gave up the alphabet board and began to rely solely on hand gestures to communicate with words. Seclusions, which had always been a feature of his work, increased, becoming, in the last decade of his life, almost constant.¹²⁵ When Baba's lovers around the world expressed alarm at the closing of external contact, Baba issued a statement through one of the mandali. It read in part:

There is no reason at all for any of you to worry. Baba was, Baba is, and Baba will also be eternally existent. Severance of external relations does not mean the termination on internal links. It was only for establishing the internal connection. that the external contacts had been maintained until now. The time has come for being bound in the chain of internal connections. Hence, external contact is no longer necessary. It is possible to establish the internal link by obeying Baba's orders. I give you all my blessings for strengthening these internal links.

I am always with you and I am not away from you. I was, am, and will remain eternally with you and it is for promoting this realization that I have severed external contact. This will enable all persons to realize Truth by being bound to each other with internal links.¹²⁹

For Baba seclusion was not isolation, just as silence was not simply ceasing to speak. In seclusion Baba worked with great energy and urgency to finish what he repeatedly called his "universal work." His followers all over the world were often asked to participate in this work by carrying out specific instructions, frequently



having to do with maintaining silence or remembrance of God's name.¹³⁰ Though he rarely explained much about this work in seclusion, it clearly had to do with his mission to awaken. This was indicated in a 1968 message he issued from seclusion to all of his lovers:

None can have the least idea of the immensity of the work that I am doing in this seclusion. The only hint I can give is that compared with the work I do in seclusion all the important work of the world put together is completely insignificant. Although for me the burden of my work is crushing, the result of my work will be intensely felt by all people in the world.¹³¹

The strain of Baba's last seclusion in 1968 took a tremendous toll on his health. Nevertheless, he was pleased with the results saying: "My work is done. It is completed 100% to my satisfaction. The result of this work will also be 100% and will manifest from the end of September."¹³³ That was November 1968. In January 1969 Meher Baba "dropped his physical body."¹³⁴

In the last few months of his life, Baba suffered as he had not suffered before. "This is my crucifixion," he told the mandali. The doctors could do nothing as they had a difficult time reaching a definite diagnosis. According to Baba, his condition "has no medical grounds at all; it is due purely to the strain of my work." Severe spasms shook his body in the last days. At 12 noon



on the morning of January 31st, he joked with the mandali about all the medicine he had been given and the little effect it had. At 12:15 "a great spasm shook his body, the pulse rate fell to nothing, and breathing ceased."¹³⁵

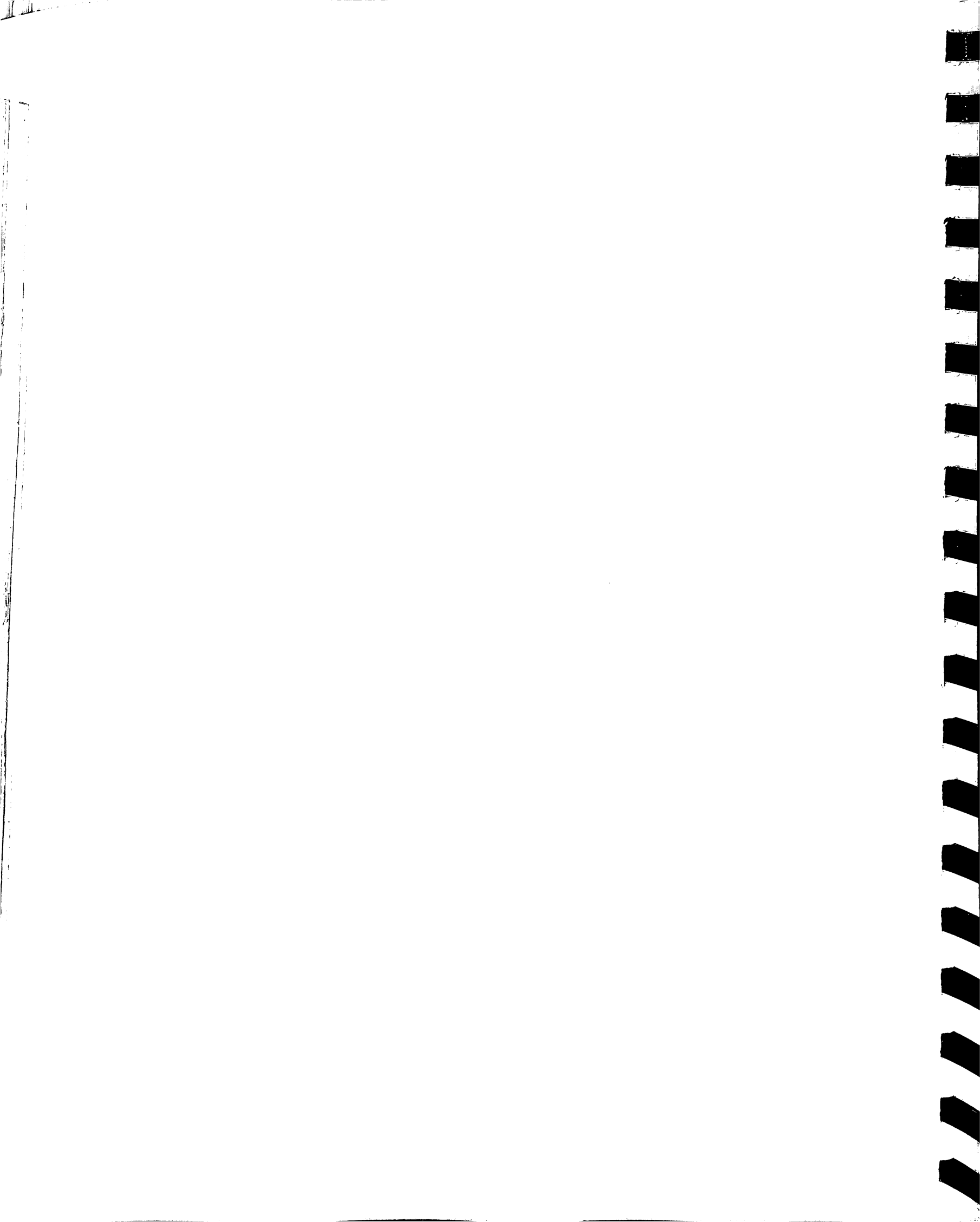
Before January 31st, Baba issued a statement for his seventy-fifth birthday (February 25, 1969). In it he summarized the central theme of his relationship to those who loved and followed him, particularly as expressed in the last period of his life:

To love me for what I may give you is not loving me at all. To sacrifice anything in my cause to gain something for yourself is like a blind man sacrificing his eyes for sight. I am the divine beloved worthy of being loved because I am love. He who loves me because of this will be blessed with unlimited sight and will see me as I am.¹³⁶

The interpretation offered here of the key events in Meher Baba's life accomplishes two things: First, I have attempted to demonstrate how these events reflect and illuminate Baba's theoretical conception of the Avatar. His life, I have proposed, intended to be a living statement of the Avataric mission for our time. Secondly, in discussing the life story, I have pointed repeatedly to the message of love and the awakening that form the background for all that Baba said or did as Avatar. I have done so in order to complete the task begun in Chapter I



of establishing a foundation for consideration of Meher
Baba's mission of awakening through love.



CHAPTER III

TRANSFORMATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

MEHER BABA'S UNIVERSAL WORK

One central theme emerges from our consideration of the life and writings of Meher Baba: Baba understood all that he said and did to be the work of the Avatar, the unfolding and fulfillment of the divine plan for this age. What he termed his "universal work" points to a transformation of consciousness through the release of divine love in the world.¹

As we have seen, the awakening Baba promised has implications for all living things since the Avatar has come to give a "spiritual push forward" to all life.² The ways in which Baba sought to bring about this collective transformation will be examined in the present chapter. How did he intend for his silence, his many activities, the periods of long seclusion, and his physical suffering to bring about a "New Humanity?" In answering this question, a pattern may become apparent, revealing, in part at least, how Meher Baba as Avatar sought to accomplish his universal mission.

Within the larger picture of the "divine plan" for our age, Meher Baba established individual relationships



that his followers claim continue to be established years after his physical death.³ In Chapter IV, building on the framework of the present chapter, I will explore the dynamics of the individual, personal relationship with Meher Baba who, as Avatar, claimed that he would be available as an active Master even after his lifetime.

The Breaking of the Silence

Meher Baba repeatedly declared that he would break his silence, uttering the "one Word" that would transform the consciousness of the world.⁴ He described his "speaking" as a universal awakening:

When I break my silence, the impact of my love will be universal and all life in creation will know, feel and receive of it. It will help every individual to break himself free from his own bondage in his own way. I am the divine beloved who loves you more than you can ever love yourself. The breaking of my silence will help you to help yourself in knowing your real Self.⁵

Baba expressed an urgency about the breaking of his silence. Even though those around him expressed little concern about when he would speak, Baba frequently called attention to the significance of his speaking the Word.⁶ Many of his statements seem to indicate that he would speak through his physical mouth, thereby signaling an inner event in the hearts of humanity. In 1954, for



example, he gave what he termed a "final declaration" in which he outlined the implications of his speaking:

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

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

When I speak that Word, I shall lay the foundation for that which is to take place during the next seven hundred years.⁷

In tones reminiscent of Jesus' preaching about the coming of the Kingdom, Baba called on humanity to be prepared to receive the Word when it is given. Those near to Baba were asked to long for the silence to be broken. Baba often reminded them that the time was short and that he would speak very soon.⁸

If we take Meher Baba's statements to mean that he would break his oral silence, then, as far as we know, this "speaking" did not take place before his death in 1969. This fact appears to make little difference to Baba's mandali, nor does it seem to concern the thousands of people who have come to follow Meher Baba since he "dropped the body."⁹ Nevertheless, to anyone reading



Baba's statements today it might well appear that he was deluded about the impact of his manifestation and mistaken about the breaking of his silence. Because of this apparent contradiction in Baba's statements, and because Baba himself stressed the giving of the "Word" so emphatically, no theological interpretation of Meher Baba can ignore the questions raised about Baba's promises to break his silence.

In light of the fact that he did not utter a word before he died, what sense can we now make of Baba's statements about his silence? Has the silence been broken or is there some "event" still to happen? If Christians are still arguing about the arrival of the Kingdom some two thousand years after Jesus, than one can hardly hope to answer definitively the mystery of Baba's Word so soon after his death. Still, if we consider carefully Baba's statements, his life, and the experiences of his close disciples, something can be said about the breaking of Meher Baba's silence.

We may begin by noting that Baba understood silence to be a form of direct communication. "Things that are real," he stated, "are given and received in silence."¹⁰ Further, silence is the means God has chosen to communicate in our time:



Because man has been deaf to the principles and precepts laid down by God in the past, in this present Avataric Form I observe silence.¹¹

What did God communicate through silence? Baba answered this by pointing to the "divinely human example" of the Avatar's life.¹² The silence of the Avatar, understood by Baba to be the silence of God, focuses attention on what the Avatar does, rather than on words or discourses. "You have asked for and been given enough words," Baba said, "it is now time to live them."¹³

Beyond being an example, the Avatar's actions are viewed by Baba as having a transformative power to effect changes in consciousness. The Avatar, being one with all life, can work from within the human psyche. In this sense, Baba believed that his silence could be "heard" within the heart.

God has been everlastingly working in silence, unobserved, unheard, except by those who experience His infinite silence.¹⁴

Baba's silence, then, was, for him, a way of speaking. In silence, he "spoke" as an example of how to live a life of love and service in the twentieth century. And by maintaining oral silence, he offered a symbolic affirmation of the inner work he claimed to be accomplishing silently within all living things. In this double sense, God speaks through the Avatar's silence. "The silence I



have been observing," Baba said, "is a call from the silence of unfathomable Divinity."¹⁵

Having said all this about Baba's claim to be speaking in silence, we are still left with his many statements and promises about the "breaking" of his silence. What are we to make of his indications that at some moment in time he would utter a sound of cosmic significance?

The breaking of my silence--the signal of my public manifestation--is not far off. I bring the greatest treasure which is possible for man to receive--a treasure which includes all other treasures, which will endure forever, which increases when shared by others. Be ready to receive it.¹⁶

The first thing to say about these statements is that Baba always made it clear that he gave them in what he called his own language. This means, as he points out in the following message, that they have layers of meaning not immediately apparent to the listener.

It is really very difficult for anyone to believe and understand what I say, because none can grasp the meaning underlying my words.

From the day I declared in Meherabad that there will be the destruction of three-fourths of the world, that a strange disease will attack my body, that I shall suffer humiliation, that I shall break my silence and speak one Word, the Word of words, that there will be my glorification and that finally I shall drop my body when I shall be stabbed in the back, my lovers and others have been confused, trying to interpret my words in different ways.

Everyone is free to interpret my words in any way they think or feel. But one thing I tell you, that whenever I say a thing, I naturally use my own "language," and whatsoever is said by me is truth. But my



"language" is such that none can understand or grasp the underlying meaning of what I say; therefore, when I want to say a thing I have simultaneously to make use of your language also, knowing well that you would understand nothing whatsoever if I were to make use of my "language" alone...

Consequently, whatever is said by me in your language, you are able to understand and know what is said; but that which is said in my own "language" is impossible for you to understand, however much you may try to interpret the meaning behind my words. Only the fulfillment of the events can unfold to you, in due course, the meaning of what is said in my own "language."¹⁷

Baba goes on to say that the "breaking of the silence" was said simultaneously in our own language and in his. He will definitely "speak," according to this statement, but the exact meaning of this "speaking" is in his own "language." The nature of the breaking of his silence, therefore, remains beyond our comprehension until it happens.¹⁸ There are, in Baba's view, no existing categories in human language to express the meaning of the "Word" he has come to give: "What will happen when I break my silence is what has never happened before."¹⁹

There are additional statements from Baba that point to the meaning of the "Word" he intended to give from his silence. In Baba's cosmology, all sound is an echo of the primal sound (Brahm-Nad) that produced the universe. God's speaking brought forth the universe, and, in our age, God's speaking will bring about a transformation of consciousness:



[B]ecause all forms and words are from this Primal Sound or Original Word and are continuously connected with It and have their life from It, when It is uttered by me It will reverberate in all people and creatures and all will know that I have broken my silence and have uttered that Sound or Word.²⁰

Baba's Word, therefore, is understood by him to be an expression of his God-realized state. In his role as Avatar he saw himself as the one who would awaken, in varying degrees, the divine nature within all life.

Whatever else this "Word" may be, it is clearly not to be equated with a sound uttered orally. Those who lived near Baba believe that he set various times and places for the breaking of his silence in order to keep them alert, and to train them to hear him within their own hearts.²¹ An example of this training is recorded by C.B. Purdom:

I was told by Ramjoo that years ago Baba informed some of the mandali that he proposed to speak, and brought a number of them to a distant place, which they reached after days of strenuous walking. When they arrived he made each stand around him at a distance of fifty feet or more with their backs to him, he standing at the centre; at the clapping of his hands they were to turn to him and he would speak. He clapped his hands, they turned, but heard nothing. He smiled and beckoned them to him. Why had he not spoken? they asked. He said, "Do you not know I am always speaking?"²²

There was, particularly in Baba's later years, a consistent effort by him to encourage his followers to



find him within themselves. "Although I appear to be silent," he told them, "I speak through you all."²³

Inwardly, as the voice of intuition and of guidance, he claimed to be "always speaking." His oral silence was intended to help people to hear his true voice:

External silence helps the inner silence and only in inner silence is Baba found, in profound inner silence. I am never silent, I speak eternally. The voice that is heard deep within the soul is my voice.²⁴

God, according to Baba, is always speaking, always working in the depths of the human psyche. The modern dilemma is that humanity has lost the ability to hear the God within, and we are consequently cut off from our true Self.²⁵ Meher Baba meant for his manifestation, especially the breaking of his silence, to restore this lost connection between the divine and the human.

Baba's statements about his silence and the speaking of the "one Word" indicate that if God's speaking is to be heard in our time, God Himself must break through into history and bring about a transformation of human consciousness. "When man becomes deaf to the thunder of His silence," Baba said, "God incarnates as man."²⁶ In this sense, Baba considered his very appearance in the world to be the speaking of God's Word. At the same time he continued to insist that some great "event" would release the



Word, thus revealing the true purpose of Baba's mission in the world:

I am never silent and I am everlastingly speaking, but the time has arrived when soon I will break this apparent silence and then those who love me will see my Real Self.²⁷

The giving of the Word, Baba maintained, would be his one miracle and would be felt by all living things. Using the metaphor of a power house, Baba pointed to what would happen when this Word is given:

When the power house is switched on, wherever there are electric bulbs and if they have connection with the power house, there will be light. If some of the bulbs are of small candle power, the light will be dim; if the bulbs are of high candle power, the light will be bright. If the bulb is fused, there will be no light at all. I perform no miracles, but when I break my silence, the first and last miracle will be performed.²⁸

We come back, then, to the question of whether or not Baba has given the Word. Has he broken his silence, or will some future event be the long-awaited manifestation? Some of Baba's mandali feel that Baba is breaking his silence. They cite the thousands of people who have come to follow Baba since his death as examples of the awakening Baba promised would come about when he gave the Word. At the same time, Baba's close disciples tend to agree that some fuller release of love may be anticipated; they see Baba's public manifestation as an event that has yet to occur.²⁹



The "dropping of the body" does not preclude, in the eyes of the mandali, the possibility that Baba will yet speak the Word. Eruch Jessawala, Baba's interpreter, has explained the mandali's view that Baba continues to be active even though he has left his physical body:

When we say that our Beloved Avatar Meher Baba dropped His body, we thereby mean that He withdrew His man-form and left in the hearts of His lovers the longing for His Reality, by which one may see Him as He really is. God is not "dead;" rather, He is no longer visible in that man-form so dear to us all. He has not ceased being immanent and active. As Avatar Meher Baba withheld His voice so that we might hear His silence, He now withholds sight of Him so that we may seek Him within ourselves, and by His grace find Him as the only Beloved.

Meher Baba revealed to us time and time again that at the end of each Avataric Advent, His Avataric impact, influence, or force and the fragrance of His presence continues to remain active for 100 to 200 years exactly as though He were physically present.³⁰

The mandali are less concerned about when and how Baba will give the Word, and more concerned that people be prepared to receive it when it is given.³¹ Baba himself seemed to indicate that the Word would be an inner Word, and that those who were prepared would feel its impact most strongly:

It is not through words that I give what I have to give. In the silence of your perfect surrender, my love which is always silent can flow to you--to be yours always to keep and to share with those who seek me. When the Word of my love breaks out of its silence and speaks in your hearts, telling you who I really am, you will know that that is the real Word you have always been longing to hear.³²



Inner Work and Symbolic Action

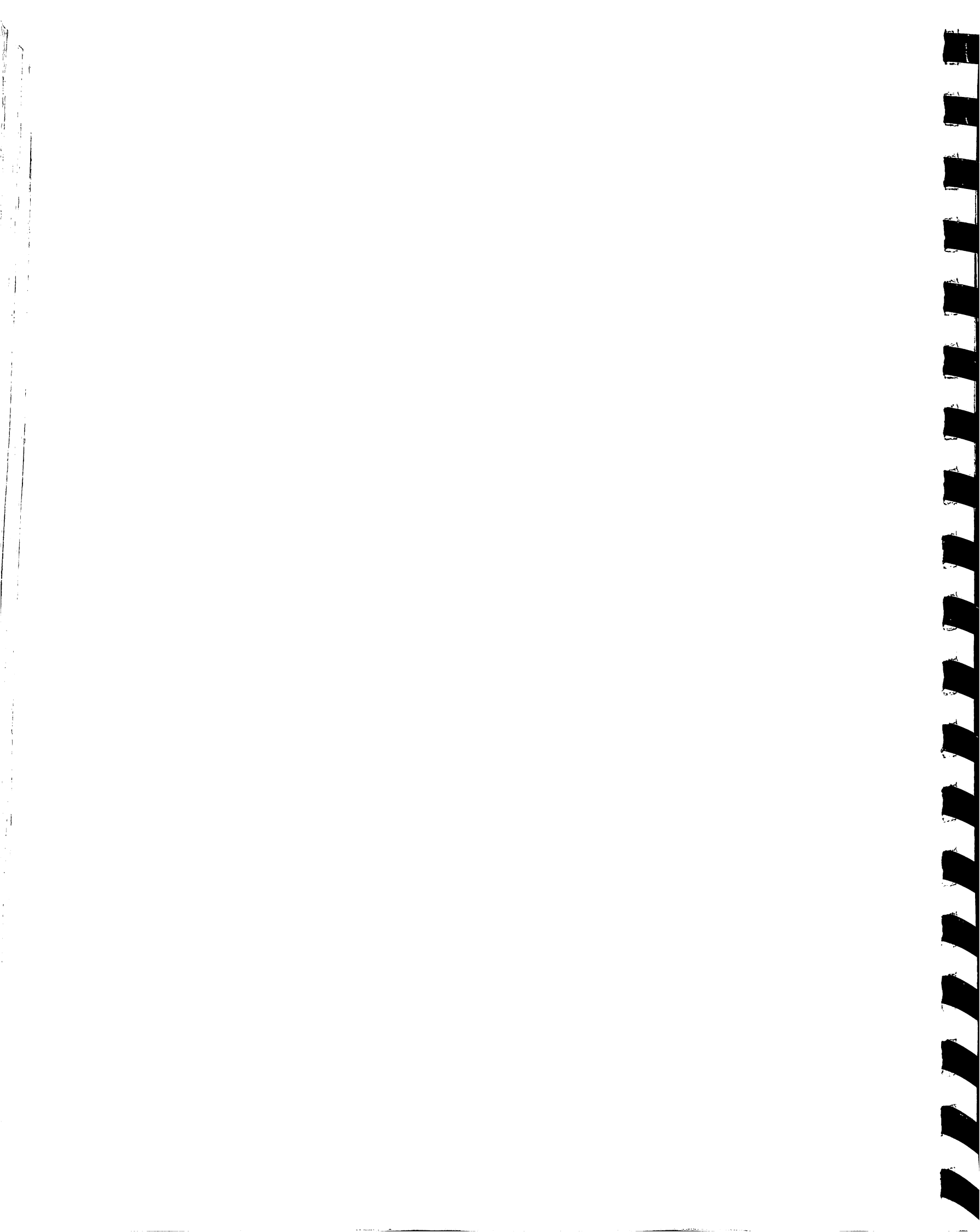
The "speaking" Meher Baba claimed to be doing from his silence had to do, as we have seen, with the universal awakening he wished to bring about in the world. All of his actions were intended to be symbolic of the inner transformation he said he would accomplish as the Avatar.

We may understand what Baba meant by symbolic actions if we first recall his view of why God must take human form. According to Baba, God comes out of compassion to consciously limit Himself within maya in order to help those who are struggling for liberation. This means that God "enters" maya to help free Himself in every finite self:

For man to have a glimpse of lasting happiness he has first to realize that God, being in all, knows all; that God alone acts and reacts through all; that God, in the guise of countless animate and inanimate entities, experiences the innumerable various phenomena of suffering and happiness, and that God himself undergoes all of these illusory happenings. Thus, it is God who has brought suffering in human experience to its height and God alone who will efface this illusory suffering and bring the illusory happiness to its height.³³

God alone suffers, and God alone relieves suffering through the agency of the Avatar.

Every action of God as Avatar, therefore, is seen by Baba as having universal significance. Each moment of the



Avatar's life is an expression of the divine plan to bring about the transformation of consciousness:

As a rule each action of an ordinary person is motivated by a solitary aim serving a solitary purpose; it can only have one target at a time and bring about one specific result. But with the Avatar, He being the Centre of each one, any single action of His on the gross plane brings about a network of diverse results for people and objects everywhere.³⁴

We may conclude, then, that Baba saw every aspect of his own life as having a transformative effect on all life in maya. From this perspective, every act of Meher Baba as Avatar is symbolic of his universal work.

God can only bring about a forward movement in consciousness by consciously participating in the gross world as Avatar. Thus when Baba cared for the untouchable boys, even washing their latrines, he indicated that he was actually working to break down the caste system. Bowing down to countless poor people, distributing grain and cloth, were not for Baba simple acts of charity; they were acts that reverberated throughout consciousness, eventually benefiting the poor everywhere.³⁵ The same symbolic meaning accompanied all of his activities: working with the mentally and physically ill, gathering disciples of many nationalities and religions, travelling throughout the world and so forth.³⁶



Baba would only infrequently explain the universal significance of his activities. Those around him, however, have sometimes correlated his actions with world events. For example, during Baba's stay at Meher Center in 1952 a large number of people from the town of Myrtle Beach, S.C. came to meet him on the one day open to the public. As the people, in family groups or individually, entered the room, greeted Baba, and then left, one of his American disciples noticed that when a black person or family entered the room, Baba would stand and walk across the room to greet them. Those around Baba took this unusual event as an outer sign of Baba's inner work on behalf of American blacks.³⁷ Although neither confirmed nor denied by Baba, similar accounts are given from all periods of his life.³⁸

Although generally reluctant to explain his activities, Baba did make it clear that his practice of working with people from various countries, religions, social classes, and castes would have universal ramifications. One clear example of this is the way in which Baba brought Eastern and Western women to live together in his ashram, encouraging them to learn from one another. In this work, Baba is seen by his followers to have reshaped the role of women. One disciple summarizes Baba's intentions this way:



He was sowing the seeds of a unity between East and West. He was stressing the importance of woman for the coming age; and he was helping to develop a pattern of what kind of woman she would be--one in whom the talent, the energy and practical capacity of the Westerners would be blended with the devotion and spirituality of the women mandali.³⁹

Meher Baba's claim to be doing inner work for the transformation of consciousness through all of his actions, is the one, consistent theme that unifies his many travels, his frequent seclusions, his sudden shifts of plans, and all else that he did. In a whirlwind of activity, Baba always appeared to have a specific timetable and plan for his Avataric work.

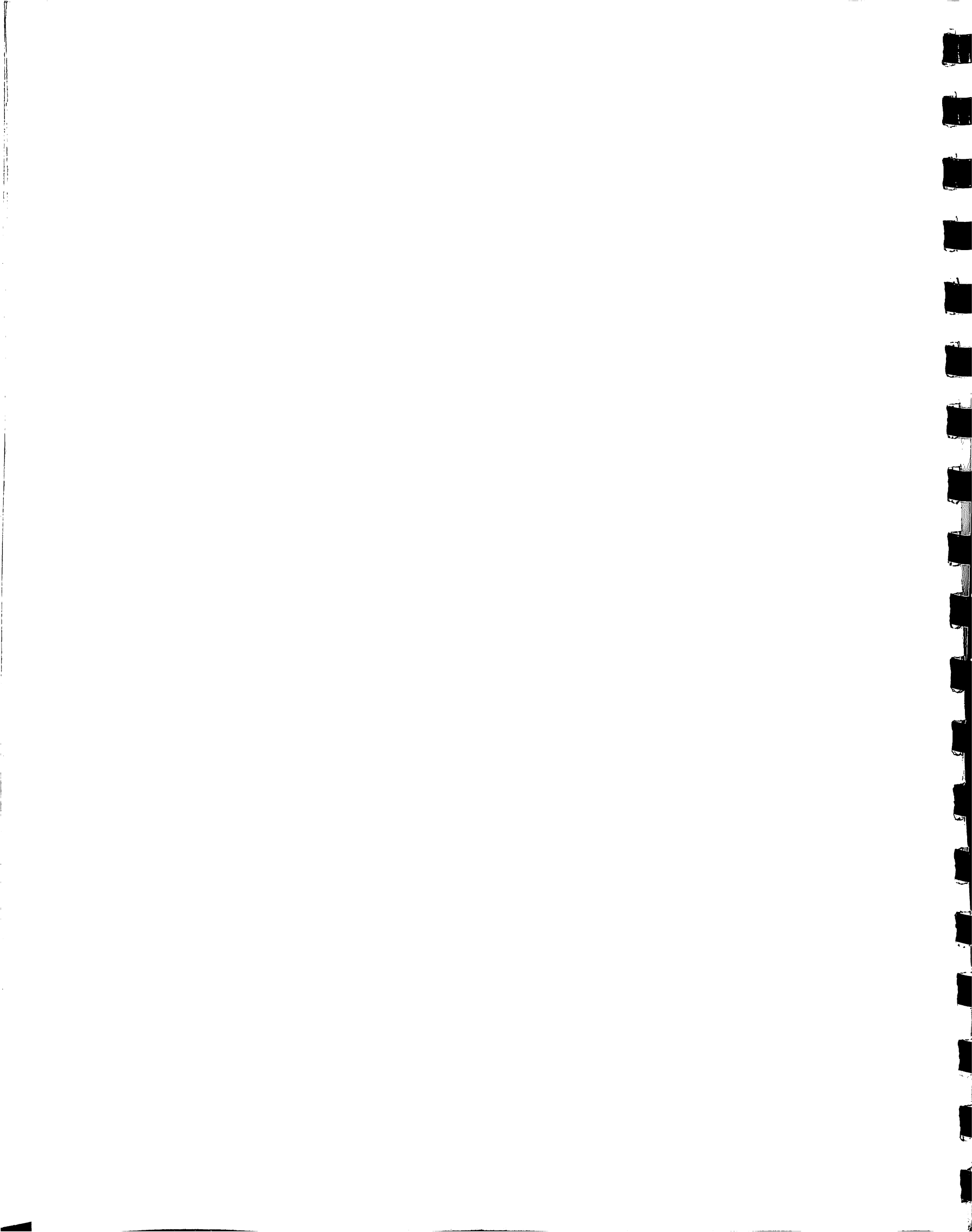
What might seem to have little or no importance, was for Baba something of great purpose. In his travels, for example, as we saw earlier, he often arranged to be taken incognito to places where large crowds congregated. There he would quietly move through the people saying only that he had important work to accomplish. At times he went out of his way, often great distances, to visit a specific spot or to contact a particular person unknown to the mandali, but known by Baba.⁴⁰

There are literally hundreds of stories about Baba illustrating how what may at first appear to be random actions or sudden changes in plans are actually part of his own inner purpose and plan. Typical of these stories



is an incident that occurred during Baba's trip to the remote Indian district of Hamipur. Baba had agreed to give darshan for the first time in this area of India. The people prepared for his coming by building roads and bridges to isolated villages so that Baba's car could reach them. While walking through one such village along a carefully prepared route, Baba suddenly stopped and asked to go a different way. His hosts objected, pointing out that the route was planned and people had lined the streets. Baba, however, insisted and began to lead the crowd to a remote area of the village. There he visited the hut of an old couple who had faithfully prepared their hut for days to receive the Avatar. Although mocked by their neighbors, they had steadfastly maintained that Baba would come to their hut. Overjoyed, they had Baba's darshan, and he spent time with them in the home that had been specially prepared for him.⁴¹

There are many indications from Meher Baba that the Avatar is always aided in his universal work by "agents" throughout the world. These agents, discussed briefly in Chapter II, are advanced souls with a history of past connections with the Avatar.⁴² Through them Baba claimed to be extending the effects of his work and carrying out the purposes of his Avataric mission.



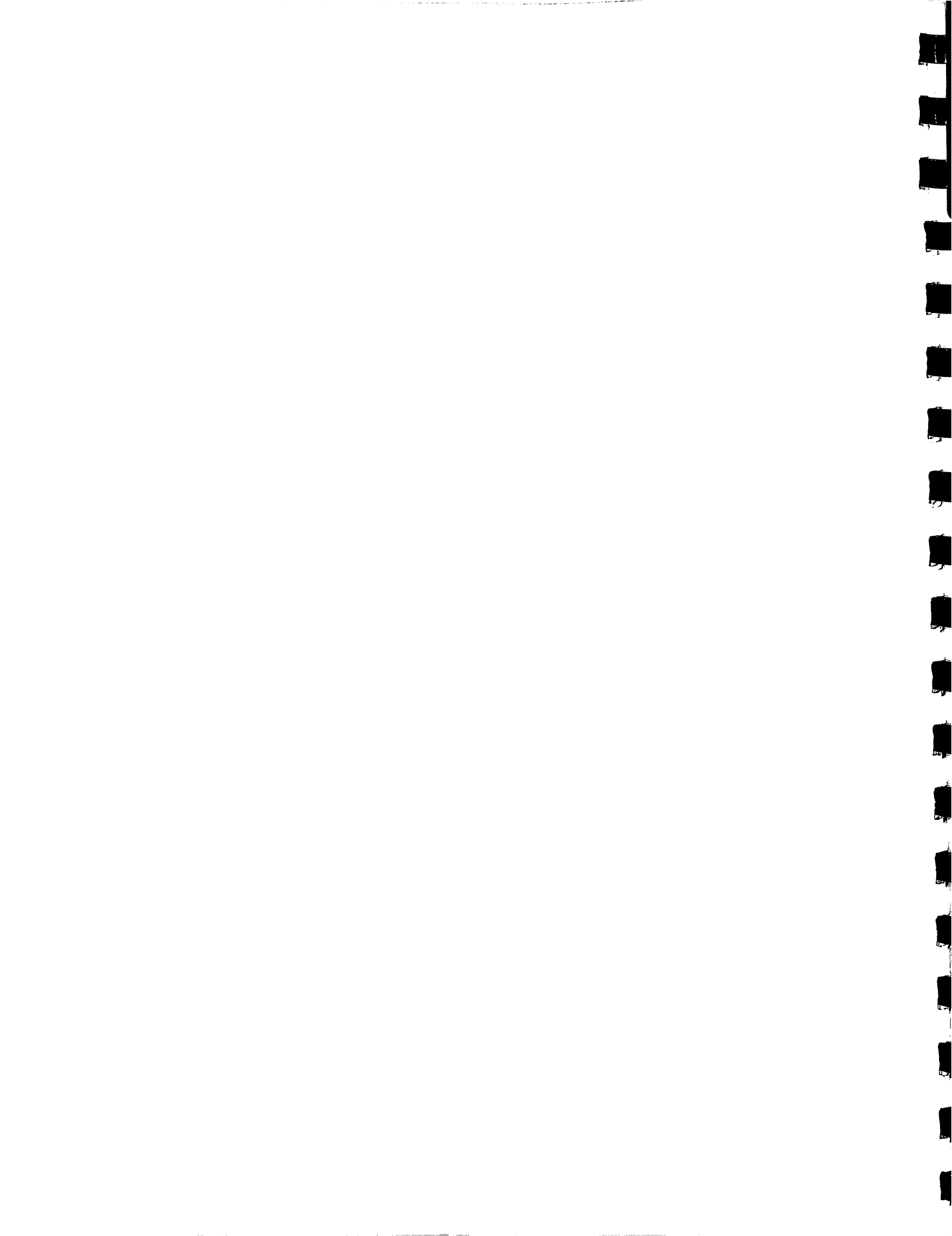
Only on rare occasions did Baba hint at who his agents were and what they were doing to help him. Agents are not to be confused with the Avatar's circle of disciples. Agents are those members of the spiritual hierarchy, unknown and hidden to the world, who carry out the directives of the Avatar. When asked how they know that they are working for the Avatar, Baba replied:

Only those who are on the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th planes, and who are conscious of me, know under and for whom they are working physically, and this knowledge they have through the medium of their subtle and mental bodies... For example, while I am sitting here, my agents are working in India, Persia, Africa and so on. This very moment, they see my subtle body, all at the same time, in the different planes...⁴³

Those around Baba sometimes witnessed a direct contact between him and one of these mysterious agents:

One day, when in Zurich, Baba said suddenly that he must reach Marseilles before midnight the following day, since he had a spiritual appointment there. As soon as the party arrived in Marseilles Baba asked to be taken to the city park, and, when he came to a particular part of it, he began walking to and fro on a gravel path with Norina and Elizabeth on either side of him. Norina and Elizabeth both noticed that, on the other side of a small lawn, there was a young man sitting on a park seat. Baba eventually took a loop around the lawn and walked straight past the young man who, as Baba passed, stood up and bowed his head in a reverential way to Baba. Baba then walked off, explaining that the man was one of his agents.⁴⁴

Masts also play a significant role in the Avatar's universal work. Living in often filthy surroundings, and

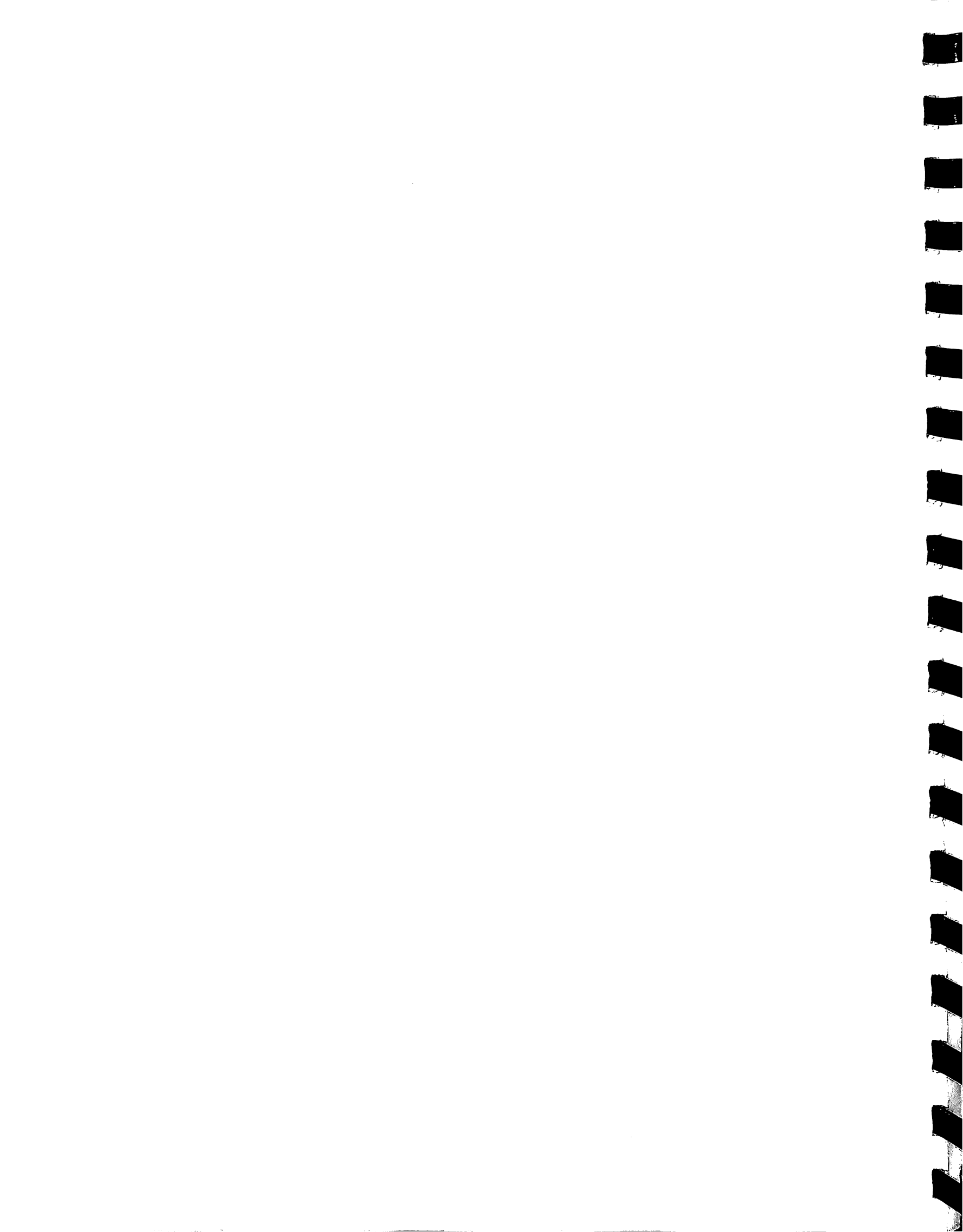


behaving in unpredicable and seemingly mad ways, the masts are, from Baba's perspective, pure and indispensable channels for the Avatar's work. An early disciple once offered this account of Baba's relationship to these unlikely workers:

The leela of God (divinity in full play) is primarily concerned with the spread of His purity and love for the benefit of the world as a whole. For the expression and manifestation of His infinite power, bliss, knowledge, light and love, God needs the purest mental channels. And the purest minds are those of the masts, who, having drowned themselves in their love for God, have gone beyond lust, anger, greed, avarice, and all other weaknesses that invariably stick round the mind of every man, in greater or lesser amounts, and in one shape or another until man is awakened to his true nature and to his real life.⁴⁵

Like the agents, the masts are extensions of the Avatar's purposes, acting as channels for the release of divine love in the world.

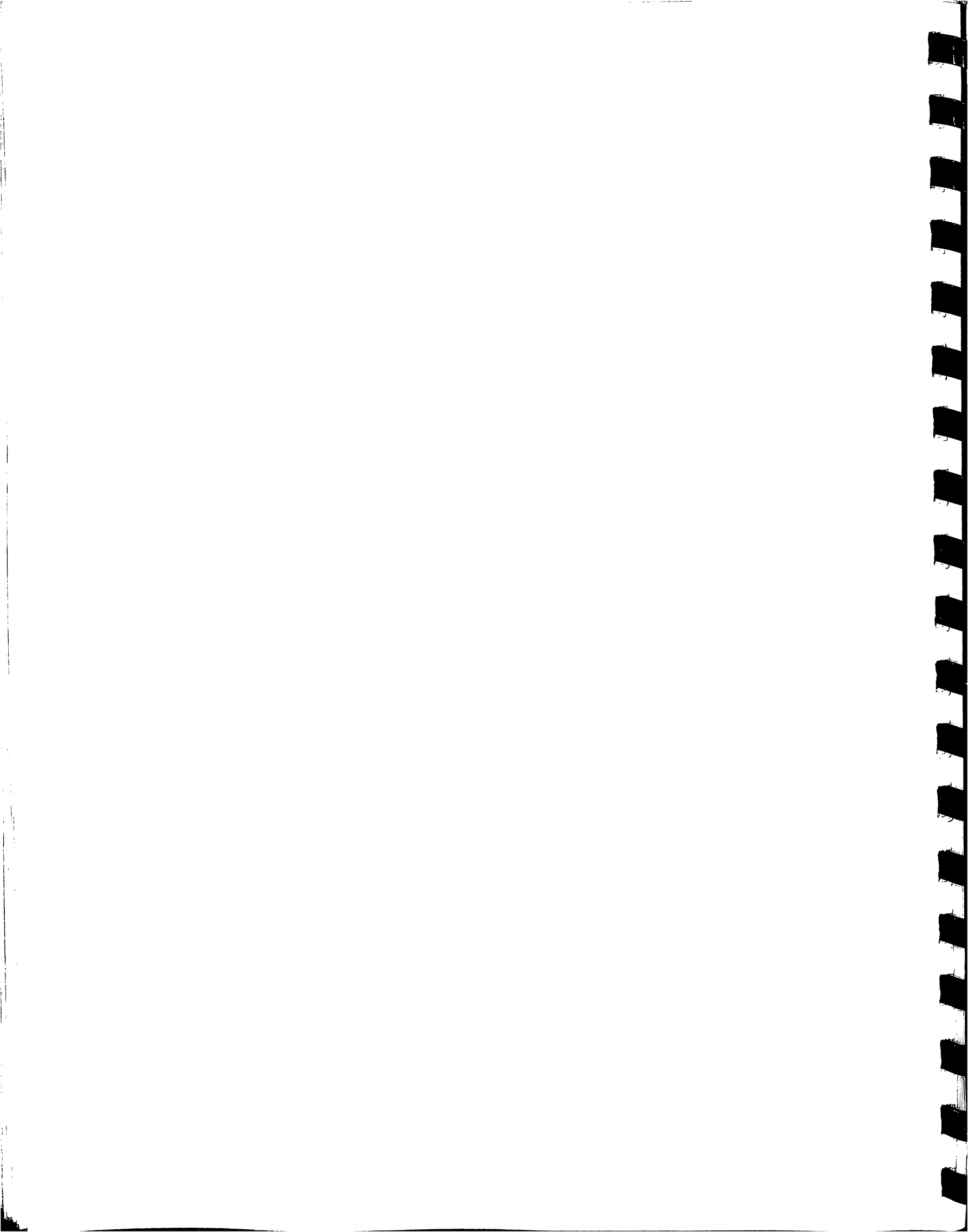
Baba's mast work, therefore, was much more than an effort to aid individual masts in their spiritual growth. The many years and the thousands of miles of travel Baba spent in mast work was deemed by Baba to be an essential element in the fulfillment of his mission. Shaking the mast out of what Baba called the "self-sufficiency" of the mast-state, Baba stated that he awakened them to the spiritual needs of the world. He was then able, he explained, to channel their love for God in ways that would benefit the entire world:



Because of his being stationed on the inner planes, which are free from the limitations and handicaps of the gross world, a mast can be, and often is, in contact with a far greater number of souls than is possible for an ordinary person. Mast mind is a nucleus of conscious formations, with innumerable and far-reaching links. A mast can therefore be a more effective agent for spiritual work than the most able persons of the gross world. The mast mind is also often used directly by the master as a medium for sending spiritual help to different parts of the world.⁴⁶

Just as little is known about how Baba communicated with his agents, little can be said of how he worked through the masts. We do know that he spent many hours with the masts alone, allowing no one to interrupt. Frequently he would wash and shave them, taking great pains always to see that each mast was meticulously cared for in the ashram. The disciples noted the special happiness that radiated from Baba when he was with "the gems in my crown."⁴⁷ The masts in turn loved Baba very deeply, often responding only to him.⁴⁸

The inner meaning of the mast work occasionally surfaced for others to glimpse. One example of this can be found in the story of the mast known as Chatti Baba who lived at Meherabad with Baba in the 1940s. Although he did not read and appeared to be oblivious to world events, Chatti Baba began to tell the disciple caring for him that the people of Europe were suffering greatly. Donkin gives this account of what happened next:



On the night of 9th June, 1940, Chatti Baba became suddenly violent, noisy and abusive, and emerged in a state of disorder and frenzy from his little room. He went directly to Baba's room, and declared that his house had now been utterly destroyed, and that he had come for shelter to Baba. If that remark were literal it made no sense at all, since his little room was as it always had been, small and bare, but neat and whole, a place where he was usually happy to sit alone for hours. Baba at once gave orders for the two to be left alone together, and Chatti Baba for some hours was heard chattering and expostulating with Baba. Eventually he became quiet and spent the rest of the night along with Baba.⁴⁹

The next day Baba, in a rare comment on the significance of mast behavior, told the mandali that Chatti Baba had a spiritual connection with France and had felt deeply the fate of the French people. It was, of course, during that period that the German armies overran France, entering Paris on June 13. Baba indicated that through the spiritual connections of masts like Chatti Baba, he accomplished much of his universal work.

In addition to symbolic activities and contacts with agents and masts, Meher Baba carried out his universal work in seclusion. Periods of intense activity would be alternated with times of deep seclusion. His seclusions would vary in length from a matter of days to months, and even, toward the end of his life, years. As in the case of silence or fasting, Baba did not view his seclusions as a spiritual discipline, but rather as a vital part of the inner work he had come to do. As he put it:



I am really the only one who is not in seclusion. It is the rest of humanity that is in seclusion; I have come to enable humanity to emerge into Eternal Freedom.⁵⁰

Baba's seclusions were usually in a small space and often accompanied by fasts. The atmosphere surrounding the seclusion area was frequently highly charged and intense. Sometimes, for reasons known only to Baba, a mast was needed for seclusion work. Donkin records this incident involving the mast Chatti Baba:

Baba has never, as far as I know, explained why, when he sits with a mast, he insists upon the rigid exclusion of anyone else. It is, however, possible from an experience related by Eruch during this period of Chatti Baba's stay at Bangalore, that there is a tangible, physical danger in interrupting him at such a time. The two were closeted in silence in Baba's room for about two hours, and at the end of that period, Eruch, hearing Baba's movements to open the door, got up and released the clasp from the outside. Chatti Baba then emerged, and brushed past him on his way to his own room. As he went past, Eruch tells how he felt a palpable and excruciating shock pass through his body similar, he says, to an electric shock.⁵¹

Seclusion work, it seems, exhausted Baba and had, Baba hinted, tremendous consequences for the world:

Baba and his men came to this wild hilltop on the last day of October 1945, and for four days Baba spent most of the day sitting alone with Ali Shah (a mast), in a hut which had been prepared for the mast on the lower slopes of the hill. Thereafter, Ali Shah was sent back to Ahmednagar, and for the final week Baba continued his silent work alone, in his special hut on the summit of the hill.

On one of these latter days Baba emerged, after having sat for many hours in complete seclusion, his face more drawn and weary than Adi ever remembered



having seen it, and said that a gigantic disaster would overwhelm the world that would wipe out three-quarters of mankind. Adi was deeply stirred, not only by the anguish on Baba's face, but also because he spontaneously dictated these words immediately on emerging from his seclusion, as if the work done during that seclusion had been specifically related to the world passion of which he spoke.⁵²

As with all of his activities, Baba placed great emphasis on the significance of his seclusions for the fulfillment of his universal work. Every seclusion was planned with care as to timing, location, and scope. Those around Baba had to be on constant guard in order to prevent intrusion and maintain the silence near the seclusion site. During a number of seclusions the mandali and Baba's followers were asked to share in the work by spending a period in silence, prayer, meditation or fasting.⁵³

The exact nature of the seclusion work, like the universal work itself, is unknown beyond saying that Baba claimed to be working on all planes of consciousness for the spiritual transformation of consciousness. Only once did he state directly what had actually occurred during a seclusion. In 1932, after spending twenty-four hours in a cave associated with St. Francis of Assisi in Italy, Baba said:

A meeting was held when all the saints and masters from the sixth and seventh planes of consciousness saw me and we mapped out the spiritual destiny of the world for the next two thousand years.⁵⁴



During some seclusions Baba continued to direct other aspects of his work, sometimes through a small opening in his room. Frequently seclusions were accompanied by prolonged fasts:

At the time of his Meher Ashram activities in 1927-1928, Baba lived on a little milk and a few cups of milkless weak tea for 5 and 1/2 months. In the midst of this fast, Baba remained for 69 days in the crypt-like double room, built one upon the other on Meherabad Hill which is now known as his future tomb. He used to retire in the six feet deep, four feet wide and six feet long underground crypt during the nights and supervised the Meher Ashram activities throughout the day time from a window of the room built above and all around the crypt. During the seclusion of 69 days, he also lived on plain water for 28 days.⁵⁵

Seclusions sometimes marked momentous changes in Meher Baba's life. In 1949, for example, a forty-day seclusion preceeded the "New Life" phase of his work.⁵⁶ And during the last years of his life Baba entered a prolonged seclusion to complete what he called his "universal work." While we do not now what he did in seclusion, we do know that this last period of work exhausted Baba as this rare comment by him suggests:

The strain of that 18 months's work in seclusion was tremendous. I used to sit alone in my room for some hours each day while complete silence was imposed on the mandali and no one of them was permitted to enter the room during those hours every day. The strain was not in the work itself although I was working on all planes of consciousness, but in keeping my link with the gross plane. To keep this link I had to continuously hammer my right thigh with my fist.⁵⁷



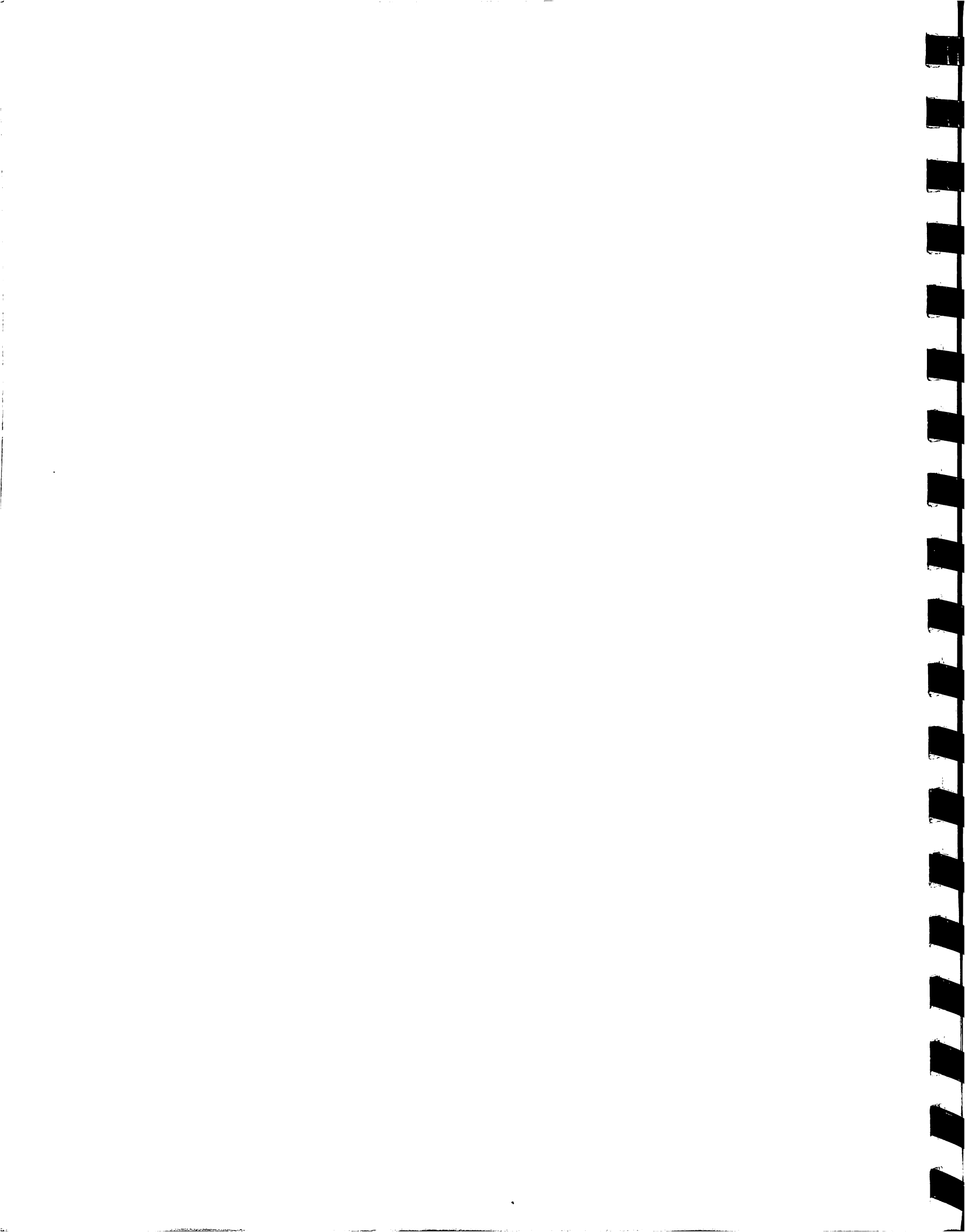
At the end of these days in seclusion the mandali would find Baba drained and wet with perspiration. By the time he ended his seclusion, this "work" had broken his health. Soon after announcing the completion of his work, he "dropped his body."⁵⁸

Baba made it clear that the work he did in seclusion could not be explained or understood, but with time, as with all aspects of his universal work, the meaning of his actions would unfold. For Meher Baba as the Avatar there was always a specific agenda and a definite timetable for all that he did. Recognition or understanding by the world held little importance for him:

To those who wish to know about my activities I can only say that as far as my inner life and internal activities are concerned, only God and those who are one with God can know and understand... From the beginningless beginning to the present day I am what I am, irrespective of praise or universal opposition, and will remain so to the endless end.⁵⁹

Universal Suffering

In the Avatar, according to Meher Baba, God voluntarily becomes human. Consequently, the Avatar is that aspect of God that voluntarily suffers the limitations of human existence in order to periodically bring about a universal transformation of consciousness.⁶⁰ By suffering as a human being the Avatar "takes on" the suffering of



the world and thus enables humanity to move forward spiritually. For Baba, sharing in the plight of humanity was an essential part of the "release of love" given by God in the Avatar. Love in this instance is understood by Baba to be, in part, an identification with human suffering in order to help individuals overcome the bondage of their finite existence.⁶¹

Baba's life is replete with examples of his suffering mostly as a result of illness and the two car accidents discussed in the previous chapter. Such physical suffering, Baba said, was an outward sign of his inner work, signifying the burden of his universal work. Although he allowed doctors to attend to his needs, he claimed that there was little they could do since his suffering was part of his work. Indeed, the doctors around him have frequently testified as to the frustration they experienced in trying to care for Baba's medical needs. His symptoms would appear and disappear inexplicably, baffling even the specialists called in by the mandali.⁶² Just prior to his death, when tests revealed severe medical problems, one of the mandali wrote to the West:

Baba says that the pressure of His universal burden reflects upon His body; and as the strain of His work in seclusion was severe, the effect on His body is



consequently severe--but though the effect is human the cause is divine and it is therefore in His hands. We get fleeting glimpses of this, at moments when unaccountably He looks more well and glowing than one in the pink of health. Indeed, in light of recent tests made, the doctors are much puzzled and amazed by certain favorable factors that are contrary to all rules of medical science.⁶³

Baba always conveyed a sense of assurance about the purpose and timing of his suffering. On occasion, as in 1962 during the Cuban missile crisis and the Chinese invasion of India, he indicated that his suffering was connected to world events.⁶⁴ In the case of the two automobile accidents in the 1950's, he foretold them to the mandali, saying that he had to shed blood in the East and in the West before he dropped his body.⁶⁵

Though told by Baba that his suffering was necessary for his work, the mandali struggled to accept the inevitability of the constant pain that plagued Baba during the last two decades of his life:

Baba tells us that He is both God and man. Seeing Him undergo sickness and accidents and suffering are stark reminders that He is man, that He has said: "I have taken on the form of man to take on the suffering of man." And when, tending to His body to the utmost of our ability we feel overanxious or worried, He reminds us: "Don't forget I am God. I know all. Simply do as I say." We bow to his will.⁶⁶

Baba would sometimes give those around him a sign that all of his suffering was a part of his plan and needed for his work. This was usually done to ease the



heart of someone near to him, as is illustrated by the following story, recounted by Elizabeth Patterson.

Elizabeth was driving when Baba had the first car accident and naturally she felt it very deeply. She writes:

Vividly I remember the beautiful late morning of May 24 when Norina and Anita and I motored 35 miles from New York to join Baba's party for a day in the country at Harmon-on-Hudson... Baba greeted us with a warm embrace and we found a number had gathered there already. After a repast was served by Jean and others, Baba led us outside to the stone terrace and then along a path to a field with wild flowers. Some went here and there picking the flowers but I stayed close to Baba. He quietly picked a small pink flower and handed it to me. He motioned to Kaka Baria who was ever near with Baba's alphabet board and Baba spelled out slowly that I should always keep the flower and should write down the date, that some day I would know the meaning. When I got home in the evening I pasted it inside the cover of my New Testament and wrote down "Baba--May 24, 1932." Not until many years later, when I was unpacking a steamer trunk that had been with me on two long trips to India, then put in New York storage and finally sent to me in Myrtle Beach, did I discover again the New Testament among my effects. Opening the cover, there were the words, "Baba--May 24, 1932." In a flash another date, May 24, 1952, came to my mind, the date the accident had occurred in Oklahoma when I was driving Baba and four of His close disciples. It had been a catastrophic occurrence, yet, despite serious injuries, all eventually recovered.

I do not fully know the meaning and deeper significance of the accident which happened twenty years to the day, May 24, but I do know that Baba knew then and now. Through the experience of sharing Baba's suffering to a degree, I feel my life, instead of being nearly cut off, was extended for a purpose. The gift of the little flower was grace from the Master to be treasured in the heart.⁶⁷

This story is quoted at length to illustrate how Baba and those around him viewed his suffering as part of his



mission. Baba, however, did not explain how every event reflected the Avataric purpose. He chose instead to give subtle indications of how this was so. As hundreds of similar stories suggest, there was no sense around Baba that his actions or suffering had to be understood by the world, only the expectation by him that the mandali would accept his life as the work of God.⁶⁸

For Baba, his suffering was connected to the giving of the "Word." A day before his death he told the mandali:

"All this, all that I have been through all along, has been a preparation for the Word--for just the One Word!" And with a quizzical smile he added, "Just imagine!"⁶⁹

What this means no one knows, though some clue may be found in the manonash phase of Baba's life described in the previous chapter. The "annihilation of the mind" Baba said that he experienced could not have been the process of ego-death experienced in God-realization, as Baba had already achieved that state. Rather, manonash seemed to be a period when Baba voluntarily went through the process of the death of the ego-mind in order to prepare the way for others to follow. We may conclude, therefore, that Baba saw his suffering as helping to bring about the new spiritual possibilities for humanity, symbolized by the giving of the Word:



Although for me the burden of the work is crushing, the result of my work will be intensely felt by all people in the world.⁷⁰

In the divine lila of Baba's cosmology, the Avatar represents that aspect of God that consciously suffers for the sake of love. This suffering is a vital part of the divine love game, with the Avatar as the beloved and the individual atmas enmeshed in maya as the lovers. From this larger perspective, it could be said that God always suffers through the ignorance of those not awakened to their true nature. But periodically God in the Avatar takes on suffering in order to draw humanity closer to the goal of God-realization. Or, to put it another way, Baba suggests that the beloved must suffer with the lover at those times when the lover can go no further without divine help.⁷¹ In this sense, the suffering of the Avatar is itself a release of love that heralds the dawn of a new era for all life.

The New Humanity

Early in his life Meher Baba proclaimed that the result of his work as Avatar would be a universal spiritual awakening. By this he meant a collective advance in consciousness creating what he called a "new humanity." In a discourse on the subject he said in part:



As in all critical periods of human history, humanity is now going through the travail of spiritual rebirth. Great forces of destruction seem to be dominant, but constructive and creative forces, which will redeem humanity, are also being released. And though the working of the constructive forces is silent, they will bring about the transformation of man for it is a part of the Divine Plan to give the world a fresh dispensation of the eternal Truth... Through Divine Love, the New Humanity will learn the art of cooperative and harmonious life; it will free itself from the tyranny of forms, and release the creative life of spiritual wisdom; it will shed illusions and get established in the Truth; it will enjoy peace and abiding happiness; it will be initiated into the life of eternity.⁷²

As exalted as this vision of a new humanity may be, it is not projected as an eschatological one. Within Baba's cosmology, changes in the universe are cyclical in nature. The only lasting change is the realization of God by individual atmas. The significance, therefore, of Baba's new humanity lies in the claim that it will be a general and dramatic improvement in the human condition allowing for a collective progression in consciousness.

In Baba's view, the twentieth century marks the end of one age and the beginning of another within that aspect of the story of consciousness that can be called collective. The age we are leaving has been characterized by what Baba termed "multiple separateness." Self-interest has brought humanity to a "peak of destruction" necessitating divine intervention:



When the evolution of consciousness began, there was oneness in spite of the diversity in illusion. With the growth of consciousness, manyness also went on increasing, until now it is about to overlap the limit. Like the wave that reaches its crest, this height of manyness will dissolve itself and bring about the beginning of oneness in illusion. Suffering at its height will cause the destruction of this climax of manyness in illusion. The time has come for the pre-ordained destruction of multiple separateness which keeps man from experiencing the feeling of unity and brotherhood.⁷³

The age we are entering will be an age of "oneness," a kind of golden age in which divisions within humanity will be greatly reduced and conditions for spiritual growth vastly improved.⁷⁴

The severity of world suffering in this century is due, according to Baba, to the end of a great cycle of time and the birth pangs of a new era.⁷⁵ A transition in consciousness of this magnitude would not be possible without the manifestation of divine love:

The New Humanity will come into existence in the release of love through the spiritual awakening brought about by the Masters... True love is unconquerable and irresistible and goes on gathering power and spreading itself, until eventually it transforms everyone whom it touches. Humanity will attain to a new mode of being through the free and unhampered interplay of pure love from heart to heart.⁷⁶

Baba declared that humanity was now in the midst of an unprecedented shift from what he called the age of reason to the age of intuition, a change he compared in magnitude to the earlier shift from instinct to reason.



As the nature of the intuition in Baba's understanding will be explored in the next chapter, it must suffice to say at this point that the new age will be one in which individuals depend much more fully on the inner guidance of the true Self or God.⁷⁷

What kind of world will result from Baba's universal work? Baba answered in these general terms:

When I speak that Word, I shall lay the foundation for that which is to take place during the next seven hundred years. When I come again after seven hundred years, the evolution of consciousness will have reached such an apex that materialistic tendencies will be automatically transmuted into spiritual longing, and the feeling of equality as spiritual brotherhood will prevail. This means that opulence and poverty, literacy and illiteracy, jealousy and hatred, which are in evidence today in their full measure, will then be dissolved through the feelings of oneness of all men. Prosperity and happiness will then be at their zenith.⁷⁸

Once, while describing what the results of his work would be, Meher Baba made a gesture to signify that he was holding the world in his hands. Then, he slowly turned the "globe" over one hundred and eighty degrees. "Upside-down Baba?," someone asked. "No," Baba gestured, pointing up, "rightside-up!"⁷⁹ Indeed, Baba's ways of working to transform consciousness suggest an "upside-down" picture of the world, at least as the world is widely construed to be operating. To acknowledge the logic of Baba's work, one would have to accept something like the following:



Obscure and strange people, masts and "advanced souls" to Baba, play a more central role in the progression of world events than do presidents and armies. The upheavals and chaos of our century represent the death throes of a passing order and the birth pangs of a new humanity. In the center of it all is the Avatar, a living symbol of the direct, inevitable and necessary involvement of God in the divine plan for our world.

My discussion of Meher Baba's "universal work" leaves us, it seems to me, with two possible scenarios behind the drama of Baba's life: Either he was completely mistaken about his identity and the significance of his actions, or he was, as his masters proclaimed, God in human form. Perhaps only when we are as removed from his life as we are from the lives of Guatama Buddha and Jesus will it be possible to speak convincingly of divine purposes behind Baba's strange, but compelling life.

If he was (and is) the Avatar, the pattern of Meher Baba's universal work suggests that we know next to nothing about how the Avatar works either now or in the past. What is remembered and understood about past Avatars, especially in the exoteric traditions, gives little insight as to the actual inner work of the Avatar. In this chapter, we have seen, rather obliquely, how Baba



went about accomplishing his universal mission. Together with what has already been said in the previous chapters, we have a kind of phenomenology of the Avatar emerging: God comes into the world as a human being. He is unveiled as to his identity by the five Perfect Masters of the time. He appears at a crucial time in human history in order to release a fresh dispensation of divine love into the world and thus to bring about a change in consciousness. His agency is always love which he expresses . . . silently, primarily through suffering and selfless service. His every action is part of a precise plan. He is aided by others deeply connected to him in fulfilling his mission. Whatever his teachings, they are secondary to the primary purpose of awakening the heart through love. Finally, he seems fully indifferent as to whether or not he is understood or recognized in what he does. When he is finished, he leaves his physical body, usually in a humiliating and painful manner.

The universal work of Meher Baba, however, has another, more personal dimension in addition to the general picture given in this chapter. For it is by examining the dynamic of Baba's work as a personal master and "divine beloved" that we may come to grasp more clearly his mission as the "awakener."



CHAPTER IV

THE AWAKENING OF THE HEART: MEHER BABA AS THE DIVINE BELOVED

"Divine Love," said Meher Baba, "cannot be awakened except by contact with the Incarnation of Love."¹ While the Avatar's love is universal in that it touches and transforms all life, it is also personal and individual, especially in those who consciously accept him as their master. For them, Meher Baba is the divine beloved who loves and guides them in all that they do.² This lover-beloved relationship reveals much about how Baba sought to awaken love in those he contacted. Significantly, it also reveals how Baba intended to make himself available as the beloved even after his physical death.

The Path of Love

The story of the cosmos, according to Baba's account, is a continual love story, a story of the relationship of the lover and the beloved:

We thus have God as infinite love, first limiting Himself in the forms of creation, and then recovering His infinity through the different stages of creation. All the stages of God's experience of being a finite lover ultimately culminate in His experiencing Himself as the sole Beloved.³



As we discussed in Chapter I, the turning point in this love story comes when the individual atma is prepared, after numerous lifetimes, to begin the spiritual path. Not surprisingly, Baba praised the path of love as being the best and most direct way to journey home to God:

Love comprehends the different advantages belonging to the other paths leading to emancipation and is the most effective Path. It is characterized by self-sacrifice and happiness. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that in whole-hearted offering to the Beloved there is no diversion of psychic energy, and concentration is complete. In love the physical, vital and mental energies are made available for the cause of the Beloved and become dynamic power.⁴

Understanding what Meher Baba means by this path is the prerequisite for understanding the lover-beloved relationship he offers to those who approach him with love. After examining everything Baba has said on the subject and exploring carefully with the mandali over a number of years the dynamics of Baba's love, I have identified seven aspects of the path of love as seen by Baba.

The first aspect of Baba's path of love is that it is no path at all. Baba's disciple and interpreter Eruch Jessawalla explains that because the lover is absorbed in the beloved, there is no thought of any path. As the lover focuses more and more on the beloved, all thoughts of a path and all experiences of the planes of conscious-

ness become irrelevant. To illustrate this point as he gathered it from Baba, Eruch gives the following image:

We are now at Meherazad where Meher Baba lived. So this is His seat and many have been permitted to come here on a visit. And because of the opportunity which had been given them, these lovers of Meher Baba were anxious with thoughts about when they would see Him, or be embraced by Him and similar thoughts about Him to the exclusion of all other thoughts.

Now, there is a long approach road from the bus stop to Meherazad and along that road there are many sights. There are a great variety of trees, many huts, many shepherds and cowherds and other similar sights to behold. But in their eagerness to be in His arms, did these lovers take notice of any of these sights? If you had asked them, "Did you notice that particular cherry tree alongside the road?" they would have said, "No. Is that so, is there a cherry tree? I haven't seen it!"

"You were passing right along side of it, how could you have missed it?"

And the reply would have been, "We were not even aware we were walking on the road, much less paying attention to a cherry tree on the side. All our attention was fixed on the destination to which we were headed." In other words, the path was following them.⁵

All the experiences along the journey, and even the thought of God-realization are ignored by the lover who is absorbed in remembrance of the beloved and longs only to be united with the beloved. Only in retrospect does the lover realize that there was indeed a path that led to the threshold of the beloved.

Baba emphasized to his lovers that all talk about the "path" was just talk. To one of the last Americans to see him Baba said:



Pay no attention whatsoever to the Path, to the planes or to spiritual experiences--these are all as toys for children and are nothing but illusion. You must strive to see me as I really am.⁶

The longing of the heart is a second aspect of Baba's path of love. Such longing is a result of the gift of love from the beloved to the aspirant who is ready to receive it. This gift causes the lover to fall in love with the beloved and to long to be with him. As love increases, the longing becomes more intense:

Beloved and lover implies separation. And separation creates longing; and longing causes search. And the wider and the more intense the search the greater the separation and the more terrible the longing.

Referring to a familiar Persian story, Baba explained how the longing of the heart leads to the beloved:

Majnu
Mainu loved Leila. This was pure Love, not physical, not intellectual, but spiritual love. He saw Leila in everything and everywhere. He never thought of eating, drinking, sleeping, without thinking of her, and all the time he wanted her happiness. He would have gladly seen her married to another if he knew that would make her happy, and die for her husband if he thought she would be happy in that. At last it led him to me--no thought of self, but of the beloved, every second and continually.⁸

A third aspect of Baba's path is the recognition of the heart. As the relationship between the lover and the beloved grows in love, the lover begins to recognize the ways of the beloved. The lover sees the activity of the beloved in all that happens and feels the presence of the beloved constantly.⁹



Longing for the beloved and a deepening awareness of his presence in all things lead to intimate companionship, a fourth aspect of Baba's path of love. Until intimate companionship the lover is treated with special attention by the beloved. Special embraces are given, much concern is expressed about the lover's health, and great interest is shown in the lover's comfort. Eventually, however, a time comes when the beloved begins to pay less outward attention to the lover and, simultaneously begins to allow the lover to be an instrument in the work of the beloved. This is the status and function of those Baba called the mandali.¹⁰

An illustration of Baba's view of intimate companionship is found in the life of Dr. William Donkin, a medical doctor who lived with Baba for many years. When he first arrived at the ashram from Great Britain and for the first period of his stay, Donkin was given extra attention and comforts quite unlike the other resident mandali. Finally, he recorded the following in his diary:

I get the impression that he no longer takes the trouble to be extra nice to me, to flatter me, but treats me much more like the other mandali, which is really a big compliment; for to work for Baba and not to be praised or thanked is the best.¹¹

The companions become, as it were, the hands and feet of the beloved. Although they are allowed and even

encouraged to give their views and enter vigorously into the discussion about any decision, once the beloved decides they are prepared to obey fully and wholeheartedly. They are, in this sense, extensions of his work in the world.¹²

Intimate companionship with the beloved is the beginning of the end of the love story. The lover has entered the close circle of the beloved and now lives only for the beloved. Thus even if the lover has many more lifetimes to live, they will all be in service of the beloved. At this stage, the false self of the lover is, in Baba's words, "dying by loving."¹³ Union with the beloved is inevitable; only the timing is left to be discovered.¹⁴

The lover who becomes the companion of the beloved learns to love for the sake of love alone. This quality of love, which I identify as a fifth key aspect of Baba's path of love, is attained only after many years of training. In the early days of their life with Meher Baba, many of the mandali were preoccupied with their spiritual status and their nearness to God-realization. At first Baba appeared to humor this interest, often telling them how close they were to him and to Liberation. Gradually, however, through living and working with him, they were



weaned from this preoccupation as they learned to love for the sake of love.¹⁵

Love without expectation of any result or reward became a central theme of Baba's relationships with his lovers. "Even the craving for union with the Beloved creates bindings," Baba said. "Therefore do not bother about separation or union; just love and love all the more."¹⁶ Such love frees one from all desire, even the desire for God-realization.

In one of his most important statements to his lovers, Baba stressed the need for them to love him because he is the source of love and for no other reason:

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 gain is still clinging behind their surrender, and as such the surrender cannot be complete.¹⁷

Only when the lover desires nothing except to love the beloved more and more is true surrender possible.¹⁸

To prepare the ground for love for the sake of love, the beloved must be the great "taker," taking away ego attachments and giving only love:

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 desires. 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.¹⁹

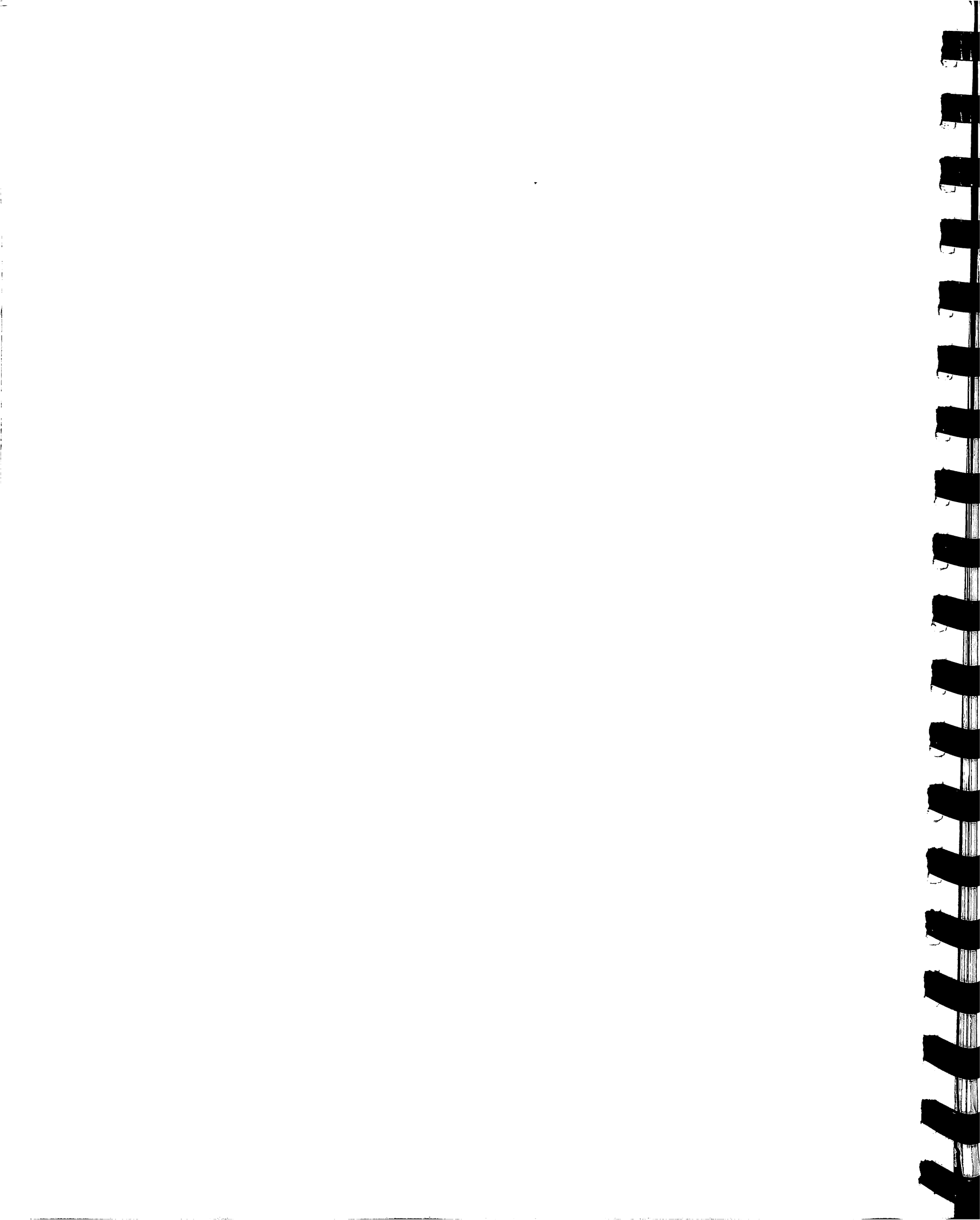
Those who lived with Baba report that every dimension of ashram life could be related in one way or another to his central work of ego elimination through love.

Kitty Davy writes:

In India, bit by bit the ego gave in; self-consciousness, inferiority, obstinacy, likes and dislikes, all went in our effort to please and obey Baba...

Baba's ways of eliminating the ego were both skillful and subtle, but they did rapidly cut down both prejudice and pride. To quote Baba, "The spiritual benefit accruing to an aspirant on the path approaching a Spiritual master is in direct proportion to the weakening or elimination of the ego." And so Baba might frequently ask you to do just those things which your nature revolted against, but never gave you the reason why. At first, we were rarely given occupations which we had done before joining the ashram but rather chores that we would have avoided doing in the outside world, or which we disliked intensely. Said one who set to work in the kitchen, "I did not come to peel potatoes--I can do this at home. I came to be with Baba!" Did we think we had come to sit with Baba all day, to meditate, discuss spiritual subjects, read philosophical books, escape the problems and monotony of daily life? If such was our vision, Baba through His own example showed us that this was not His way of life. "All work is My work," He said. Baba was so intensely practical and I feel it was a help to Baba if those around Him were practical too.

For the most part, life for all in the Meherabad ashram was on the practical side, but there were times, usually corresponding to periods of Baba's special work, when he gave us periods of combined fasting, silence and meditation... As the motive for these spiritual exercises, Baba placed emphasis always



on Worship or on helping Him in His universal work, never on any spiritual benefit that might accrue to us individually. There was to be no attachment to results, at least not consciously. Rarely did Baba discuss one's own spiritual progress except in group sessions when ethical behavior in terms of forbearance, love and self-control came up.²⁰

The lover on the path of love must lose everything that is unreal in order to gain the Real. The mandali point to the on-going process of loss as they grow closer to Baba. Gradually the lover loses interest even in God-realization and lives only to please the beloved. Indifferent to their own spiritual status, the mandali love Baba because they experience him as the source of divine love. They believe that he is still training people to love him in this way and to become his intimate companions.²¹

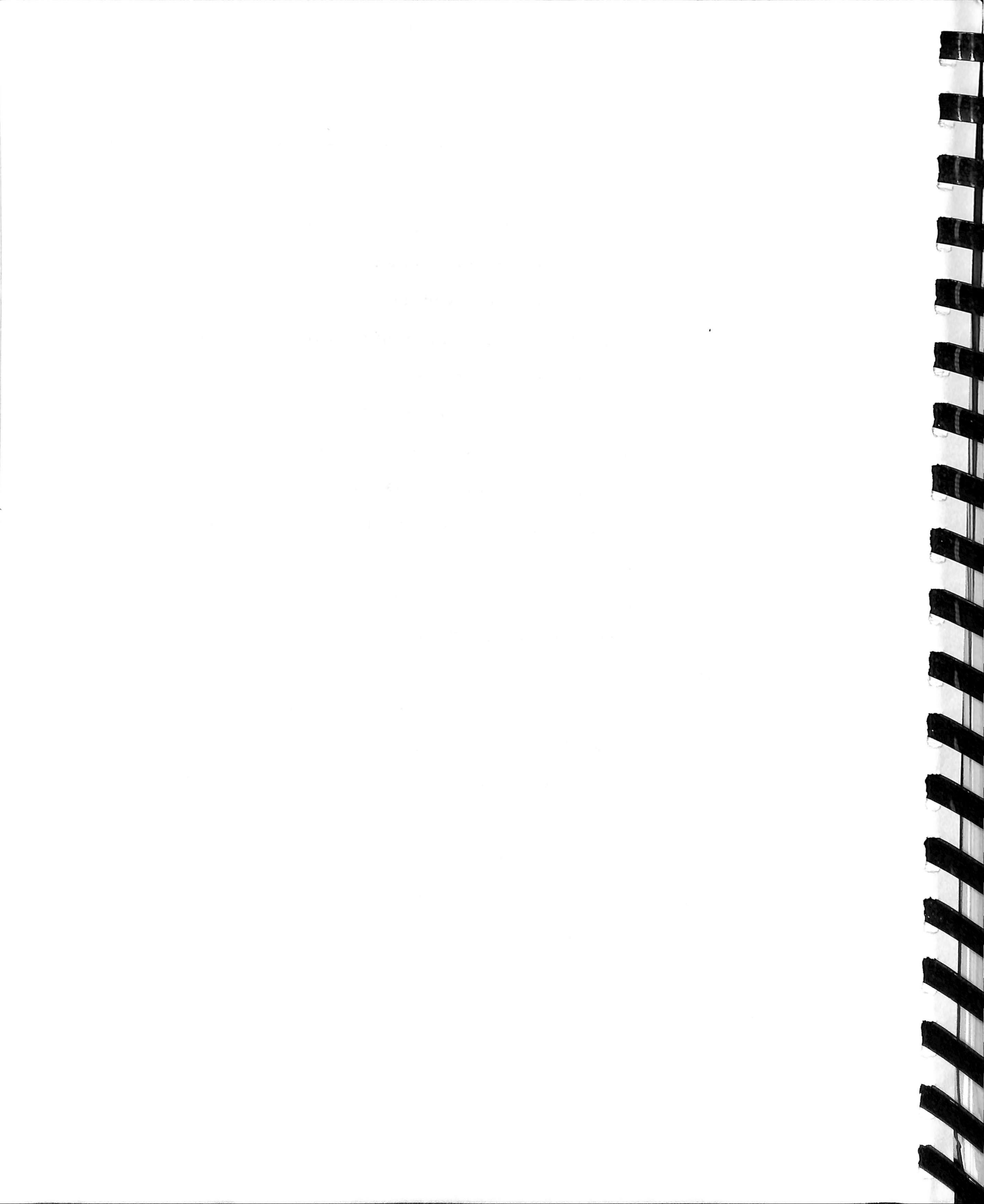
So much does the lover come to enjoy the companionship of the beloved that not only does the goal of God-realization lose its appeal, it is actively resisted. Eruch Jessawalla compares this stage, the sixth aspect in my outline of important themes in Baba's path of love, to the fruit ripening in a tree. The fruit ripens until finally it must fall away from the tree. Just so, the lover grows in love until the time comes when liberation takes place as a by-product of love. The lover prefers to stay with the beloved, loving and serving him, but, just



as the fruit must fall when it is ripe, so the lover unites in love with the beloved when the fullness of love is reached.²² The lover-beloved relationship becomes, therefore, the highest and only aspiration of the lover.

A seventh key feature of Baba's path of love is the absorption of the lover who thinks only of the beloved and sees the beloved everywhere. Such a lover anticipates the needs of their beloved before he asks. This lover becomes the beloved of the beloved. According to Baba, there is always one in the circle of the Avatar who plays this special role; for Rama it was Sita; for Krishna it was Radha; for Meher Baba it is Mehera, Baba's closest woman disciple.²³

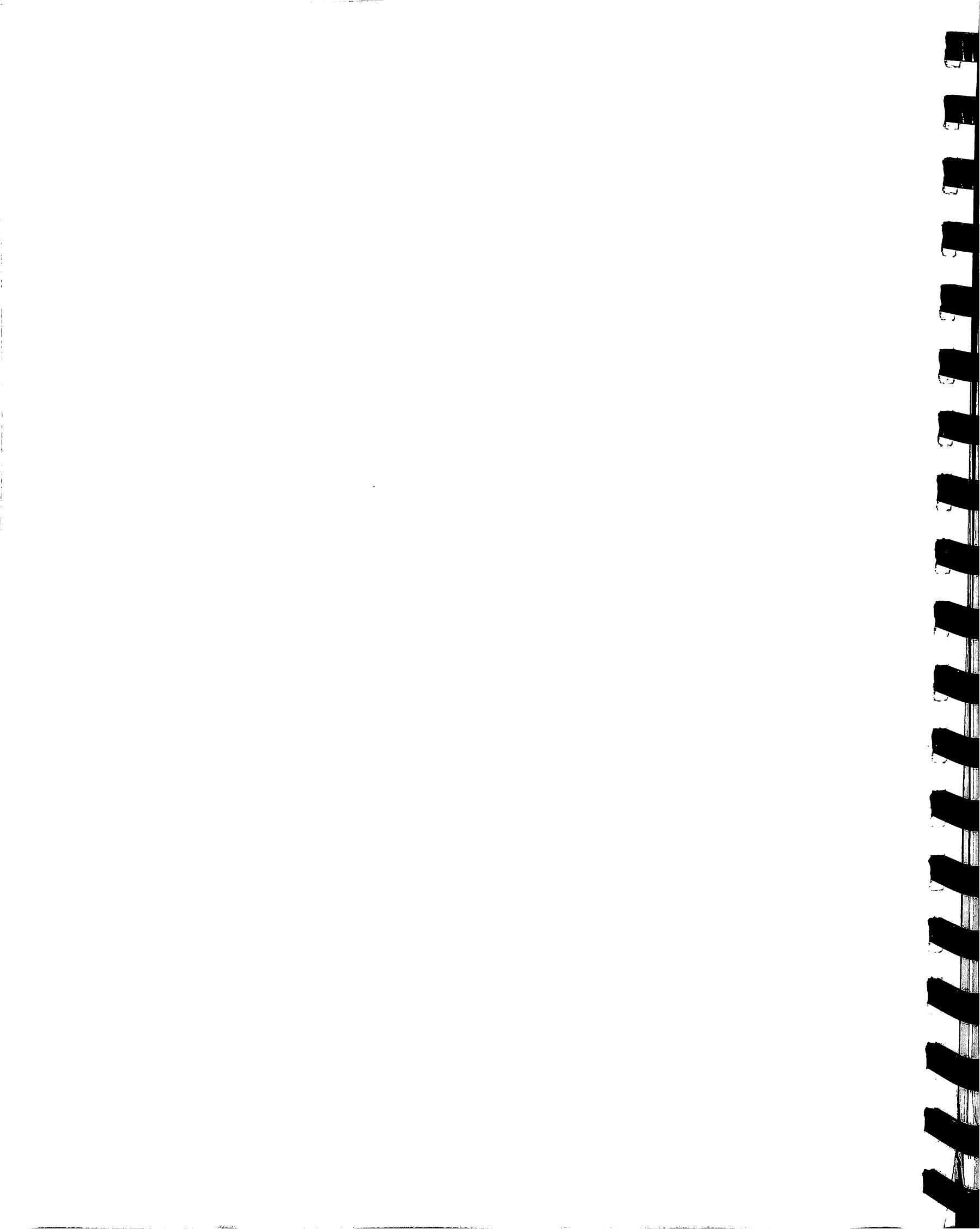
Though Baba rarely commented on the attributes of individual mandali, he frequently made an exception in the case of Mehera Irani, referring to her as the one who came closest to loving him as he should be loved. Mehera joined Baba with her mother in the early 1920s and remains in his ashram to this day. It became clear in the first decades of her discipleship that she had a unique role to play in Baba's circle. Her purity, constant remembrance of Baba and ability to serve Baba selflessly made her the beloved of the beloved.²⁴



The absorption of Mehera in love for Baba is, in the view of the mandali, the fullest expression of the Avatar's love story in this advent. They believe that Baba shaped her as the highest example of how to love the divine beloved. Thus the relationship of Baba and Mehera is symbolic of the lover-beloved relationship. In her love for Baba, Mehera expresses with unusual clarity all of the dimensions of the path of love as given by Meher Baba.²⁵ This song she wrote for Baba states succinctly all the themes we have discussed:

May I always be blessed by your company.
 I want your company at every moment of my life, and
 only
 in your cause should this body be sacrificed.
 O you, the Infinite One, have infinite attributes,
 Do not be indifferent to me!
 O Meher Baba, Guru of Gurus,
 I ask nothing but this last wish,
 I don't ask for God or for God-realization,
 or powers, or authority. My only wish is:
 Please don't be indifferent to me!²⁶

The lover-beloved relationship as outlined here contains themes familiar to students of Bhakti Yoga, Sufism and other devotional faiths.²⁷ Baba acknowledged these connections, especially by often quoting Hafiz and other Sufi poets.²⁸ What is significant, if not innovative, about Baba's "path of love" is the way in which it emerges out of his actual relationships with those who love him even now that he has "dropped the



body." Perhaps it may be said that each time this love is lived it is new.

Meher Baba's promise to awaken divine love was, in personal terms, a promise to renew a direct, inner connection of the spiritual seeker to the divine beloved. His mandali and lovers believe that he has kept that promise by inspiring thousands of people, both in his lifetime and since his passing, to enter into a relationship with him as the divine beloved. Now that we have an overview of that relationship, we are ready to explore more closely the dynamics of how the lover grows closer in love.

Knowledge of the Heart

A common thread running through many accounts of meeting Meher Baba for the first time is the experience of immediate recognition and familiarity. The following account of a meeting in the 1930s is typical:

I was so engrossed at looking at this wonderful man for the first time that everything else faded away. What impressed me most was the rather wild quality, as of something untamed, and his truly remarkable eyes. He smiled, and motioned me to sit beside him. He took my hand and from time to time patted my shoulder. We sat for several minutes in silence and I was aware of a great feeling of love and peace emanating from him; also a curious feeling of recognition came to me, as if I had found a long lost friend.²⁹

The feeling that Baba is an "old friend" is also attested to by those lovers who did not meet him



physically.³⁰ From Baba's own perspective, this recognition is rooted in lifetimes of connection with him and constitutes a knowledge of the heart that has been covered up:

As a rule an introduction is required between people who do not know one another. Such an introduction is not felt to be necessary when there is a give and take of love between persons, for hearts need no introduction. An affinity can be felt between strangers, a feeling of having known one another before. This feeling is because of their connections in previous lives.

No one requires an introduction to me, for no one is a stranger to me. However, I am a stranger to most, and those coming and remaining in my presence do not do so without introduction. As a matter of fact, they have come with many introductions--for many times in previous lives have they been introduced to me and have gone away and forgotten me and met me again. All these introductions are their introduction to me this time.³¹

In those who have a past connection with the Avatar, then, there is an intuitive basis for recognizing him when they encounter his love. The Avatar's message of love may be embodied and expressed differently each time he comes, but the love, according to Baba is always the same. Whatever the circumstance, whatever the guise, the lover will "know" the beloved when the beloved unveils his love.³²

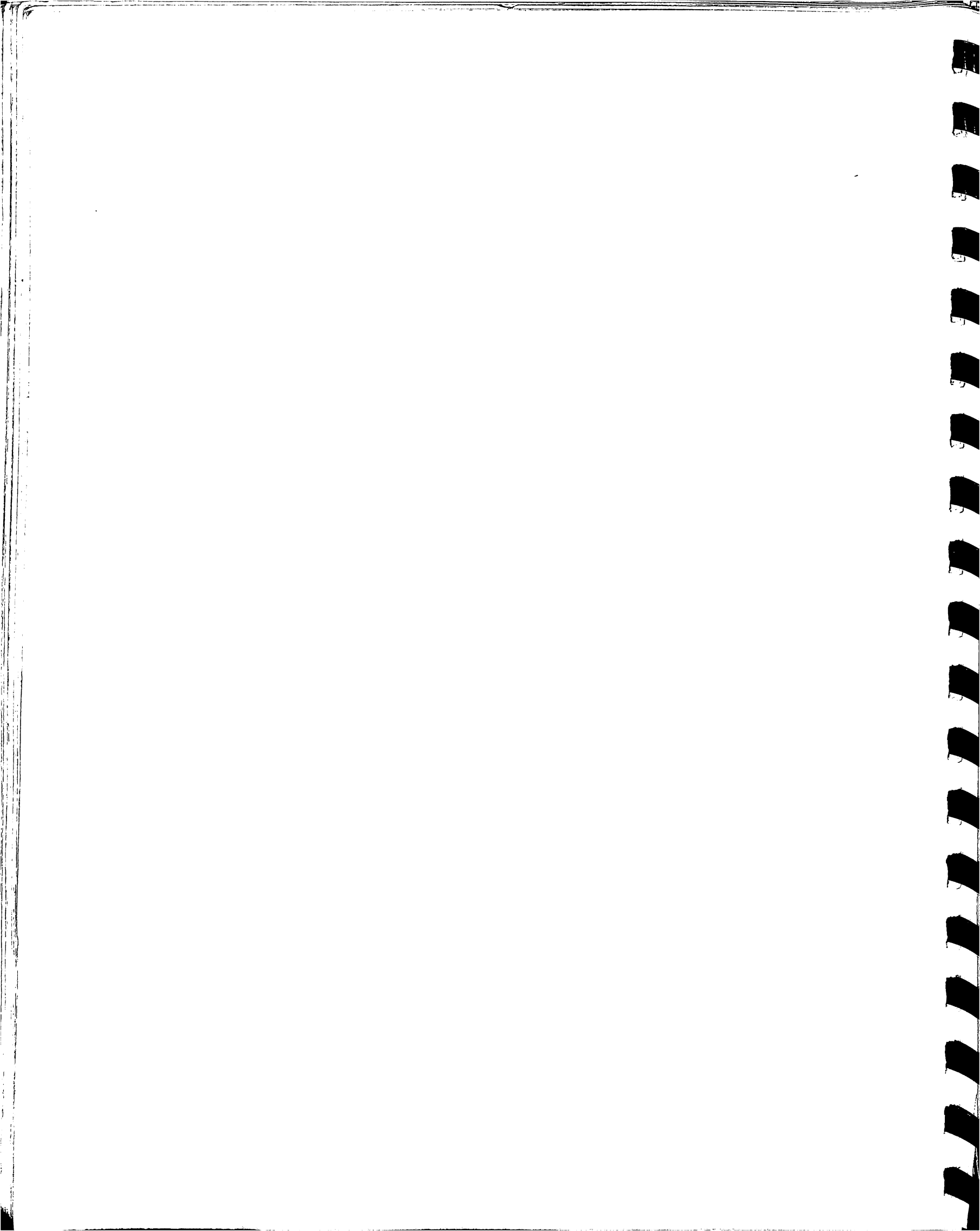
The inner recognition and sense of familiarity reported by Baba's lovers past and present establishes a deeply personal connection with him. Since there is no organization to join and no set creed or ritual, the



individual relationship of the lover and the beloved is the primary way of knowing Meher Baba. It is often said by Baba's disciples that it was love that drew them to Baba and love alone that keeps them with Baba.³³ As the following story suggests, Baba's followers feel that it is Baba who awakens this love and enables the lover to recognize the beloved.

A woman who met Baba during one of his visits to the United States in the 1950s found him during her initial meeting to be loving and friendly, but she did not feel an inner recognition of him as her beloved. A few days after this first meeting, she awoke in the middle of the night thinking she had heard her name called. Once awake she noticed a beautiful fragrance of jasmine in her room. Then she slept, falling into a very deep sleep. At dawn she awoke and began to weep tears of great joy, although she was not sure why. She went directly to the place where Baba was staying to see him. Soon he entered the large room where she and several hundred others were waiting. He was carried in a lift chair due to the injuries suffered in the second car accident. The woman relates what happened next in these words:

Upon entering, He had the chair stopped by my seat. There was no interpreter with Him. He simply gestured, "Did you sleep well Jane?" Of course I had



slept like a baby, but wakened at dawn weeping, but with joy. Then Baba went on. At the close of the program, after many discourses, I heard only this, Adi speaking for Baba: "Only in deep soundless sleep does the soul return to God. And so it will be when you reach the end of the journey; only then you will be aware. You will see me. You will know me as the true beloved." Upon leaving the barn, again He had the chair stopped by my seat. He made the same gesture, leaning down, looking directly into my eyes: "Did you sleep well Jane? Now do you understand?" I cried out, silently, from my heart: "But it's you!" And Baba responded, in the inner voice, very clearly: "Yes, Jane, it is I." He had shown me the young Christ, very beautiful, the One I had always tried to pray to. He was utterly familiar, especially His beautiful eyes. I had a glimpse of His divinity that made everything disappear. There was only His beautiful face. The deep impact was there, the recognition. And it is an clear today, clearer, than then.³⁴

Meher Baba, then, as the personal beloved, can only be recognized by the heart. It is for the beloved to awaken in ready hearts the conviction that he is the true beloved, the one residing deep within. Once awakened, this love becomes the foundation for the love, obedience and surrender of the lover:

The love the aspirant has for the Master is the response evoked by the love of the Master. Love for the Master becomes a central element in the life of the aspirant; because he knows the Master to be an embodiment of the infinite God, all his thoughts and aspirations are centered upon the Master. All other streams of love join this great river of love and disappear in it.³⁵

The mutual recognition of the lover and the beloved leads the lover to feel that the beloved as the true Self knows everything about the lover. In Baba's words, this is



"the love of God-unconscious for God-conscious."³⁶ Baba sought during his lifetime to demonstrate to his lovers that he knows their heart and will always be with them, guiding and loving them.

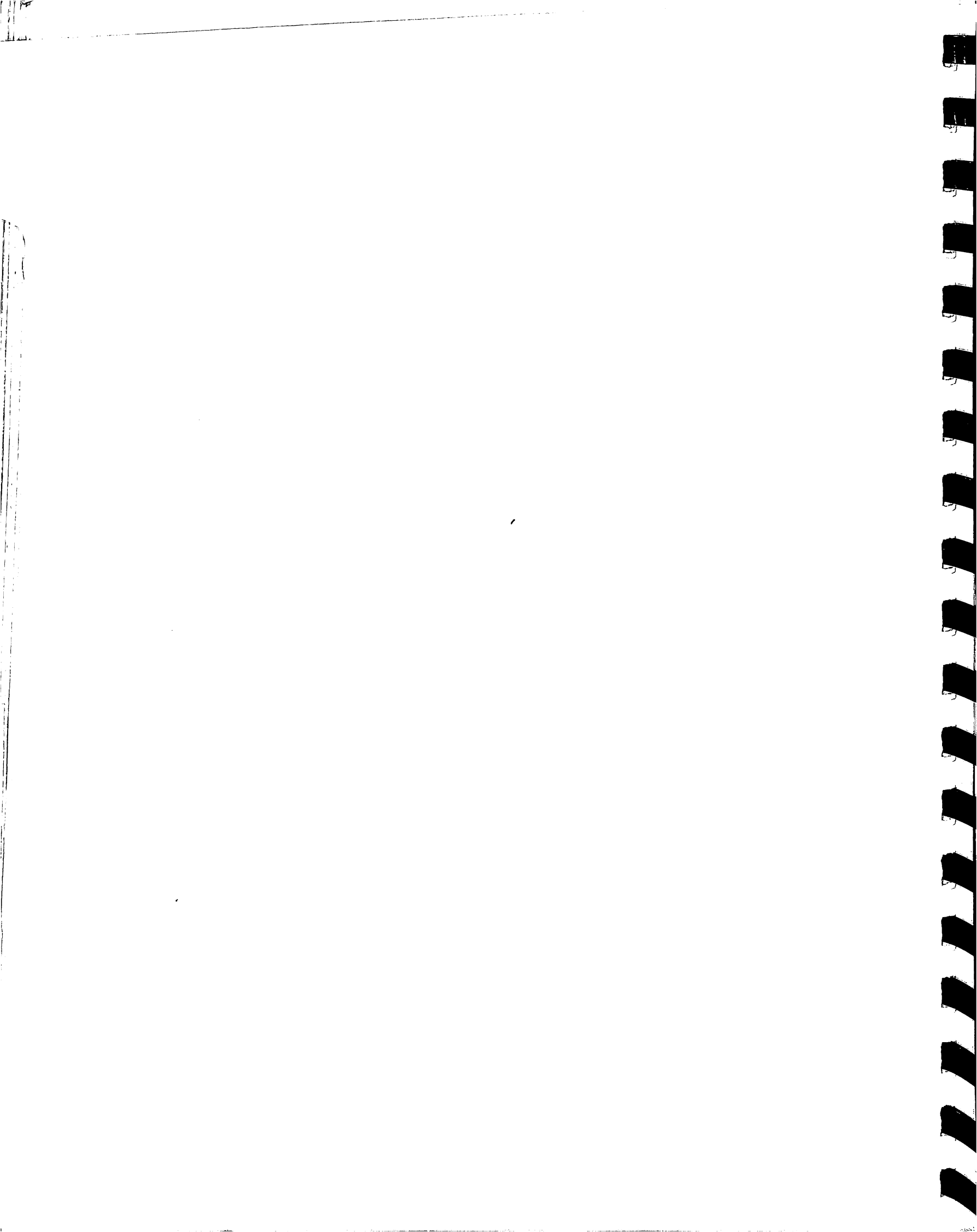
To understand how Baba indicated that he "knows the heart" of every lover, we must begin by discussing what Baba did not "know." When gathered with his lovers, he would ask about their health, families, plans, etc. One of the mandali would often jot down instructions Baba might give to someone so as to have a record for Baba. In the midst of all this no one questioned their fundamental conviction that Baba knows everything. It was always perfectly natural for Baba to ask and to be informed of countless details each day. How was it that Baba knew and did not know at the same time? On one occasion Baba explained his omniscience this way:

Being the highest and becoming the lowest I manifest Knowledge and assume ignorance at the same time.

Even though I know a certain thing will happen within a month, I may chalk out plans as if it was not to occur for years. Again, knowing that an event will not take place for years, I appear to expect it to happen shortly.

In Dnyan (Knowledge) there is Adnyan (non-knowledge or Ignorance). But in Adnyan there cannot be Dnyan. Having all knowledge on the highest level, I can assume full ignorance on your level.³⁷

The assumption of ignorance by the Avatar is a concept that parallels Baba's explanation of the Avatar's



voluntary suffering discussed in previous chapters. For the sake of his work, the Avatar who is all-bliss and all-knowledge suffers and appears ignorant. The following statement by Baba, his fullest on the subject, indicates that God as the Avatar must take on ignorance in order that humanity might find him approachable:

It is difficult to grasp how I, as the Highest of the High, can be so ignorant. It is because, being the Avatar, I do not act but become everything as everything. The Avatar, Who is Infinite Knowledge, becomes infinite Ignorance too. But how can you imagine my state of being simultaneously on and between the Highest and the lowest levels of consciousness? From the Highest level I know everything, while on the rest of the levels I do not know.

This dual role that I play has been depicted to some extent in one Persian couplet, which translates as follows: "I appear in the Highest Sphere, but at the same time I seem not to know what is just near my leg."

I am God and Man as the eternal God-Man, and as such I stoop down to all levels of consciousness to make myself available to all things and beings, so that they may know me as the One Indivisible Self.³⁸

The mandali feel that Baba's "ignorance" did in fact make him more available and aided in his work. Just as Baba was silent in order to speak, so he hid himself in order to be known. From the perspective of those around him, it was a great strain for Baba to cease speaking and singing--activities he enjoyed immensely. It was a tremendous sacrifice for Baba to give up walking due to his suffering. Similarly, they feel that it was most



compassionate of Baba to hide his omniscience. By so doing, he became their full companion, allowing them to feel that they aided him in his work and that he needed their services. Further, Baba's humanity gave his lovers the opportunity to play and joke with him and to share in the trials and tribulations of his life.³⁹

Baba also veiled himself because he wished the beloved to be known only by the heart. Conviction about his divinity must be based, he insisted, in love for him that flows from an experience of his love. He often reminded his followers that they should expect nothing from him but love, otherwise they should leave him.⁴⁰ Conviction rooted in love gave Baba the internal foundation he needed to develop the lover-beloved relationship in his lovers.

There are many stories about how Baba trained his lovers in the meaning of real conviction based in love alone. The one that follows will suffice to convey the flavor of Baba's training:

In the early days at Meherabad, not long after Baba established his ashram there, many near-by villagers came seeking Baba's blessing. Hearing that someone great was there, perhaps even a Sadguru, they came to take his darshan and often to make requests for spiritual or material benefits.

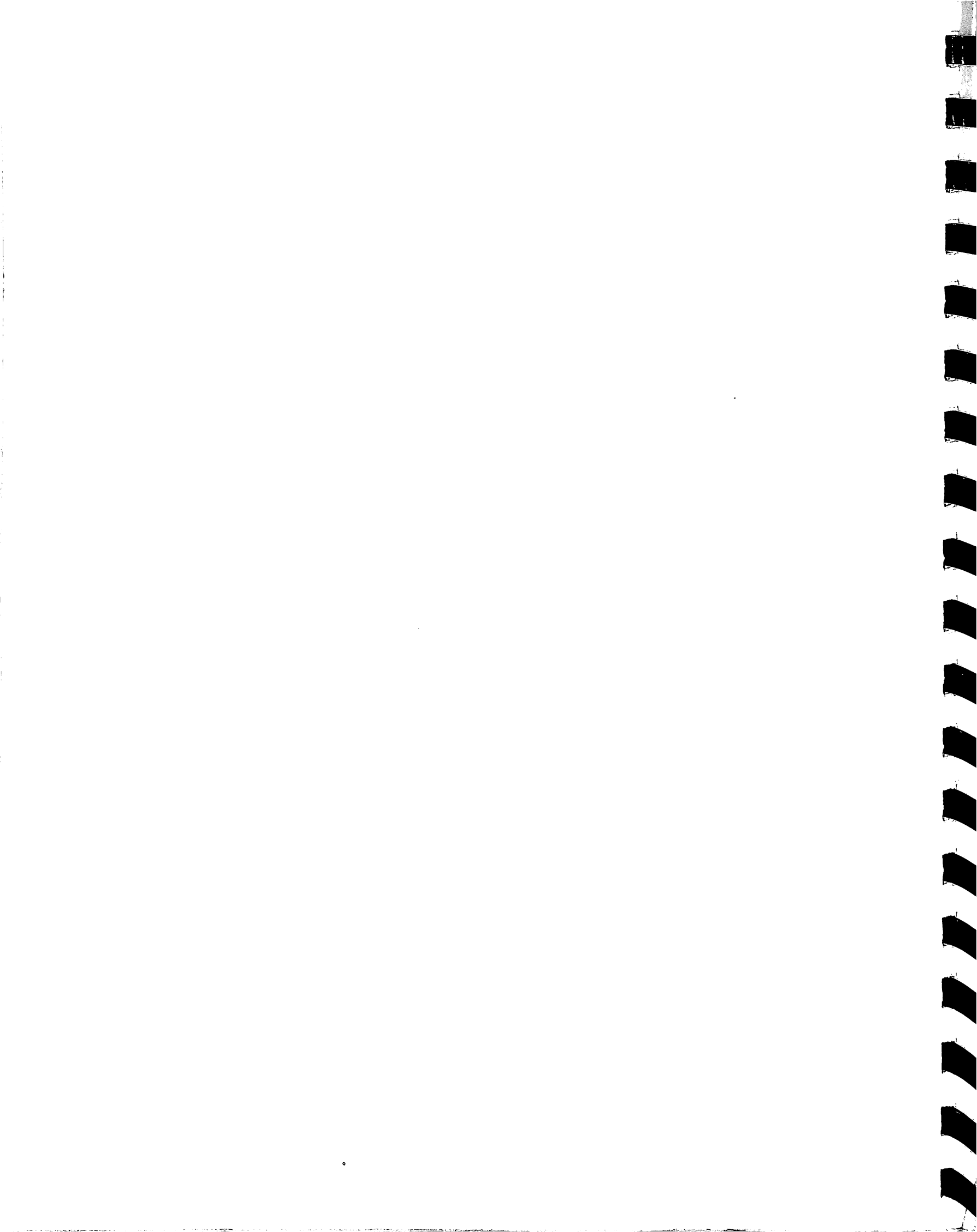


One day a poor farmer came before Baba relating a sad tale. It seems he had invested all of his money in land and now he was unable to find sufficient water on it. All of his efforts to dig wells had yielded nothing and he was now desperate. He lamented to Baba that he and his family would be ruined if they did not discover water soon. Prostrating himself before Baba he begged: "I have faith in you, oh Perfect One. I know that if you just tell me where to dig, I will definitely find water. Please help me."

Baba spelled out on his board: "How deep have you dug?" The farmer told him and Baba said: "Dig six feet more." The farmer was ecstatic and went away very happy.

After the farmer left, to the mandali's surprise, Baba began remonstrating with them: "What have I done?! Why did you not stop me? I have told this farmer that he will find water, but what if he doesn't? The entire village will be in an uproar! They will turn against us, thinking that Baba is a false master. We are new in this area. What will happen if they come to drive us out?" Taken aback, the mandali said little, thinking that surely Baba's advice would yield good results.

In a day or so, after all had forgotten the incident, Baba brought up the matter again with vigor: "How

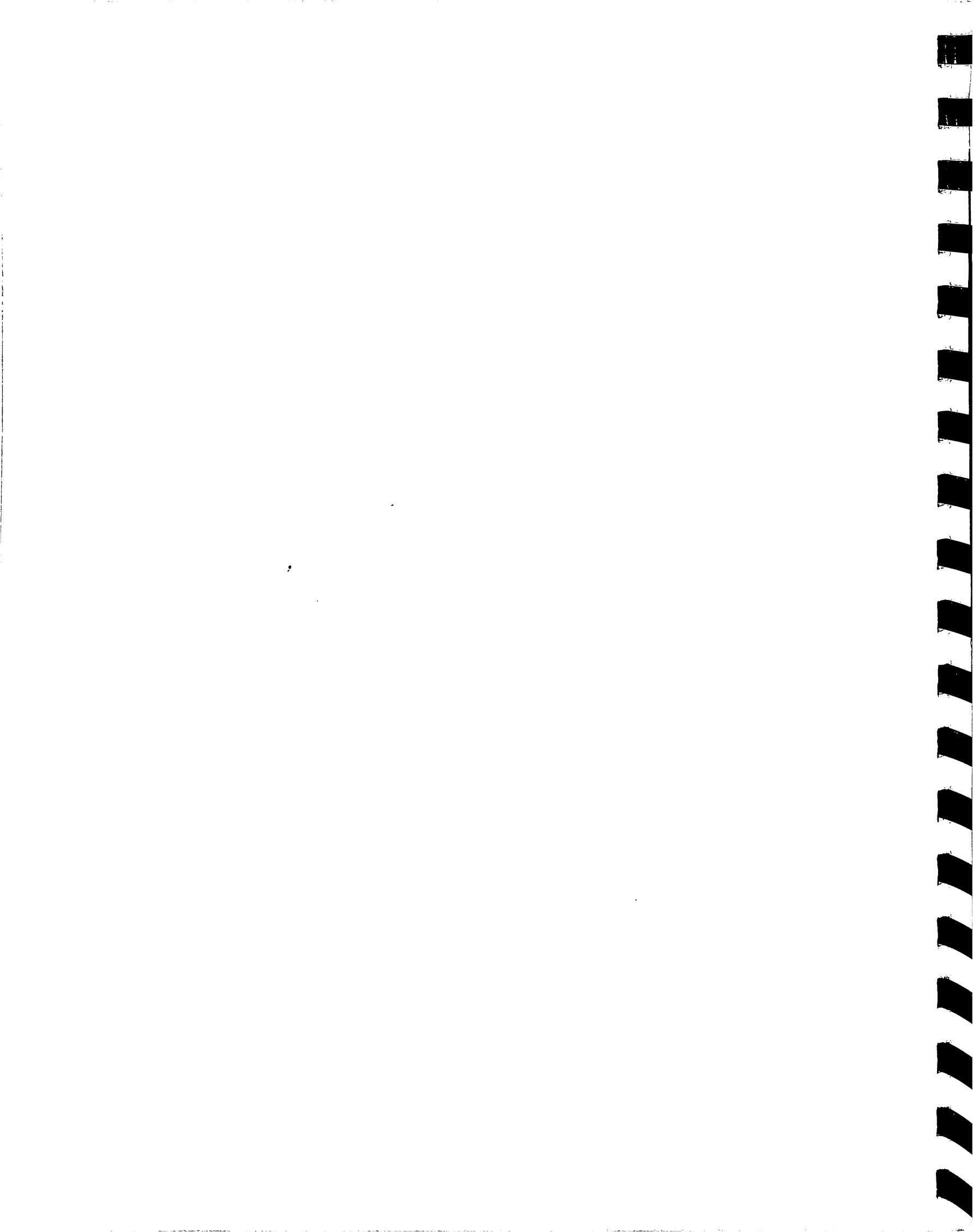


could this happen? We could be driven out! etc." The mandali themselves now began to be concerned. When the matter would die down, Baba again would bring it up, stirring them up even more.

Finally, after a week of this concern by Baba, the farmer returned. Even as he approached Baba urged the mandali to rush to the road to see if he was happy or angry and to see if the crowd with him looked threatening.

When the farmer arrived he and his entire village prostrated themselves before Baba, offering him flowers and fruits, and thanking him profusely for the water that they had found. Baba asked them what happened and they told Baba that after only three more feet water had gushed forth. Baba was pleased and embraced the farmer saying: "It was your faith that found the water."

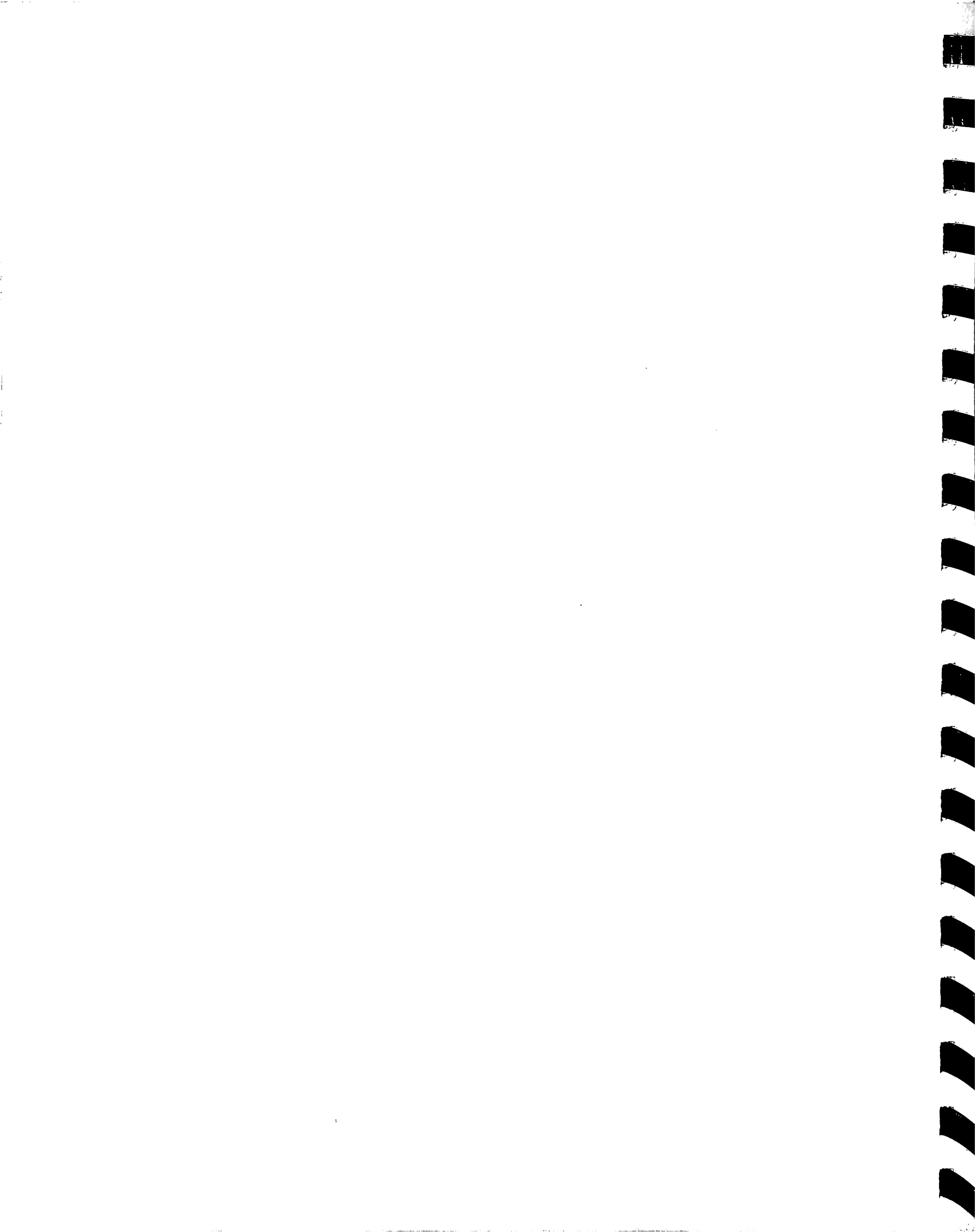
After the farmer left, the mandali began to ponder over the incident. They realized that they had long been searching for water at Meherabad with little success. No matter where they dug, even following Baba's suggestions, no water was to be had. Being young and still new in Baba's service, they began to wonder about their own lack of faith in Baba. Here was a farmer who barely knew Baba and so great was his faith that he quickly found water. So concerned did they become about this apparent disparity



that they began to question whether they were worthy to be in Baba's ashram.

Soon this discussion reached Baba who then called them together and asked them to speak out about what was bothering them. After hearing them out, Baba responded: "Yes. That farmer did have faith. But what would have happened if he had not found water? He would have renounced me. He would have rejected my divinity. But you, my dear companions, have faith of an entirely different order. Whether or not you find water, you will continue to love me and to accept me as your master. This is real conviction. That is why you are with me." In this and similar ways Baba trained his lovers to love him not for what he might give them, but for the sake of love alone.⁴¹

By "taking on" ignorance, Baba attempted to push his lovers to find the beloved within themselves. Baba demonstrated through his "not knowing" that he has full knowledge of each lover's heart and that he can be found only there. He would, for example, frequently ask "What are you thinking?" at unexpected but well-timed moments.⁴² He often evoked spontaneous answers from those around him, answers that sometimes surprised the person giving them. The story that follows is typical of this interaction:



An American woman arrived in India for one of the rare darshan programs arranged by Baba later in his life. She had no job at the time and had experienced recent rejections in her search for work. At the same time, out of love for Baba she had begun to compile stories for a possible book about him. After an initial embrace, Baba had the woman sit next to him. He then asked: "Do you have work?" Her mind raced. Simultaneously, she thought of the rejections and the little project she was doing. Spontaneously she replied: "Yes, your work Baba." Baba looked pleased. He gestured emphatically: "So be it, always."

The woman was surprised by her own answer, unsure of why she had said what she did. When she returned to America, however, she soon found herself more and more involved in direct work for Baba. Gradually she forgot about her former career and became involved in running a spiritual retreat dedicated to Baba.⁴³

The atmosphere around Baba was not of occult practices where the master reads the mind or predicts the future. Instead, in a natural and informal way, Baba encouraged his lovers to feel that his guidance came from within. Remarkably, though Baba asked questions and appeared not to know certain things, those who lived with



Baba and those who visited him often always felt that he knew everything. One of the mandali summarizes their view this way:

You may have seen images or paintings of Hindu deities with weapons in their hands--spears, swords and other weapons.

However, Meher Baba's weapon was Ignorance which He displayed to make us believe that He knew nothing. In this Divine Pretence that made it easy to relate to Him, He would ask loving questions of strangers and in return their love would flow out to Him as to a great and trusted friend.⁴⁴

The conviction of Baba's lovers that, even today, he knows everything rests on the experience that Baba responds to every longing of the heart. In his "ignorance" Baba worked to help his lovers with their inner conflicts and desires. He wished them to feel that he was working in their lives constantly, and he would always do so. His lovers cite hundreds of incidents, like the one that follows, to indicate how Baba knows and responds to the lover's heart:

During Meher Baba's stay at Meher Spiritual Center in Myrtle Beach in 1958, he was on one occasion carried down to the beach. While there Baba asked a number of people in turns to carry an umbrella in order to shield him from the harsh rays of the sun. A woman in the crowd describes her experience of the day:

On the next to the last day, Baba was carried down to the beach. After placing his feet in the water, he



was carried back to the car. Prior to that, inside myself, I was longing to carry the umbrella. Several were called to do so. I kept hoping, but Baba did not ask me. Inside, I regret to say, I thought: "Does Baba really know every longing? If he did, he would ask me to carry the umbrella!" After we returned to the Center, Baba sent Adi to call me to the Lagoon Cabin. Baba called me to him and gestured: "Was there something you wanted to tell me while we were at the beach?"

I knew then that he knew my heart. I felt ashamed and I cried out: "I just wanted to carry the umbrella and to tell you that I love you." He folded me in his arms tightly and then said: "Now, isn't this better?" As I stepped to the door to leave, Baba stopped me with a firm gesture and said through Adi: "Old friend. Very old friend. I love her very much." Then he gestured for me to leave.⁴⁵

Baba expressed no interest in proofs of his divinity. When miracles were attributed to him, he denied knowing about them, saying he had not come to perform miracles.⁴⁶ Baba did, however, have intense interest in the smallest details of his lovers' relationship to him, and took every opportunity to demonstrate his love for them. "I am," he said, "the slave of the love of my lovers."⁴⁷ Although Baba has been called unpredictable, his lovers claim that all of his actions arose out of his compassion for humanity. They tell countless stories to illustrate that he could and can always be depended on in matters of the heart, no matter how strange his actions may at first appear. An example of this type of story is told by one of the mandali:



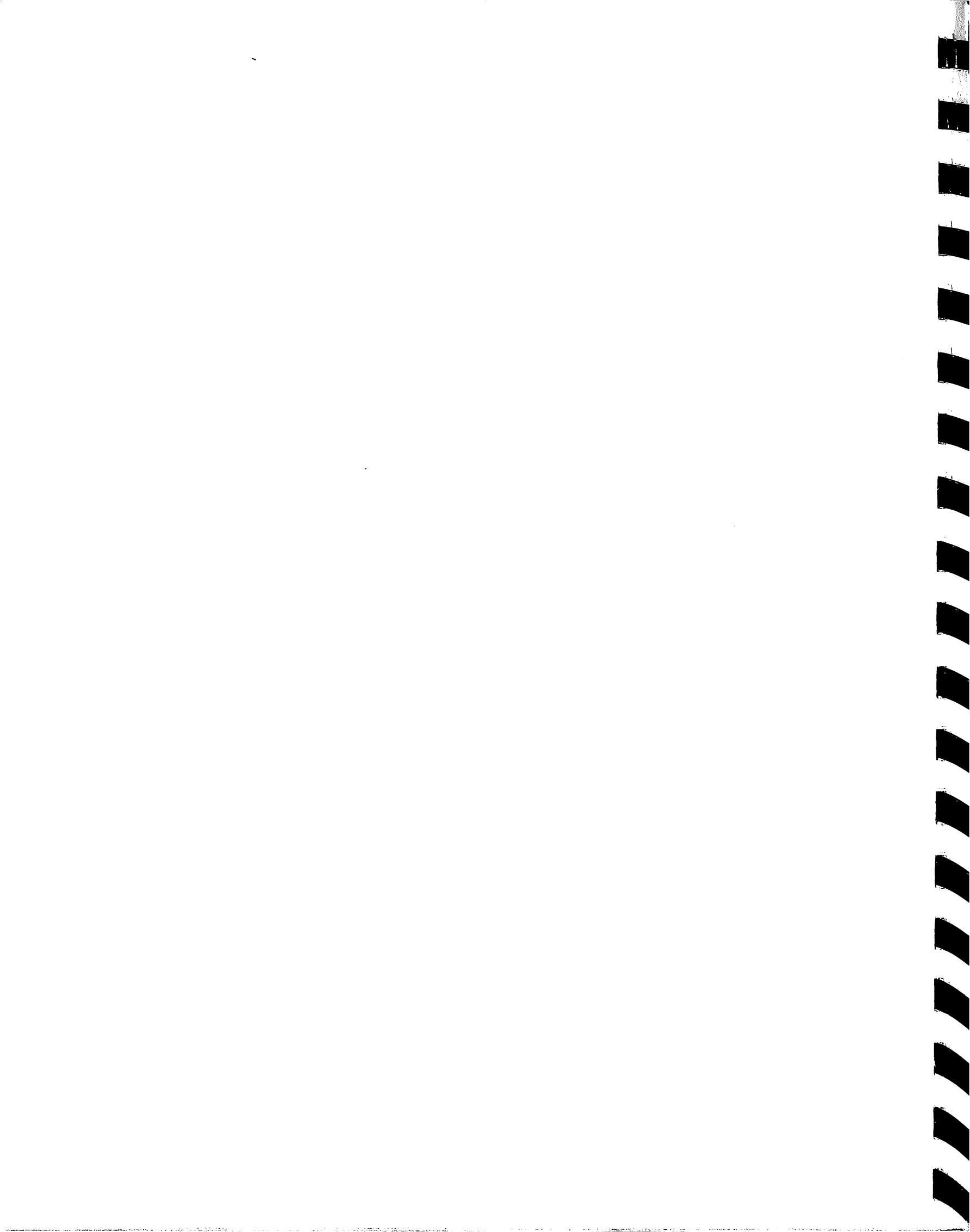
At one town, Masulipatnam, Baba gave his darshan to thousands of people from morning until late in the evening. Later, Baba proceeded in the car to the house of one of his close followers, but instead of going inside he entered a lane inhabited by poor hutment dwellers. Baba began turning down one lane and the next, as if he knew the way to some predetermined destination. The men mandali followed of course, and behind them were many of the townspeople.

Baba walked on, not indicating where he was headed, until finally he came to a poor hut near the seashore. There was only a single kerosene lamp inside, so it was very dark, but all could see the outline of an old man standing in the doorway. Baba indicated that he wanted to go inside, and requested the old man to come and sit near him for five minutes alone. Baba was absolutely quiet when he sat down, yet his fingers were moving rapidly. After remaining there for five minutes, absorbed in his work, he left.

The mandali found out later that the old man belonged to the lowest group; he was a Harijan or Untouchable. Since the caste system was strictly enforced in Andhra at that time, the old man had not gone to Baba's public darshan program because there were higher caste Hindus in attendance. Before Baba had arrived at his hut, the man had been thinking sadly, "How unfortunate I am! God has come, and he is giving darshan. Most of the people are there, but I can't even have a glimpse of him! Oh, if I could but see him!"

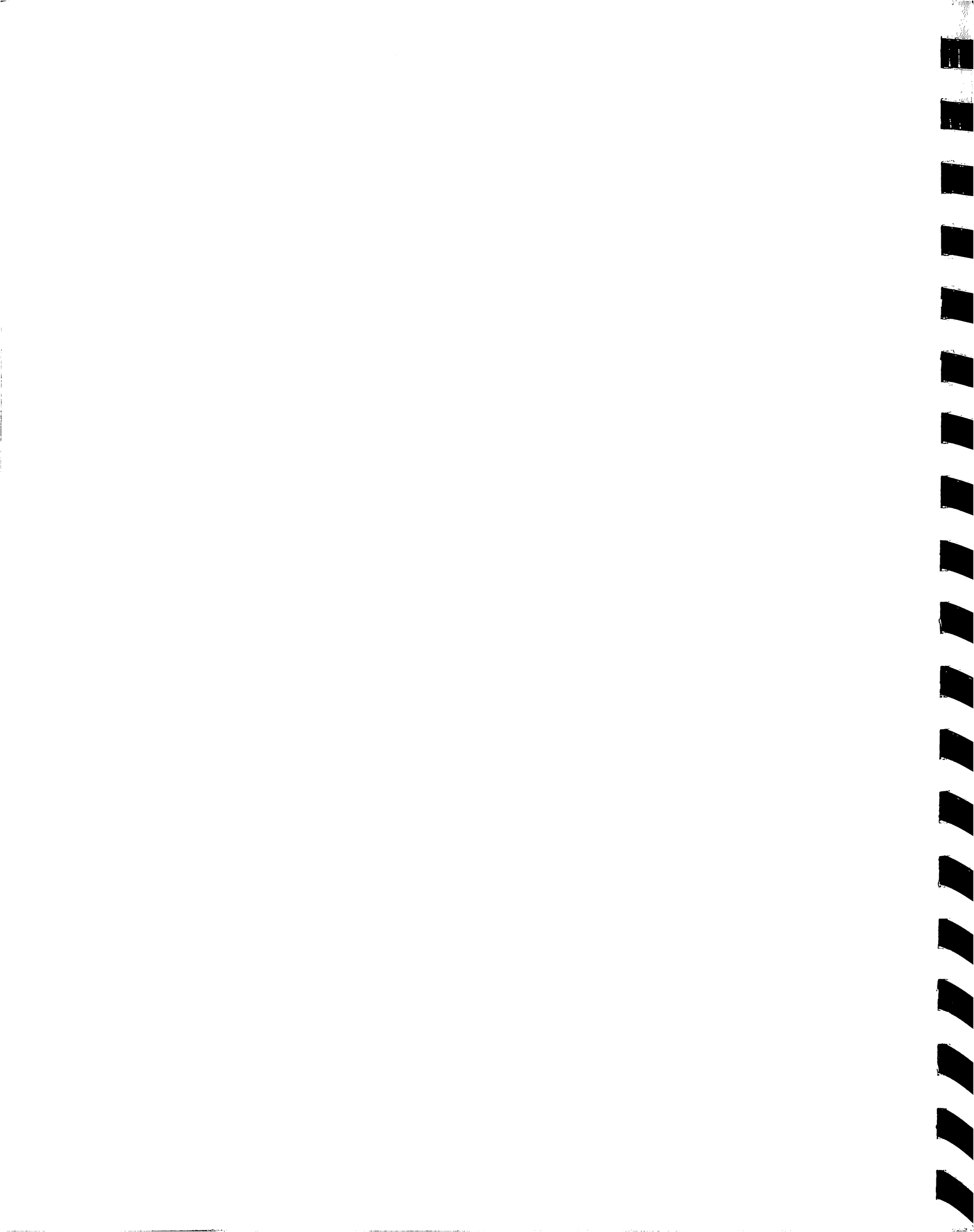
God not only heard this poor Untouchable's prayer, he also answered it and came to his very own house. The man was so elated when Baba requested he sit near him inside that he could not utter a single word. He was dumbfounded with no words to express his gratitude for his good fortune in having Baba there.⁴⁹

For his part, Baba did not explain his actions except to indicate that everything he did was part of his universal work of awakening. Often the significance of something Baba said or did would not become clear until years later. The mandali claim that they are only now



7. discovering the meaning behind Baba's behavior. As an example, one of the mandali cites the time he was reading a letter to Baba from a lover in Bombay. Baba interrupted and asked if the letter was from a certain lover. "No," the disciple replied, "the letter is from another fellow. Baba, you are thinking of someone else." More of the letter was read, and again Baba stopped him asking if he was sure that it wasn't a particular fellow Baba had in mind. "No," the disciple said more emphatically this time, "The man you are thinking of is not in Bombay; he is temporarily in New Zealand. This letter is from someone else entirely." After this happened yet a third time, the disciple thought with some irritation: "Why doesn't this Avatar remember his lovers!" After finishing the letter the disciple had a sudden thought. "Baba," he said, "Now that you have mentioned that fellow who went to New Zealand, it comes to me that today is his birthday." Baba looked surprised and pleased. "Cable him," Baba said, "Send him my love and blessings and tell him that I am thinking of him."

Years later, after Baba left the body, the rest of the story came out. One day the lover who had been stationed in New Zealand came to Meherazad to see the mandali. Prodded to relate what he had been doing, the



man explained how he had gone to New Zealand to work. He was there for some time without his family and he became very lonely. "If you must know," he said, "I fell into deep despair. I felt as though no one remembered me. One year, on my birthday, I was feeling particularly depressed. I even began to doubt that Baba loved me or remembered me. I felt suicidal. As I was thinking these thoughts, the doorbell rang and there was the postman with a cable. He waited because in that country if its good news they hope for a tip and if its bad news they commiserate and leave. But the postman was confused because I was joyous and crying at the same time! It was a cable from my beloved reminding me that he was thinking of me and that he loved me." The disciple concluded the story by saying that even when Baba appears not to know he is always alert to his lovers. He knows the heart of each one.⁵⁰

Remembrance

Once the beloved awakens himself in the heart of the lover, it is the duty of the lover to keep the beloved awake at all times. Remembrance of the beloved with love is the essential practice of the lover-beloved relationship:



Complete identification of the Master with the spiritual ideal is responsible for removing such barriers as might exist between the aspirant and the master. This gives rise to the release of unrestrained love for the Master and leads to the meditation of the heart, which consists in constant thinking about the master with uninterrupted flow of limitless love. Such love annihilates the illusion of separateness, which seems to divide the aspirant from the Master, and it has a spontaneity which is virtually without parallel in other forms of meditation. In its final stages mediation of the heart is accompanied by unbounded joy and utter forgetfulness of self.⁵¹

Being alert to the presence of the beloved provides the lover with a constant source of love and guidance according to Baba:

I am nearer to you than your own breath. Remember me and I am with you and my love will guide you.⁵²

The name of the beloved, then, connects the lover to the God within.⁵³ For this connection to bring about genuine spiritual growth it is very important for the aspirant to have a God-realized master. Only one who has become one with the Self can guide the Self in every finite self.⁵⁴

Remembrance of the beloved is not, for Baba, mere repetition of the beloved's name. The name must be remembered with love if the lover wishes to awaken the beloved in the heart:

Just as when we breathe we do not pay attention to our breathing, and in sound sleep it is automatic and our constant companion, and still we do not pay attention to it, so Baba is there all the time and therefore you don't feel him. Although I am "taking" my own name continuously, I have come to hear it repeated



by my lovers, and even though I were deaf, I would hear it if you repeated it only once with all your heart in it.⁵⁵

Keeping the beloved awake in the heart allows the master to do his work of ego-elimination. In love with the beloved, the lover forgets the limited self and more willingly gives up the desires of the ego-mind. The lover-beloved relationship is therefore a process of freeing consciousness from sanskritic bonds in the individualized atma. Love can make you, according to Baba, "burn all your desires and longings and kindle the one and only desire and longing--union with the Divine Beloved. To be worthy of the Divine gift of this love, let all your thoughts, words and deeds be controlled by the constant remembrance of God."⁵⁶

As we saw in Chapter I, the problem of trying to eliminate the ego is that the ego cannot eliminate itself. The accumulated sanskaras of evolution and reincarnation necessitate a life of ego-consciousness which creates a seemingly endless cycle of fresh impressions. The only way out, in Baba's view, is to somehow free oneself from living out of the false "I":

It is, therefore, most necessary for the aspirant to keep free from the idea "I do this and I do that." This does not mean to keep clear of all activity through fear of developing this form of the ego. He may have to take to the life of action to wear out the



ego that he has developed. So he is caught up in the dilemma that if he keeps inactive he does nothing toward breaking through the prison of his ego-life, and if he takes to a life of action, he is faced with the possibility of his ego being transferred to these new acts.⁵⁷

Baba provided the way out of this dilemma by offering himself as the beloved who replaces the ego as the center of the lover's consciousness. By remembering the beloved in the heart, the lover, in effect, creates what Baba called a "provisional ego":

Before beginning anything, the aspirant thinks it is not he who is doing it but the master who is getting it done through him; and after doing it he does not claim the results of action or enjoy them, but offers them to the master. By so training his mind he creates a new ego which, though provisional, is able to become a source of confidence, enthusiasm and energy. This new ego is spiritually harmless, since it derives its life from the master and since, when the time comes, it can be thrown away.⁵⁸

As the lover becomes more and more centered in the beloved, the lover becomes more centered in the Self. Fewer and fewer new impressions are created as the ego becomes increasingly less active. In this way the beloved draws the lover ever-closer in love and consequently ever-closer toward the goal of Self-realization. Remembrance is, therefore, a gradual ego death. As Baba put it:

The less you think of yourself and the more you think of Baba, the sooner the ego goes and Baba remains. When you--"ego"--go away entirely, I am one with you. So bit by bit, you have to go... So better think of me when you eat, sleep, see or hear. Enjoy



all, don't discard anything, but think it is Baba-- Baba who enjoys, Baba who is eating. It is Baba sleeping soundly and when you wake up, remember it is Baba getting up! Keep this one thought constantly with you.⁵⁹

Though remembrance of the beloved, in Baba's understanding, is forgetfulness of ego, it is not avoidance of suffering. In fact, the more the lover remembers the beloved, the more all hidden aspects of the ego are brought to the surface to be confronted.⁶⁰ It is the job of the beloved to help the lover in the necessary experience of all the opposites of existence. At the same time, the beloved gives the lover the love and support needed to work through ego conflicts. The lover grows to feel detached from the complexities of ego-life, realizing slowly that the ego is not the true Self.⁶¹

The lover who remembers the beloved must be prepared for the master to cleanse the heart of all desires.

Lovers of Baba report that this can be a painful process:

At Meherabad, it was very necessary at first that Baba supervise every activity in the ashram because, although we all loved Baba, still with our very different nationalities and different ages, life, as I have said, did not always run smoothly. Baba, of course, did not expect all would go smoothly with such assertive egos. Had He wanted continual peace, He would have selected very different types. We all had too many sanskaras, more than we ever suspected while we were still out in the world. Loosening up the ego must have been for Baba not unlike extracting a tooth, painful to the patient, but most satisfying to the



dentist! And as Baba saw the ego slowly disintegrating under His ceaseless drilling, there He would be, ready to fill the void with His love and presence...

There were often arguments, discussions or clashes of opinion regarding how things should be done. We were fussy over food; Indian food was too spicy, English food too insipid... To Baba, dislikes were as significant as likes. "Both," He said, "are desires of the ego, and hence both have to go." ...It was, however, just these daily happenings that afforded Baba His opportunity to work up a crisis of ego-elimination and bring us a step further on the Path toward God, through control, obedience, and a mind concentrated on Him. "Any time a person's thoughts turn truly to me, I am truly with them," He told us.⁶²

Whether physically near him or not, Baba promised his lovers that his name, when remembered in the heart, would help them to cope with the ego desires he would bring to the surface:

When you feel angry or get lustful thoughts, at once remember me wholeheartedly. Let my name serve the purpose of a net around you, so that like mosquitoes, the thoughts may keep buzzing around you, yet they will not be able to "bite" you.⁶³

In this way, thoughts can come and be recognized without necessarily being put into action. If, Baba said, "in spite of being very angry, you refrain from expressing anger, it is indeed a great achievement."⁶⁴

Remembrance gives the beloved internal permission to root out all that is false and to destroy ignorance in the lover. This work of love, stressed Baba, is not an avoidance of karma, although the beloved may speed up the process of working through an individual's karmic



bindings. At any point on the journey, the beloved, being one with the real Self, knows exactly what the lover needs in order to progress spiritually.⁶⁵ The work of the lover is remembrance in order that the beloved continue his work of ego-elimination:

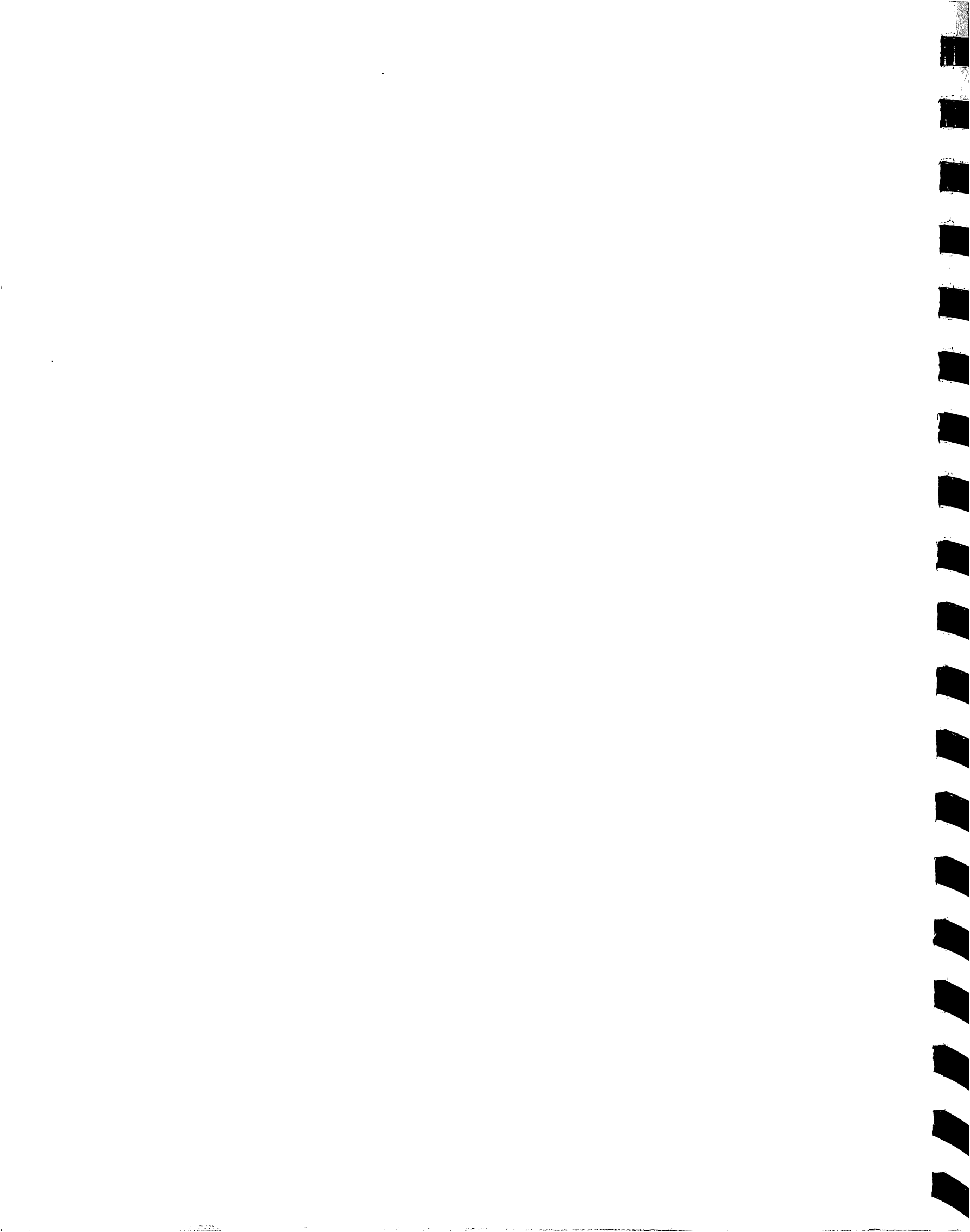
I am in everybody's heart, but I am sleeping there. It is my old, old habit. In order to awaken me, you should always call out to me and say, "Baba, Baba, Baba..." continuously. Then I, who am asleep in your heart, will not find any pleasure in remaining asleep. Let alone sleep, I shall not find time even to doze... I shall slowly be awakened in your heart by hearing your constant call...your taking my name constantly.

Once I am awake in your heart, you too would awake, and remain awake for all time. Therefore repeat my name constantly and awake me in your hearts so that you become awake for all time.⁶⁶

The transformation of the lover from ego-centered to God-centered is a long journey, though joyous as it is enlivened by love. Remembrance of the beloved gives rise to ever-deepening love and obedience until at last the will of the lover surrenders to the will of the beloved:

Spiritual advancement is a succession of one surrender after another, until the goal of the final surrender of the separate ego-life is achieved. The last surrender is the complete surrender, equivalent to the attainment of Truth, which is the ultimate goal of spiritual advancement.⁶⁷

As the ego surrenders to the will of the beloved, the lover experiences greater detachment from the world. For Baba, however, this detachment means non-attachment of



the ego, but not lack of concern for others. As the ego diminishes, a genuine interest in the welfare of others increases proportionately. The lover grows more and more aware of the beloved within every living thing. The lover is called, Baba said, to act selflessly:

The only Real Knowledge is the knowledge that God is the inner dweller in good people and so-called bad, in saint and so-called sinner. This knowledge requires you to help all equally as circumstances demand, without expectation of reward, and when compelled to take part in a dispute, to act without the slightest trace of enmity or hatred; to try to make others happy with brotherly or sisterly feeling for each one; to harm no one in thought, word, or deed, not even those who harm you.⁶⁸

Concern for others is not simply the result of ego loss, it is also a way to deeper remembrance of the beloved. Baba asked his lovers to remember him by serving the needs of others:

Start learning to love God by loving those whom you cannot love. The more you remember others with kindness and generosity, the more you forget yourself, and when you completely forget yourself, you find God.⁶⁹

Such service is liberating, according to Baba, as long as it is done for and through the beloved. Service done with selfish motives is spiritually harmful to the server and provides little help to the one served.⁷⁰ That is why service must be done with the awareness that it is the beloved who serves and the beloved who is being served:



I am the Ancient One, the one residing in every heart. Therefore, love others, make others happy, serve others, even at discomfort to yourself; this is to love me.⁷¹

Remembrance, finally, enables the lover to participate in the universal work of the beloved as Avatar.

Unconsciously, Baba said, his lovers serve all by loving and serving him because the Avatar is in all:

The unity and solidarity of the inner plane make it possible for the master to use his disciple as a medium for his work even when the disciple is unconscious of serving this larger purpose of the master. This is possible because the disciple, through his love and understanding of the master as well as his obedience and surrender, establishes a rapport with the master and comes in tune with him... The master feeds upon the love of his disciples and uses the forces released by them for his universal work.⁷²

Inner Guidance

Following the Avatar as the divine beloved requires complete obedience. Obedience, Baba said, is made possible through love and is actually a higher form of love.⁷³ The question naturally arises: How is the lover to discern the will of the beloved, especially after the Avatar leaves his body? For an answer, we need to take a closer look at the dynamics of the inner link Meher Baba promised that he would establish with his lovers.⁷⁴

In his lifetime Baba gave many direct orders that were easy to grasp, if not always easy to carry out.



Baba's orders were part of his training of the mandali and lovers throughout the world. Some instructions, as when he asked all of his lovers to pray certain prayers daily for a period of months, had, in some way known only to Baba, a connection with his universal work.⁷⁵ Other orders concerned directions for an individual lover's daily life. In all cases, Baba asked for one hundred percent obedience:

The beginning of real love is obedience, and the highest aspect of this love, which surpasses that of love itself is that which culminates in perfect obedience to and supreme resignation to the Will and the Wish of the Beloved. In this love are embodied all the yogas known to saints and seekers.⁷⁶

Baba's orders served the dual purpose of carrying out what he called his "universal work" while at the same time training his lovers. An example from the 1920s reveals how difficult obedience around Baba could be:

Occasionally the members of the ashram were ordered to fast for a day or two. But this did not exempt them from work. On the contrary, their work was increased. At other times they were ordered by Baba to find hundreds of blind and lame beggars and bring them to Manzil-E-Meem (Baba's ashram) for the purpose of feeding and clothing them. Since beggars are plentiful all over India, this seemed an easy order to fulfill. But Baba did not want the able-bodied ones--only those who were disabled. This made their task more difficult. It was often complicated further by the fact that the disciples--who were restricted to eight pie (five cents) a day--would find themselves at the other end of the city without the necessary money for transportation home. To persuade the mendicants to follow them to a strange house--



where, they assured them, they would be bountifully fed and newly clothed--and at the same time to borrow money from them for carfare, was another of those experiences, which tested both their ingenuity and fortitude!⁷⁷

In those early days, every detail of life was seen to by Baba. As this excerpt from a diary kept in the 1930s suggests, his orders could be very specific:

Baba's orders had to be obeyed to the letter. Be assured that if you did anything contrary to what He said, He was sure to know about it and would call you to explain. No one who has not lived near Baba can ever believe how every detail of everybody's life throughout the day was His concern. It might be your food, your health, your bath, your special work, your home ties, but whatever it was it was also Baba's interest. How he also did His spiritual or universal work was a puzzle to me, but He said, "This must be so. I work all the time whether I am thinking of the butter, bread or milk. I do my universal work simultaneously. I cannot rest unless I work. When I work, that is my rest. My work is in restlessness."⁷⁸

In the last two decades of Baba's life, beginning with the "New Life," a shift took place in the way in which Baba guided his lovers. No longer did he oversee the details of a large ashram and he gave fewer and fewer direct orders to lovers throughout the world. As the periods of Baba's seclusions began to lengthen, many restrictions were placed on the contact his lovers could have with him. No one was to visit except during infrequent darshan programs, and, after 1958, no one was to write except in an emergency or for special work.⁷⁹



When one of the mandali wondered why Baba was so much in seclusion, not allowing his lovers to see him, Baba replied:

My work is different. It is not my work to travel continuously and hold darshan programs simply to allow people to bow down at my feet. It is not my work to give discourses, to perform miracles, or to attract crowds to me. I do not come for this. I come for all. I come to awaken all... You have no idea what I am really doing. The more you stretch a bow, the greater the distance the arrow will fly and the harder it will hit the target. I am in seclusion now, yes, but I am drawing back my bow farther and farther so that when I release the arrow of my love, it will strike deep and wound the hearts of all.⁸⁰

The same disciple pressed the point, saying how great Baba's lovers were. They only wished for his darshan.
Baba said:

Yes, you are right. My lovers are really great. But what do you mean by this? You have been with me for so many years, yet you still don't understand what I am doing for them? If they come to me, what will they see? This physical form. This is nothing. (Then he made the sign for his seclusion work, hitting his thigh with his fist, and continued.) This is the real thing I am giving them, and you will witness with your own eyes what will happen to those who have not seen me physically. Though they have not seen me physically, they are with me and I am working for them. They are present here.⁸¹

Baba repeatedly said that in his seclusion he was guiding his lovers from within and working to establish this inner connection for those who would come to love him after he left his body. He saw his work, on a very personal level, as the restoration in the world of the



possibility of knowing God within. For those who love the Avatar, he promised to awaken the beloved in their hearts as a source of constant guidance. As he entered into deeper seclusion and silence to "complete" his universal work, he claimed that external links were no longer necessary. The last message he gave on the alphabet board, before giving it up for hand gestures alone, stressed that all the work he had done in his life was to awaken an internal connection. "Hence," he said, "external contact is no longer necessary."⁸²

Gradually, it became clear to his lovers that Baba had shifted from external to internal guidance. In reply to questions or requests for instructions, he began to tell his lovers that they would hear his answer within themselves. He promised them that he was always with them, guiding them. "Don't worry," he said, "Be happy. Do your best and I am there helping you."⁸³

To receive this guidance, Baba said, the lover must be open to the beloved and willing to obey him. To keep open to Baba, as we have seen, means to remember him as much as possible, thereby diminishing the ego-mind of the lover. Inner guidance, Baba indicated, is given through the heart, that aspect of the ego-mind that harbors all desires and feelings. As ego desires recede in wake of



the desire for the beloved, the heart is "purified" and thus ready to receive the guidance of the beloved. Remembrance also quiets the intellect allowing the beloved's guidance in the form of intuitive feeling to be noticed and carried out by the lover.⁸⁴

By willingness to obey, Baba meant that the lover should, in the midst of daily life, try to see and feel him in everything. This, he said, was his wish:

The lover has to keep the wish of the Beloved. My wish for my lovers is as follows:

1. Do not shirk your responsibilities.
2. Attend faithfully to your worldly duties, but keep always at the back of your mind that all this is Baba's.
3. When you feel happy, think: "Baba wants me to be happy." When you suffer, think: "Baba wants me to suffer."
4. Be resigned to every situation and think honestly and sincerely: "Baba has placed me in this situation."
5. With the understanding that Baba is in everyone, try to help and serve others.
6. I say with my divine authority to each and all that whosoever takes my name at the time of breathing his last comes to me: so do not forget to remember me in your last moments. Unless you start remembering me from now on, it will be difficult to remember me when your end approaches. You should start practicing from now on. Even if you take my name only once every day, you will not forget to remember me in your dying moments.⁸⁵

Everything and anything, for Baba, can be a source of guidance from the beloved if the lover is alert. Because the beloved is actively awake in the lover's heart, all of



life becomes an opportunity to grow closer to him in love.

Alertness to the activity and guidance of the beloved can be deepened, Baba suggested, by learning to listen. He advised his lovers to pause and think of him silently in any difficult situation, surrendering it all to him, and he would be there helping and guiding them. If they cannot do this, Baba said, then at least think of him silently for five minutes when rising each morning and again when retiring at night.⁸⁶ If the lover listens in this way, the day's events will unfold the beloved's answer. Baba's lovers frequently report that by listening to Baba in these ways, they feel him with them in the challenges of daily life. By remembering the beloved they are, in effect, bringing their true Self into play as they confront their problems. Thus in any given situation, they claim to "sense" what Baba is doing or would have them do. They feel that this intuition is from Baba.⁸⁷

For the lover of the Avatar, then, life is a meditation. Loving remembrance and a willingness to obey purify the heart, allowing the lover to hear and feel the guidance of the beloved. A deep inner connection is sustained by the alertness of the lover listening to the wish of the beloved. This connection also may be strengthened by prayer which is, according to Baba, an interior dialogue



with the beloved. Baba always encouraged his lovers to speak their hearts to him honestly and fully. Some lovers of Baba do this silently; others write or speak aloud to the beloved. All, however, attempt to make him their constant companion.⁸⁸ Life with the beloved produces, Baba said, the highest form of prayer--the prayer which unites the lover with his own true Self:

The ideal prayer to the Lord is nothing more than spontaneous praise of His being. You praise Him, not in the spirit of bargain but in the spirit of self-forgetful appreciation of what He really is. You praise Him because He is praiseworthy... In the entire spiritual panorama of the universe nothing is more sublime than a spontaneous prayer. It gushes out of the human heart, filled with appreciative joy. It is self expression of the freed spirit without any actualization of a motive. In its highest form, prayer leaves no room for the illusory diarchy of the lover and the beloved. It is a return to one's own being.⁸⁹

Even in the context of a life of prayer and meditation, guidance from the beloved is not unambiguous. The lover must still deal with the many conflicting voices of the subconscious. In fact, as we noted earlier, remembrance of the beloved intensifies ego conflicts because, once awake in the heart, the beloved must bring everything to "the light of consciousness."⁹⁰ The desires of the ego, caused by sanskritic bindings, must all be brought up and rooted out for ego-elimination and Self-realization to take place.⁹¹ How, then, can the guidance of the beloved be discerned in the midst of this upheaval within the

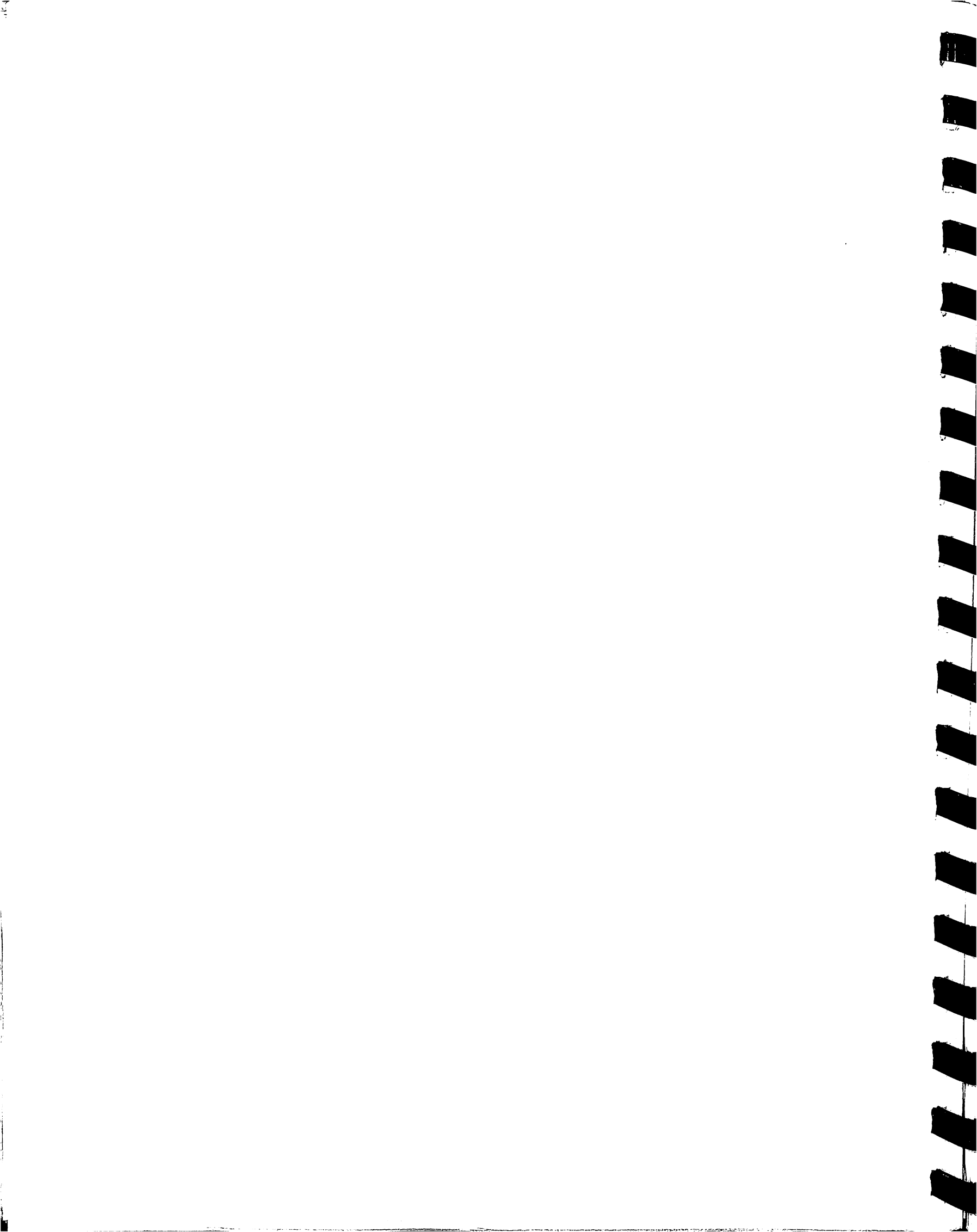


psyche? Or, to put it another way, how can the lover know the will of the beloved in any given situation?

To know and follow the guidance of the beloved, Baba stressed that the lover must learn the ways of the beloved. In the "divinely human example" of the Avatar, the aspirant discovers how the beloved lives and acts, and how the beloved would have the lover act.⁹² The life and message of the Avatar do not give the lover a rigid set of rules for behavior. Instead, clues are offered suggesting how the lover may get to know the beloved in his or her own heart.⁹³

Wherever lovers of Baba gather, stories are told illustrating the ways of love. Little interpretation is given so as to allow personal application by the individual listener.⁹⁴ The stories often focus on general themes such as Baba's compassion or his ever-present sense of humor. They detail how Baba approached difficulties in and through his daily activities which included everything from card playing to mast work. Through these stories, as well as through pictures and film, his lovers get to know Baba personally.⁹⁵

The stories of Baba help to shape the lives of his lovers by giving them a sense of "Baba's way" in the events of each day. Baba's followers often cite, for



example, his practical nature and sense of humor as evident in situations they find themselves facing. They believe that Baba still works in ways quite similar to the ways in which he worked when in the physical body. They base this belief in part on the testimony of disciples who lived with Baba and felt his inner working. A typical story of this kind is given by a British disciple who lived in India with Baba:

It seemed as if Baba were asking for an impossibility when, about a year after the war was over, He told me that He was sending me back to the West, and that I must go to the United States and there teach ballet. I put some of the difficulties of doing this to Baba: How was I to get a job? Steamship passage to America was hard to get unless one was doing important business and making money for England.

Baba smiled happily, patted me on the back, and sent me off anyway.

As always, unexpected things completely out of my control (and only Baba could have so timed them) came into action, and within a few months I, plus job, had landed in America.

Two weeks after my landing in England, American Ballet Theater came over to give performances. Antony Tudor, their chief choreographer, was an Englishman, a great friend of mine, who coincidentally had left England for America about the same time that I had left for India. He spoke to Lucia Chase, the director of the company, about me, and she invited me to come to America and give lessons to the company. I accepted thankfully.

The next things were visas and travel accommodations. Even after the war, when most people were shabby, I could probably have been classed as one of the seven worst-dressed women in England. Therefore, when I went to the American Embassy, a most efficient young man frankly looked me up and down and said "Why do you want to go to America?" I explained about Ballet Theatre and I showed him my contract. His



attitude immediately changed. He beamed on me, forgot my clothes, and said, "I am a balletomane. Sit down and let me see what I can do." He asked very few questions, again stated his love for ballet, and the next thing, I was walking out of the Embassy with the required papers! Since I had the papers and the contract, the steamship company made no difficulties. Baba's order was fulfilled. By New Year's Day 1947, I was teaching in San Francisco.⁹⁶

This story is quoted at length because it illustrates, as do literally thousands of similar stories told by Baba's lovers past and present, how the lover feels that the beloved is constantly active in the lover's life. In practical and natural ways, often with humorous overtones, Baba is seen to be working to help and guide the lover. Once the lover gives her life to the beloved, everything she does becomes part of the beloved's work. For lovers of the Avatar this is not only the work of ego-elimination in the lover, but also the "universal work" of transforming consciousness. The lover comes to feel that wherever she is sent and whatever happens it is all part of the work of the Avatar.⁹⁷

Other clues about the ways of the beloved are found in the places Baba lived and by contact with those who lived with him. Baba called this getting the "scent" of the beloved.⁹⁸ Today people come from all over the world to be with the mandali and hear stories, and to visit Meherazad and Meherabad. There is, however, no authority



centered in these people or places. The mandali continue to remind new lovers of Baba's admonition to find Baba within themselves. They warn against having any authority other than the beloved:

However, it so happens that some pilgrims who come here, begin to look up to us with great admiration thinking we are special, first among them, and that is quite wrong... We are simply among them as Baba lovers and if that relationship is properly understood, then I am sure that posterity will take the right road... We are not hiding anything from you and neither do we try to pose as simpletons while possessed of spiritual status. No, our status is at the feet of our Lord and when one has His feet in one's grip, one has all of Him... There is no greater status than being a lover of the Lord.⁹⁹

Baba gave additional clues about his ways in his many discourses and messages. As we saw in Chapter I, these words provide a framework for seeing the world as Baba would have one see it, and they "point to" the truth that he brings. Baba did not give a creed or set of rules, but rather a general description of the spiritual life. In the discourses he held before the aspirant the ideal of a life free of "lust, greed, and anger," but left it to the individual to discover how to achieve this goal in his or her own life.¹⁰⁰ If the lover has faith in the master and places him at the center of life, then Baba promised he would work directly with each one in the process of spiritual growth:



The condition of progress on the path is guidance from the master according to the immediate needs of the aspirant. What the master expects is that the aspirant will do his best. He does not expect immediate transformation of consciousness. Time is an important factor in spiritual advancement as in material endeavors; and when the master has given a spiritual impetus to the aspirant, he waits until the help thus given is assimilated. Too much spirituality may have unhealthy reactions. The master selects the moment when his intervention is beneficial, and having intervened he waits with patience till the aspirant needs further help.¹⁰¹

The lover can "do his best" if he remembers the beloved in everything that he does and gives the results to the master. A general guideline Baba gave for action is to seek the pleasure of the beloved in everything one does. Pleasing him means:

Think of things that you will not hesitate to think in my presence; speak words that you will not hesitate to speak in my presence; do things that you will not hesitate to do in my presence.¹⁰²

The effort to please the beloved in every thought, word and deed is, for Baba, the essence of obedience and the goal of all inner promptings from him. Eventually, this effort ends in complete surrender to the will of the divine beloved:

The sacrifice of love is complete and ungrudging. The more it gives the more it wants to give, and the less it is conscious of having given. Ever increasing and never failing, it seeks to please the Beloved. It welcomes suffering to satisfy a single wish of the Beloved or to relieve the Beloved of the slightest neglect. It would gladly die for the Beloved. The lover breaks through his limitations and loses himself in the being of the Beloved.¹⁰³

Pleasing the beloved opens the lover to the inner guidance of the beloved. As we have seen, this guidance may come through synchronistic events that suggest "Baba's hand" in solving a problem or help in confronting a personal trial. A long-time Western disciple suggests that the longer one is connected to Baba, the more one grows in this "awareness":

I only know that because of love we wanted to please Baba. But slowly, gently, spontaneously, Baba was shifting our consciousness to Himself--to God--the one Reality of Consciousness--Infinite Love...

This is awareness, the consciousness of God in everything. This consciousness of God's omnipresence leads to the further sense of His omnipotence that His hand is in all that happens. This, too, we may say is part of awareness.¹⁰⁴

Many of the lovers who did not meet Baba physically tell countless stories of Baba's guiding presence in their lives. They see daily occurrences as gifts of love and training from Baba, and they feel they are constant recipients of his grace. There is a general consensus among Baba's lovers that their work and family life are opportunities from Baba to grow closer to him in love and service. They feel themselves to be living with their beloved as his intimate companions.¹⁰⁵

The intuition that opens the lover to the grace of the beloved is, I have suggested, shaped by Baba's cosmology, stories of his life, and contact with people and

places associated with him. All of these influences help the lover to discover that the beloved knows the heart of the lover. Further, the lover learns what to look for as signs of the beloved's presence in the events of life.

The lover gradually grows to trust the beloved to help the lover work through all of the ego conflicts that arise from the unconscious. Even though at times the "inner voice" of the beloved is not clearly understood, the lover trusts that her life is in the master's hands. Baba, she believes, will transform every situation into an opportunity for spiritual growth. This conviction is strengthened through constant remembrance and continual surrender. The lover seeks to place the beloved at the center of every thought and action in order that the beloved may do his work of eliminating the false center of the ego. In this way, the lover is eventually awakened to Baba as the real Self and the story of the lover and the beloved comes to an end.¹⁰⁶

The Awakener

"I have come," Meher Baba said, "to awaken myself in all."¹⁰⁷ This awakening was seen by Baba to be the work of God who must incarnate periodically as the Avatar for the sake of love. We have examined Meher Baba's mission

as Avatar in its two, inter-related dimensions: For the world, he promised a universal release of divine love that will give all of life a spiritual push forward and thereby usher in a "new humanity." For individuals, he offered himself as the divine beloved who will guide aspirants on the inner path of love.

It is not my task to offer an assessment, even if one were possible, of whether or not Baba accomplished his mission. What is possible, and what I have attempted to do, is to say, as far as it can be said, what Meher Baba saw as the meaning and scope of his life and work. If I have been at all successful, the way has been cleared for a direct encounter with his message of love.

I have tried to demonstrate that in everything he said and did Baba pointed beyond himself to the real Self or God within everyone. Sometimes he would remind visitors, pointing to his physical form: "This is not Baba. I am within you. Long to see me as I really am."¹⁰⁸ In silent, and sometimes very human ways, he hid himself in order that he might reveal himself to the eyes of love.

As we have seen, it was love that drew Meher Baba's disciples to him and it was for the sake of love that they remained with him. Today, by all accounts, it is still love that draws those who seek him. No doubt this is as

he would have it; for Baba's message, he often said, was only of divine love. This is a message he intended to give not in words but through an awakening of the heart.

Baba promised nothing except love. Today his lovers do not join anything in his name, nor do they accept a particular creed. There is no formal ritual or ceremony connected with Baba, and no prescribed discipline. They understand from Baba that they are to ask for no material or even spiritual reward by virtue of their connection with him. On the contrary, when Baba once heard that people were asking the mandali what they had gained by following Meher Baba, he commented that it was the wrong question. They should be asking, Baba said, what have you lost by following Meher Baba.¹⁰⁹ The work of love, he warned frequently, intensifies life's problems as the beloved eliminates the ego in order to awaken the Self.

To accomplish his work in his lovers and in the world, Baba spent a lifetime "laying cables" for the inner connections that he claimed would continue to be established long after his physical death. He did not ask his lovers to flee from the world, but rather to live fully and freely in the world remembering him constantly:

You do not have to renounce anything; you can lead a family life and be in the world. You may do your work or business or attend your service. But always

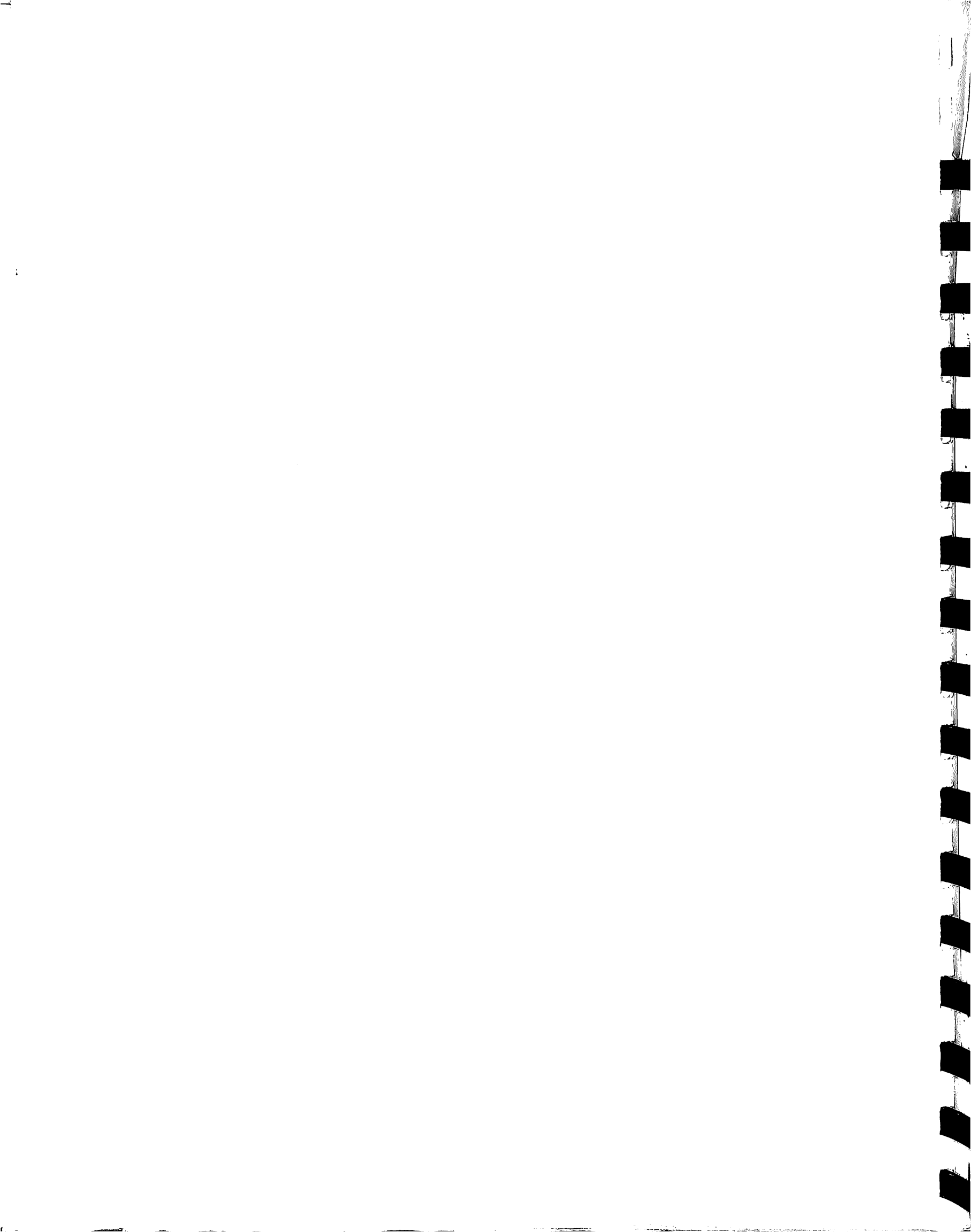


do one thing: Constantly think of me and constantly try to make others happy even at the cost of your own happiness.¹¹⁰

In this sense, Baba asked his lovers to live with him and at the same time live an ordinary life. The world, he said, is my ashram, and every detail of life is an opportunity for growth in love.¹¹¹

Baba, then, did not wish to establish an organized religion. In fact, he encouraged his lovers who wished to do so to remain in their traditional faiths.¹¹² He warned spiritual seekers that many so-called masters and saints were bogus, and that they would be safer in the ancient paths established by the Avatar.¹¹³ Though these paths are covered over with centuries of dogma and ritual, they still contain, according to Baba, the Avatar's same message of divine love.¹¹⁴

Will the current loose association of Baba's lovers lead to yet another world religion? If Baba is the Avatar, and a new age does dawn, then who can say what form religion may take? Though Baba's actions and writings seem to guard well against a formal structure or hierarchy in his name, he also indicated that the Avatar is always misunderstood. The nature of the story of consciousness is such, he said, that the Avatar will always need to return to renew his love in the world:



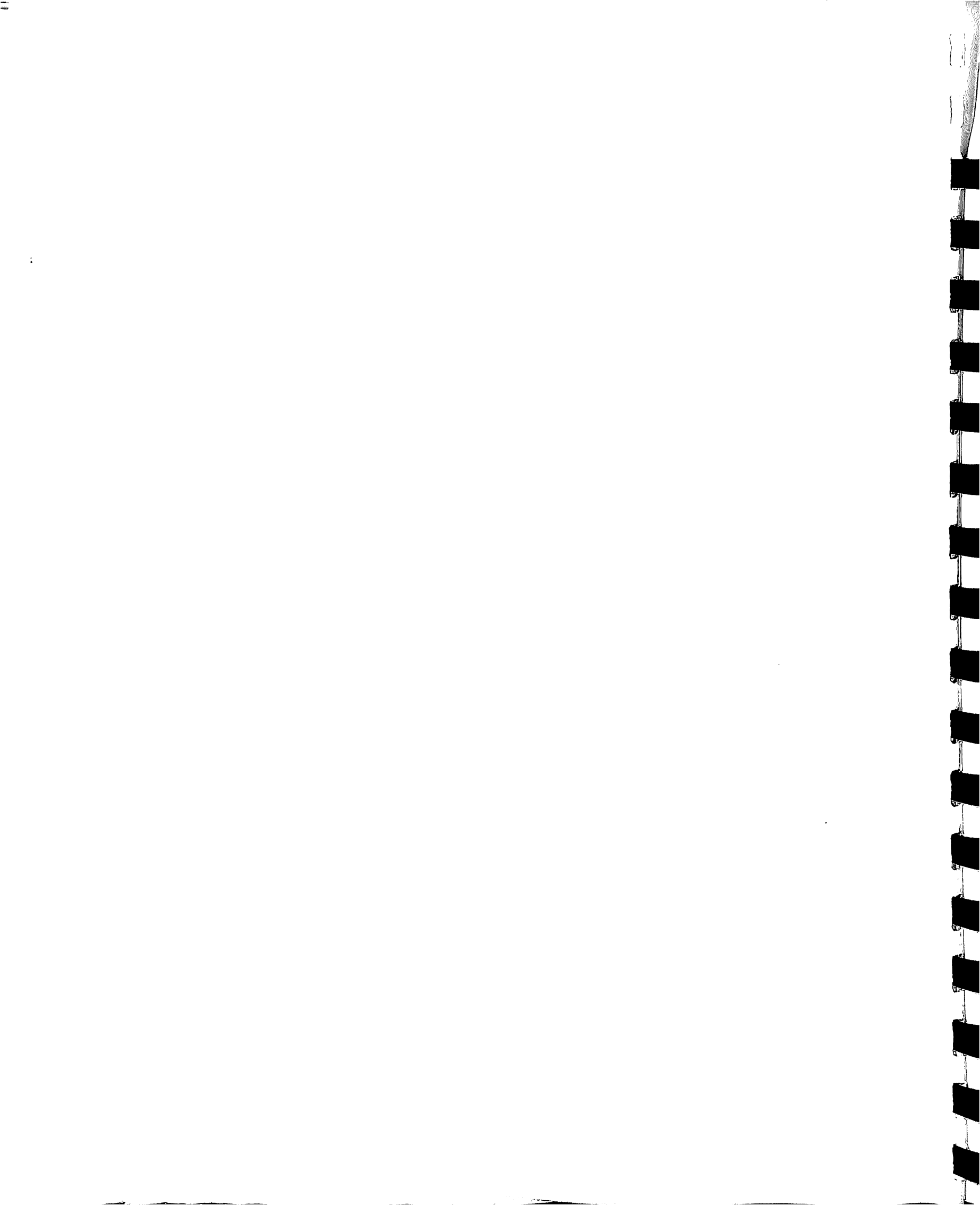
I am the one who is always lost and found among mankind. It is your love for yourself that loses me and it is your love for me that finds me.¹¹⁵

Only love, he said, can grasp him. And only love will recognize him when he comes again.¹¹⁶

For now, in any case, Baba's lovers have a myth of meaning around which to organize their lives. Within the larger story of the movement from unconscious divinity to conscious divinity, they find their own story in the relationship of the lover and the beloved. They come together in informal groups, as encouraged by Baba, in order to share his life and message. On occasion, they give public programs about Baba, but they feel that Baba does not wish them to proselytize.¹¹⁷ In discussing work done in his name, Baba said:

When you spread my eternal message of love to others, show them first that you really love me. Do not merely make them read my books and messages. Do more. Live such a life of love, sacrifice, forgiveness, and tolerance that others will love me. If instead of doing the real work of love, you start doing organized propaganda work for me, it is absurd. I need no propaganda or publicity. I do not want propaganda and publicity, but I do want love and honesty. If you cannot live the life of love and honesty, you should stop working for me.¹¹⁸

At the end of his life, Meher Baba expressed full confidence that his Avataric mission had been accomplished, and that the results would unfold in time. He



proclaimed that his work had brought about a revolution in consciousness, inaugurating a new era that would be marked by an increased awareness of the essential unity of all life. He envisioned a wide-spread awakening to the divine within each person and he offered a way to develop an intuitive relationship with that inner Reality. All this, he said, was the divine intervention desperately needed in a world poised on the brink of destruction:

There was and is no way out except through my coming in your midst. I had to come and I have come. I am the Ancient One.¹¹⁹

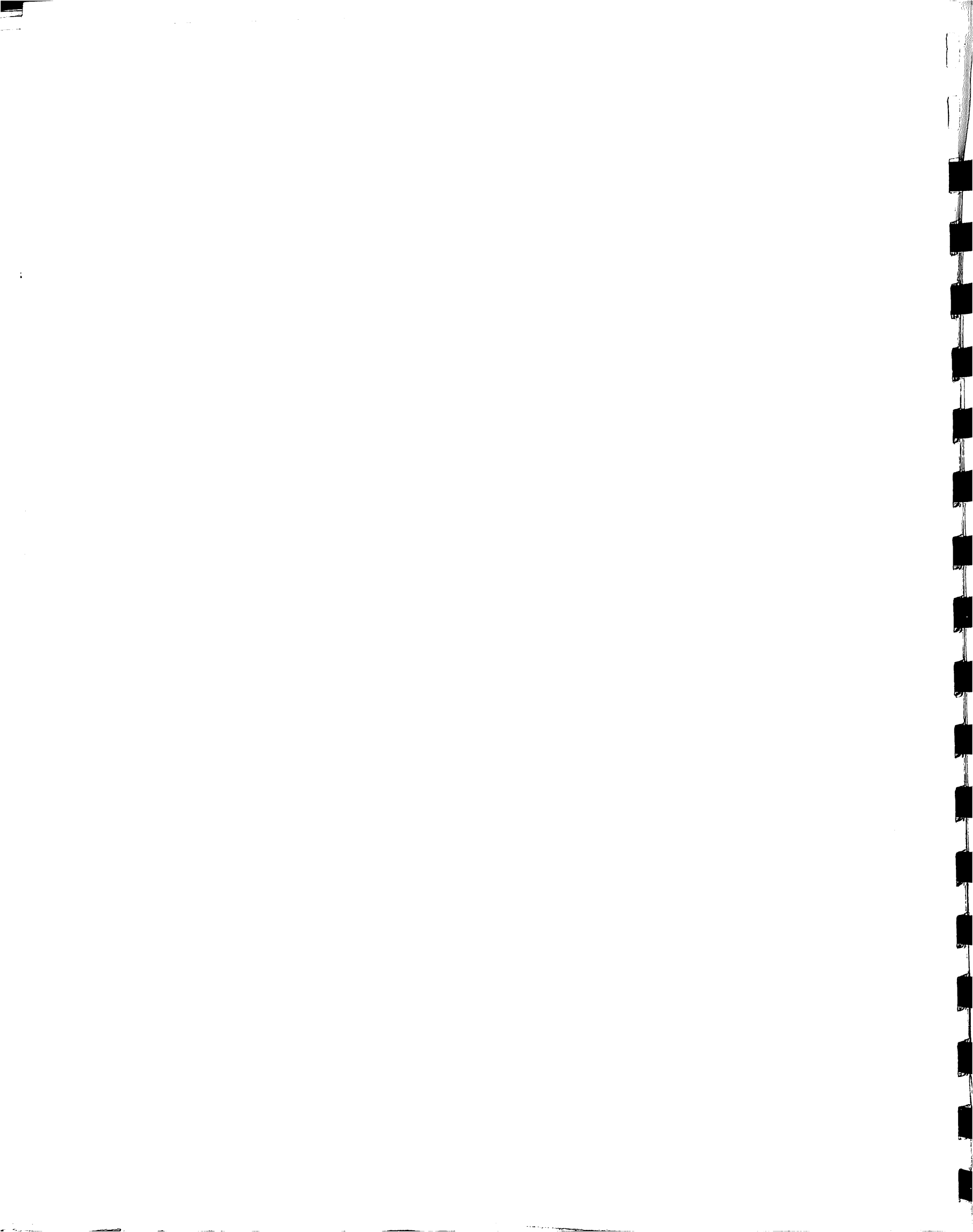
We may conclude, then, that all Baba did in silence pointed to the "Word" of love he promised to speak within every heart. Even after his physical death, he said, he will continue to speak in the hearts of those who love him. This promise of an on-going love relationship was perhaps symbolically expressed by the 1969 darshan, planned by Baba just months before his death. When some of the mandali objected that the strain of seeing so many people over a two-month period would be too much for his fragile health, Baba replied that they should not worry because he will feel no pain. He will, he told them, give darshan "reclining." It will be the greatest of all darshans, he said, and after it he would give darshan continuously.¹²⁰

The mandali came to realize what Baba may have meant, for he "dropped his body" in January, 1969, just two months prior to the planned darshan. In spite of Baba's physical absence, thousands of his lovers responded to his invitation, travelling to India to take darshan of a master who was no longer present in the body. Those who came later reported that they felt Baba giving them darshan directly with no barriers in between.¹²¹ One of the mandali who spoke at the darshan, described the unique nature of this event:

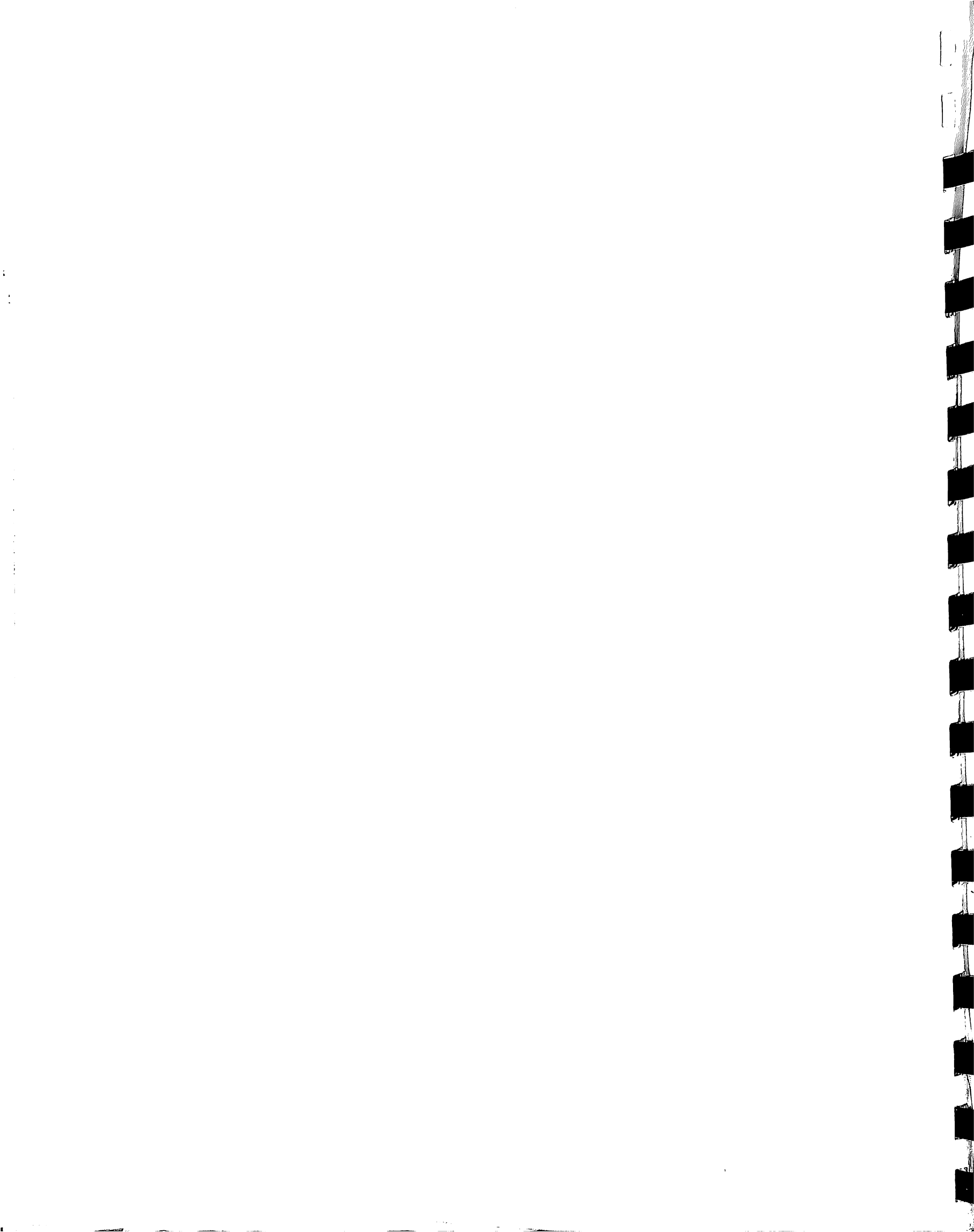
Who but the Beloved of Beloveds, could speak his Word silently in our hearts and make you come from across the world to take his darshan, to bow down to him in your hearts? Such a thing has never happened before. I have been at Mass-darshans where tens of thousands came to bow down to his Man-form. But to come thousands of miles to bow down to him in one's own heart, that is of an entirely different order of devotion.

Why has beloved Baba given you people this extraordinary privilege? Because he required a few to do what the many, what everyone, must eventually do: journey across the world of illusion to take darshan of him in their hearts.¹²²

Whoever one takes him to be and whatever the results of his work, the love story that surrounds Meher Baba the Awakener has not ended; it has only just begun. For while there are many who speak of love, Baba lived it. At the very least his life of love and service will stand as an example of life as it should be lived. To those who love



him and bear witness to the beauty of his ways, he is the Ancient One: the One who comes age after age to reveal the love of God in the world.



NOTES

Introduction

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⁸Davy, p. 700.

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⁵C. B. Purdom, The God-Man (North Myrtle Beach, S.C.: Sheriar Press), p. 273.

⁶Ibid., pp. 416-417.

⁷Baba, God Speaks, pp. 239-243.

⁸Ibid., p. 87.

⁹Ibid., p. 87.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 81.

¹¹Baba, Beams, pp. 4-5.

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¹³Baba, Beams, p. 6.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 102.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁶Meher Baba, The Everything and the Nothing (Berkeley, California: Beguine Library, 1971), p. 49.

¹⁷Baba, God Speaks, Chapter 9.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 180.

¹⁹Baba, The Everything and the Nothing, p. 87 and p. 53.

²⁰Ibid., p. 54.

²¹Baba, God Speaks, The dedication.

²²Anna-Marie Schimmel, The Mystical Dimensions of Islam. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), p. 266.



²³Many of the themes on Meher Baba's "myth of meaning" parallel ideas presented in Aniela Jaffe, The Myth of Meaning: Jung and the Expansion of Consciousness (New York: Penguin Books, 1975), revealing an interesting correspondence between the metaphysics of Meher Baba and the psychology of Carl Jung.

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²⁵Baba, God Speaks, p. 235.

²⁶Ibid., p. 182.

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²⁸Baba, The Everything and the Nothing, p. 59.

²⁹Baba, God Speaks, p. 235.

³⁰Baba, God to Man and Man to God, pp. 128-138.

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³⁴Dr. A. A. G. Munsiff, "The House of the Master," The Glow 10 (Nov. 1975):7.

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⁴²Baba, God Speaks, Part 4.

- ⁴³Ibid., p. 36.
- ⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 34-39.
- ⁴⁵Baba, God Speaks, p. 39.
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- ⁴⁸Ibid., p. 193.
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- ⁵²Charles Haynes, "Carl Jung and Meher Baba" (Seminar paper, Emory University, 1977).
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- ⁵⁴Ibid., p. 193.
- ⁵⁵Ibid., p. 198.
- ⁵⁶Ibid., p. 199.
- ⁵⁷Baba, God Speaks, pp. 234-239.
- ⁵⁸Ibid., p. 238.
- ⁵⁹Baba, Life at Its Best, p. 38.
- ⁶⁰Baba, Discourses, vol II, p. 41.
- ⁶¹Baba, God Speaks, p. 56.
- ⁶²Baba, Beams, p. 29.
- ⁶³Baba, God to Man and Man to God, pp. 16-17.
- ⁶⁴Ibid., p. 25.
- ⁶⁵Ibid., p. 268.

⁶⁶Charles Purdom, "The American Sahavas with Meher Baba," The Awakener 5 (May, 1958):34.

⁶⁷Baba, The Everything and the Nothing, p. 1.

⁶⁸Baba, God to Man and Man to God, pp. 264-265.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 259.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 86.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 261.

⁷²Baba, God to Man and Man to God, pp. 85-86.

⁷³Ibid., p. 262.

⁷⁴Baba, The Everything and the Nothing, pp. 1-3.

⁷⁵Baba, God to Man and Man to God, p. 264.

⁷⁶Jane Barry Haynes, ed., Treasures from the Meher Baba Journals (North Myrtle Beach, S.C.: Sheriar Press, 1980), p. 242.

⁷⁷Meher Baba, Darshan Hours (Berkeley, California: The Beguine Library, 1973), p. 67.

⁷⁸Baba, God to Man and Man to God, p. 273.

⁷⁹The best summary of the Avatar doctrine in the Indian traditions is found in Geoffrey Parrinder, Avatar and Incarnation (London: Faber and Faber, 1970), pp. 13-130. The book does not examine the close parallels between modern Indian views of the Avatar, notably Meher Baba's, and Christian ideas of Incarnation. Parrinder takes the theological position that Indian notions of divine descent are inferior to the Christian understanding of Jesus as the Christ.

⁸⁰Baba, God to Man and Man to God, p. 49.

⁸¹Baba, God Speaks, pp. 267-269. See also Baba, Beams, pp. 27-32.

⁸²Baba, God Speaks, Chapter 9.

⁸³Don Stevens, Listen, Humanity. (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 227.

⁸⁴Baba, Beams, p. 30. Meher Baba asserted that there were always five Perfect Masters in the world. When one dies, another soul takes his place.

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⁴A. Reza Arasteh, Rumi the Persian, the Sufi (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), pp. 37-50.

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⁷Ibid., p. 66.

⁸Purdom, The God-Man, p. 343.

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¹⁶Baba, God to man, Man to God, pp. 40-41

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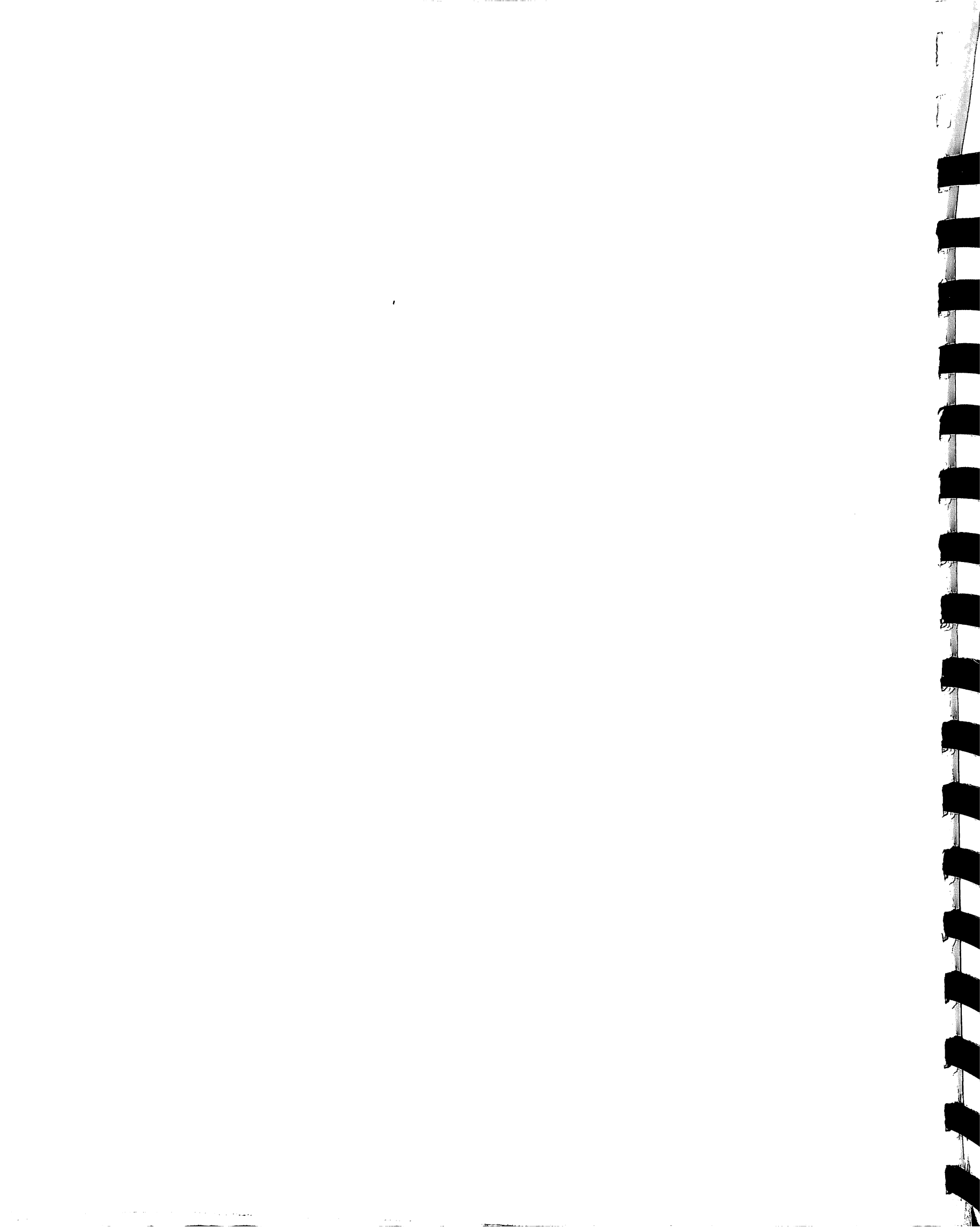
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⁵³Purdom, The God-Man, p. 416.

⁵⁴Baba, Significance of the Silence Meher Baba Observed, ed. K. K. Ramakrishnan (Poona: Meher Era Publication, 1977), p. 3.

⁵⁵Baba, Sparks from Meher Baba (North Myrtle Beach: Sheriar Press, 1971), p. 8.

⁵⁶Brabazon, The Silent Word, p. 287.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 227-322.

⁵⁸Purdom, The God-Man, p. 50.

⁵⁹There are three places Baba did order to be maintained as centers for his work: Meherabad, India; Meher Spiritual Center, U.S.A.; Avatar's Abode, Australia.

⁶⁰Baba, God to Man and Man to God, pp. 57-58.

⁶¹Meher Baba, The Mastery of Consciousness, ed. Allan Y. Cohen (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 54.

⁶²Stevens, Listen, Humanity, p. 254.

⁶³Purdom, The God-Man, p. 438.

⁶⁴Adi K. Irani, Messages of Meher Baba.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 84.

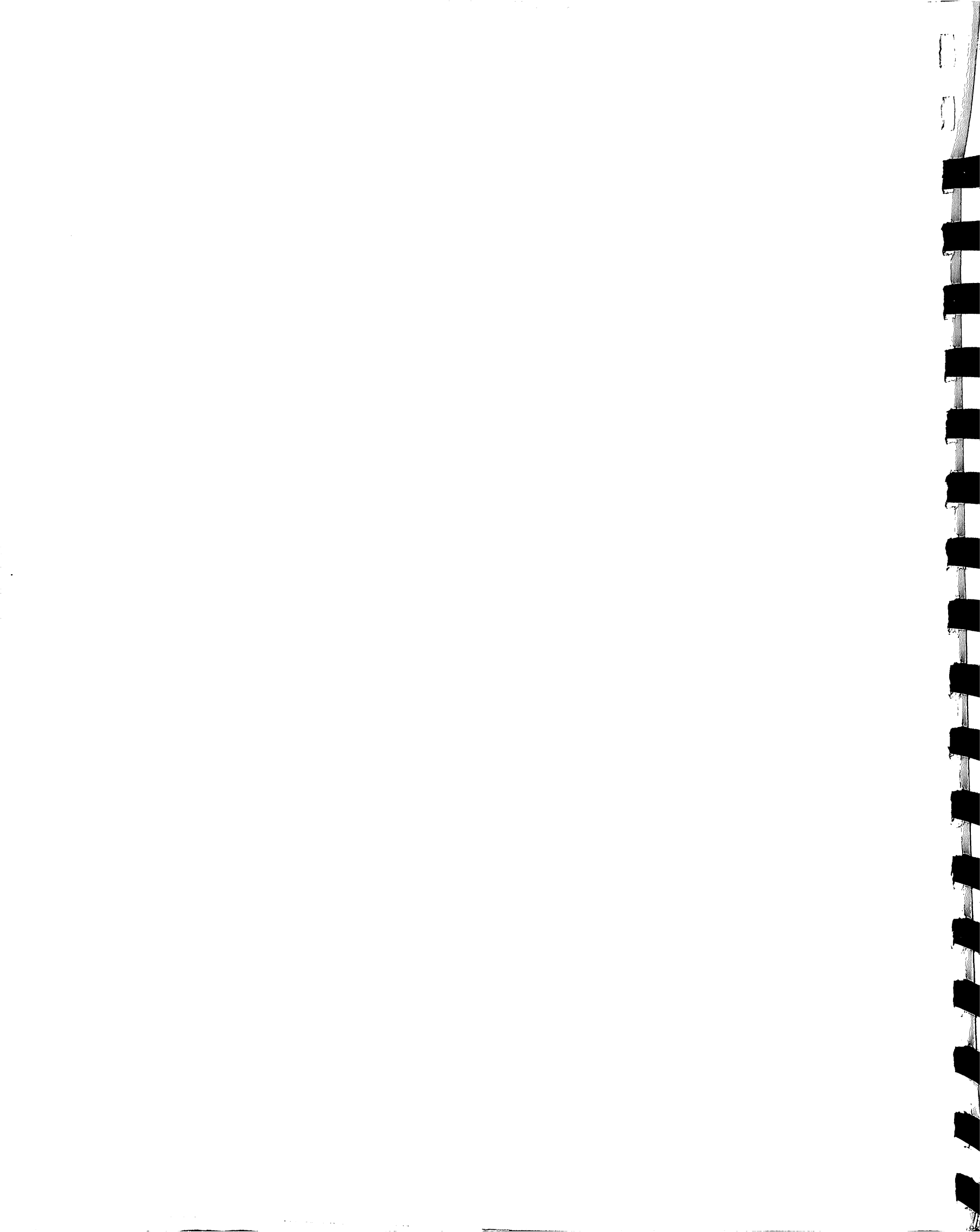
⁶⁶Ibid., p. 85.

⁶⁷Purdom, The God-Man, p. 438.

⁶⁸William Donkin, The Wayfarers (San Francisco: Sufism Reoriented, 1969), pp. 157-373.

⁶⁹Naosherwan Anzar, "Meher Baba in America," The Glow, 7:3-4.

⁷⁰Purdom, The God-Man, pp. 95-96.



⁷¹Hopkinson, p. 60.

⁷²Purdom, The God-Man, pp. 105-106.

⁷³Donkin, p. 373.

⁷⁴Duce, p. 442.

⁷⁵Elizabeth C. Patterson, interview at Meher Spiritual Center, Myrtle Beach, S.C., July 1976.

⁷⁶Donkin, p. 161.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 25.

⁷⁸Ibid., pp. 21-25.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 22.

⁸⁰Ibid., pp. 2-3.

⁸¹Donkin, p. 3.

⁸²Ibid., p. 19.

⁸³Ibid., p. 33.

⁸⁴Ibid., pp. 6-7.

⁸⁵Ibid., pp. 8-9.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 10.

⁸⁷Ibid., Chapter IV and VI.

⁸⁸[Eruch Jessawalla], The Ancient One: A Disciple's Memoirs of Meher Baba, ed. Naosherwan Anzar (Englishtown, N.J.: Beloved Books, 1985) pp. 25-30.

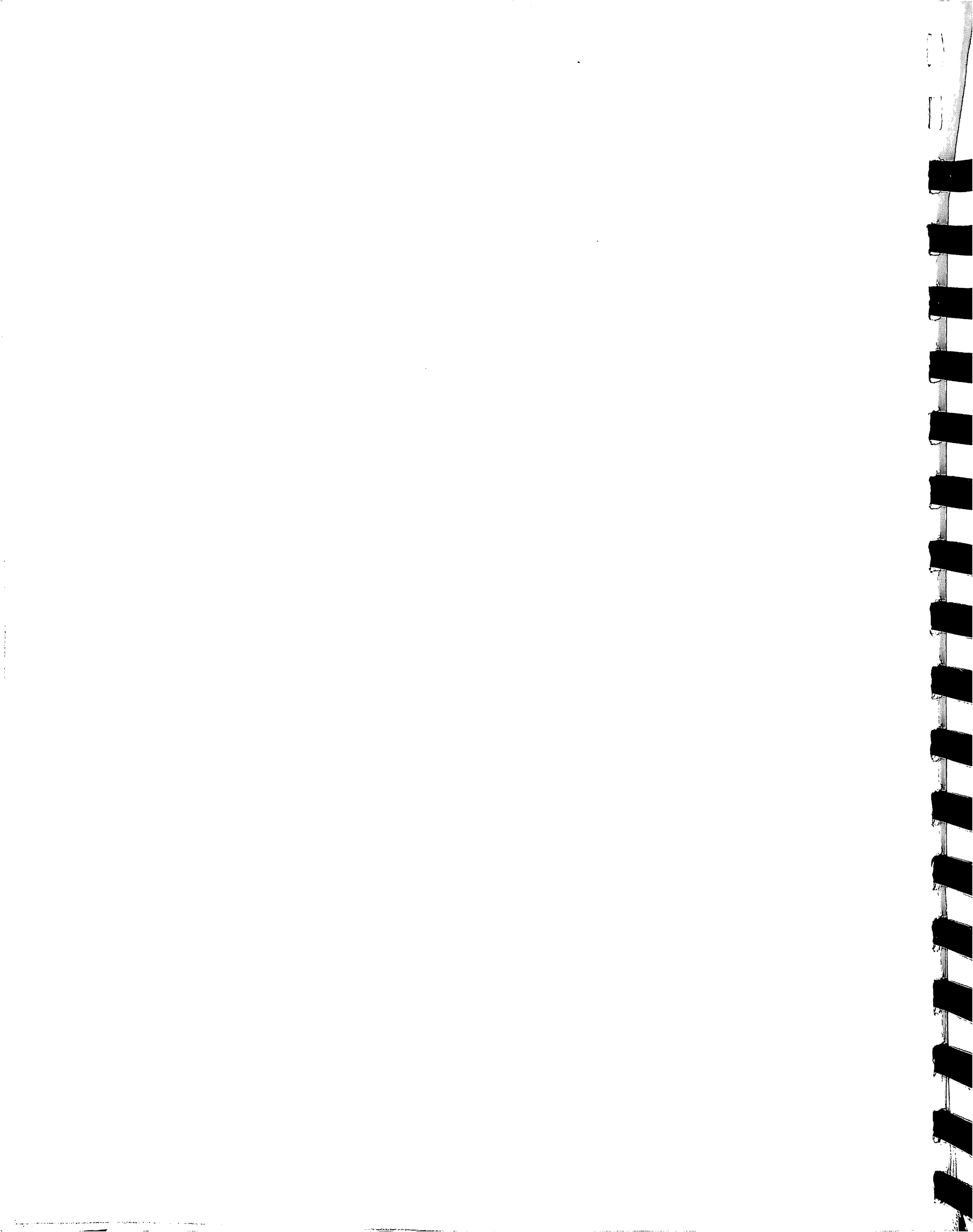
⁸⁹Donkin, pp. 162-163.

⁹⁰Ibid., pp. 51-53.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 48.

⁹²Stevens, Listen, Humanity, pp. 258-260.

- ⁹³Ibid., p. 260.
- ⁹⁴Donkin, pp. 13-20.
- ⁹⁵Hopkinson, p. 68.
- ⁹⁶Donkin, pp. 95-166.
- ⁹⁷Hopkinson, Chapter 10.
- ⁹⁸Swami Satya Prakash Udaseen, The New Life of Meher Baba and His Companions (Hyderabad: The Meher Vihar Trust, 1967), pp. x-xi.
- ⁹⁹Purdom, The God-Man, p. 169.
- ¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 170.
- ¹⁰¹Udaseen, p. xv.
- ¹⁰²The Ancient One, pp. 38-70.
- ¹⁰³Purdom, The God-Man, pp. 178-179.
- ¹⁰⁴Ibid., p. 189.
- ¹⁰⁵Purdom, The God-Man, p. 195.
- ¹⁰⁶Bhau, Kalchuri, "The New Life," Ahmednagar, India, n.d. (Typewritten.)
- ¹⁰⁷Purdom, The God-Man, p. 195.
- ¹⁰⁸Duce, pp. 430-434.
- ¹⁰⁹Purdom, The God-Man, pp. 187-188.
- ¹¹⁰Hopkinson, p. 94.
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- ¹¹²Baba, Fiery Free Life.
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- 114 Brabazon, Journey With God, pp. 21-22.
- 115 Ibid., p. 27.
- 116 Eruch Jessawalla, interview at Meherazad, Ahmednagar, India, August 1978.
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- 118 Purdom, The God-Man, p. 195.
- 119 Stevens, Listen, Humanity, pp. 239-243.
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- 123 Purdom, The God-Man, p. 203.
- 124 Mani S. Irani, Family Letters (New York: Society for Avatar Meher Baba, 1974), Letter of 1956.
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- 127 Purdom, The God-Man, p. 333.
- 128 Irani, Letter of 1965.
- 129 Jim Mistry, ed., Letters from the Mandali of Avatar Meher Baba (North Myrtle Beach, S.C.: Sheriar Press, 1981) pp. 139-140.
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- 132 Ibid., Letter of September 1968.
- 133 Ibid., Letter of November 1968.
- 134 Ibid., Letter of March 1969.



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¹³⁶Ibid., Letter of January 1968.

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⁴Francis Brabazon, Stay With God (Sydney: Garuda Books, 1959), pp. 65-66.

⁵Kitty Davy, Love Alone Prevails (North Myrtle Beach, S.C.: Sheriar Press, 1981), pp. 711-712.

⁶Filis Frederick, "The East-West Gathering," The Awakener 9:19.

⁷Davy, p. 700.

⁸Mani Irani, Family Letters (New York: Society for Avatar Meher Baba, 1969), Letters of 1965-1968.

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¹³Davy, p. 711.

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18 Ibid., p. 279.

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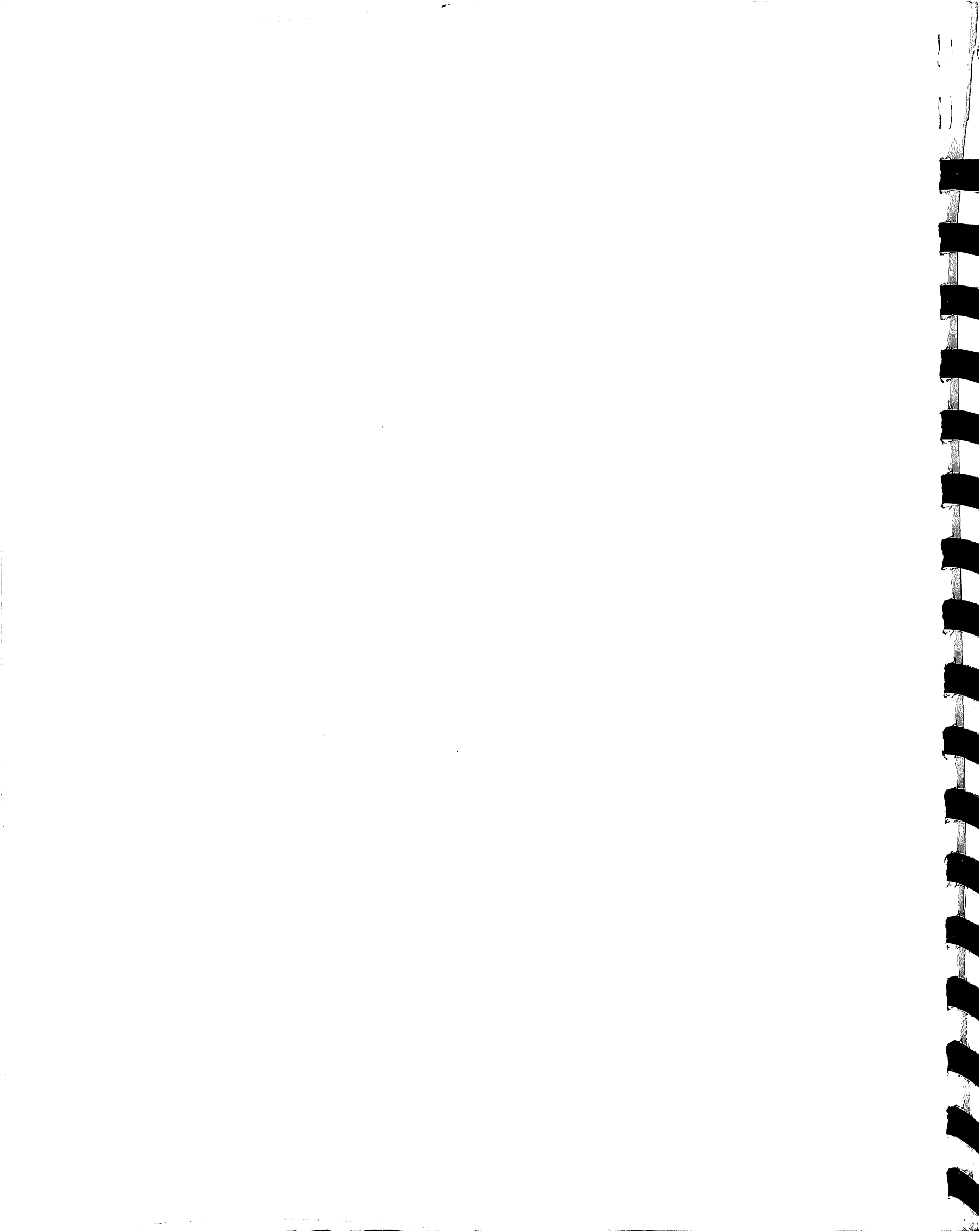
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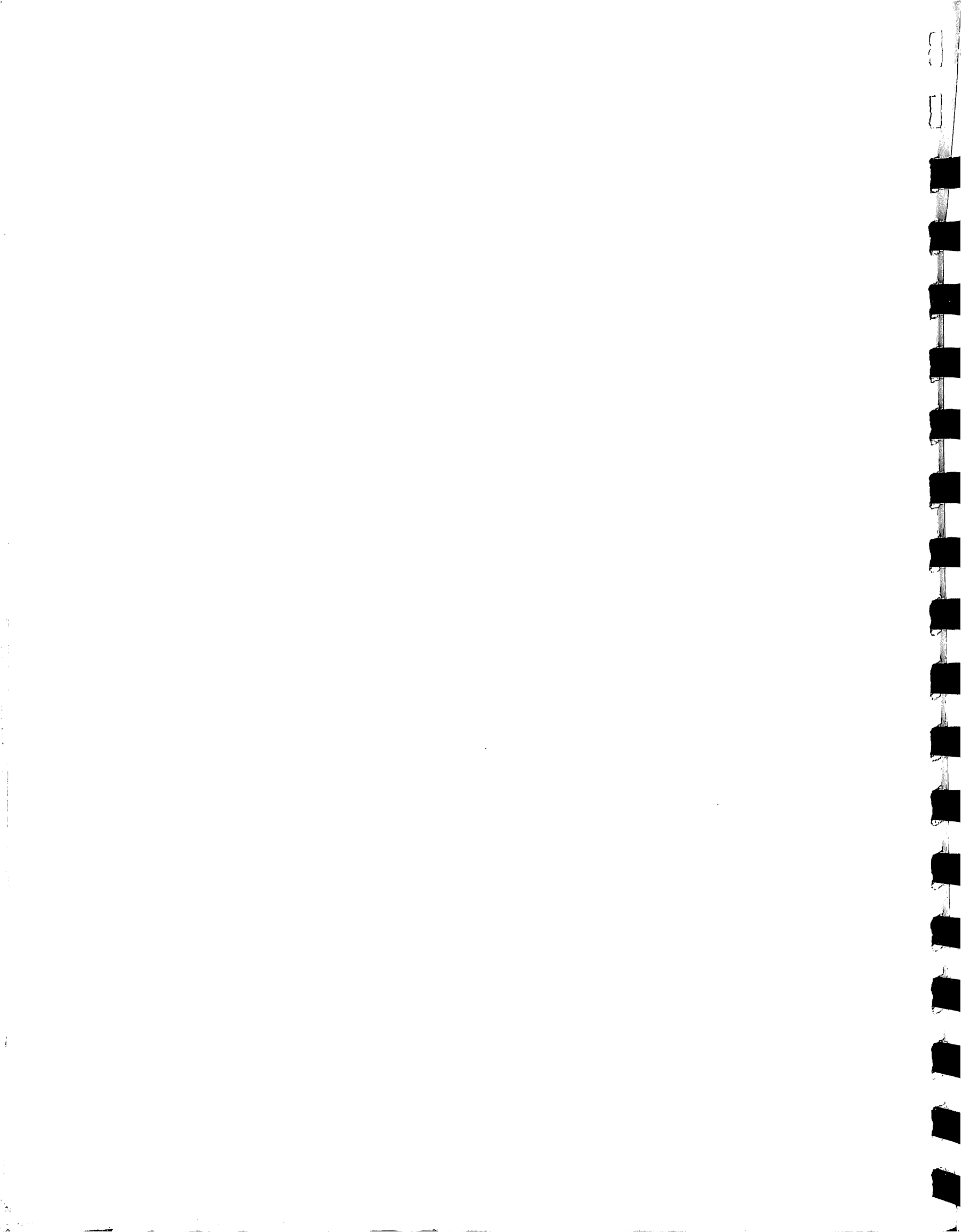
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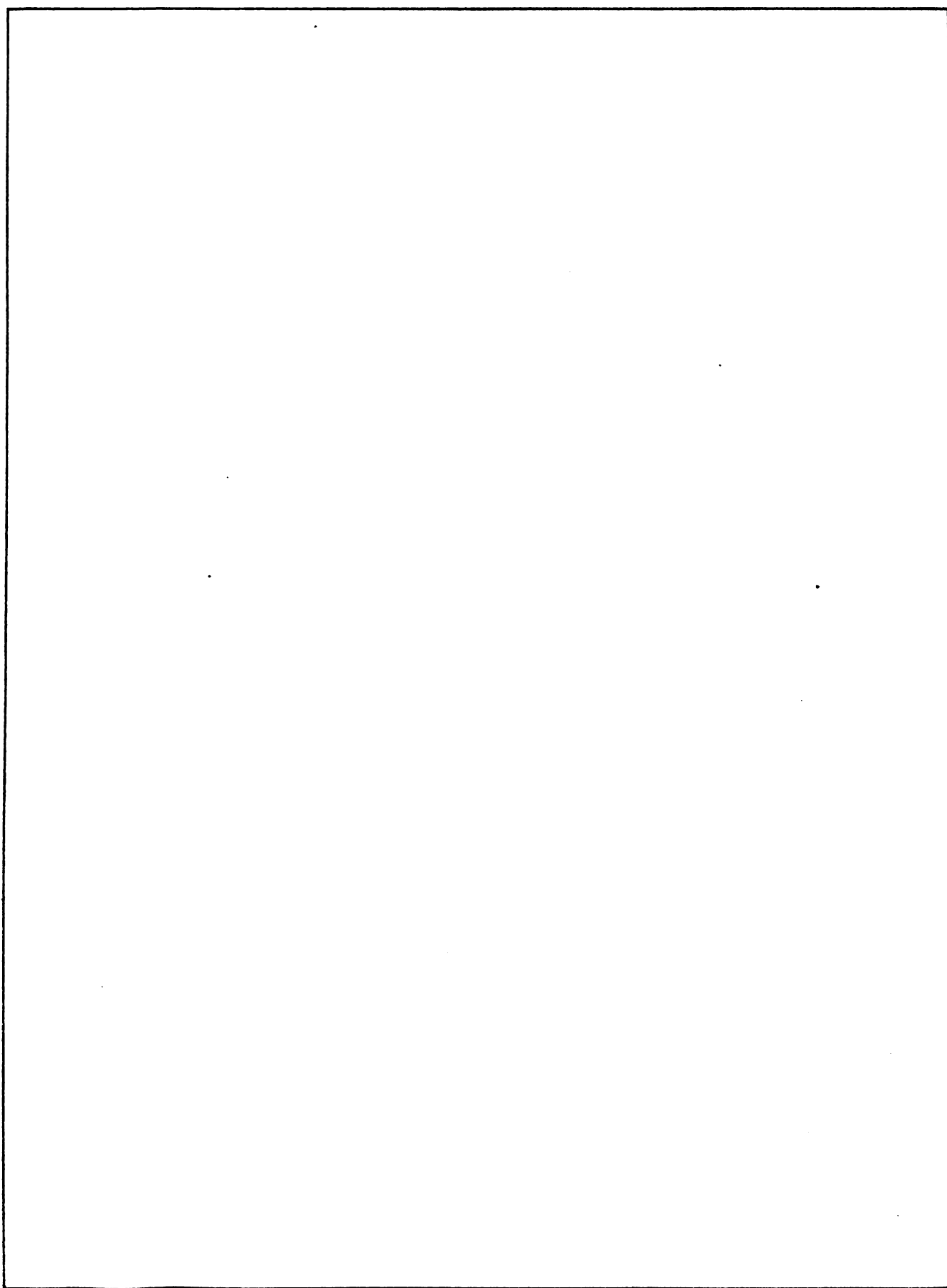
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