

A BRIEF LIFE-SKETCH
of
AVATAR MEHER BABA



"I have come not to teach but to awaken."

—MEHER BABA

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MEHER BABA

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Spiritual Movements

Besides the established Religions on earth, in the blinking lights of certain or uncertain convictions raised today by the hundreds of spiritual movements all over the world and especially in India, one cannot be said to be less or more sublime than the other so long it heralds the cause of Ultimate Truth, God, Paramatma, Allah or Ahuramazd in one, more or all the aspects of Its being and consciousness.

However dim or bright be the light shed by various movements according to their recency or antiquity, one-sidedness or comprehensive view, partial or full experience (according to the level of development reached by the Founders), our love and reverence is *equally* due to *all* of them. It is very easy to say this, but, it would have been very difficult to feel it in face of the tremendous comparative heights of intellect and unfathomable depths of heart, the conclusions, the utterances and the exemplary life of Meher Baba would lead one to.

Were it not for this Perfection-Personified-Being's deep impress upon our sense of maintaining a perfect balance of mind and heart on every spiritual movement sighted (excepting the established religions on the earth), it would not be possible to escape an air of superiority over thoughts and ideas received, stressed and practiced by different movements without a proper understanding of their graded values in the scheme of creation and the motives behind to make them instrumental in realizing oneness of God everywhere and in every human being.

One Avatar

The Light that glowed in the fire of Zoroaster, that flashed through the arrow of Rama, that hallowed the face of Buddha, that radioed the flute of Krishna, that silvered the cross of Christ, that flamed through the speeding brotherhood of Mohammad, is *the Self-Same Light* coming over again to flood-light the paths of all the existing religions of the earth. It is because of the different conditions of the times and the trends of people that account for the modernity of cloak and expression, the present revelation of Meher Baba fits in.

Conviction

In the quest for spiritual or secular ideals and ideologies, history roams, as humanity roams, in the boundless space of time; and the two lines seemingly parallel never in their fullness of vigor meet each other in a happy blending of love, save in periods of grave world crisis and the time that immediately follows thereupon.

Just as God who is the source of everything and who remains hidden to the general experience of man as the doer of everything, a Spiritual Master bringing to bear upon people the infinite love and mercy of God for their upliftment, remains equally hidden. But, says Meher Baba, "the time has come—as it does in every grave crisis of world history — for man to accept God-Man in his thoughts, feelings and actions when He manifests on earth as a universal necessity."

Without assuming a proper perspective of the subject under view, our understanding and our assessment of a personality like that of Meher Baba is likely to fall short of reality. His height of experience, His largeness of authority and His selflessness of work is apt to elude our intellect.

If we were to affirm an obvious fact that a thing existing is far too different from the same thing described or enunciated, and that the thing described does not under any circumstances become less or more qualified or modified because the methods, the language or the logic by which it is expressed is too pleasing or too disagreeable—if we care to keep these in view—we place ourselves on a firm footing for a correct appreciation of Truth.

Meher Baba, as seen normally from a view of intellect alone, is a man; but should we care to know Him comprehensively through His writings, His utterances, His purposeful "*silence*" of over thirty-five years, His utter detachment to everything selfish, His all-embracing love for humanity expressed in His grave concern for its ultimate freedom and His unassuming declaration of always being *consciously One with everyone and everything*, we would feel, see and conclude that He is no other than what He elaborately expresses himself in His own words:

"THE HIGHEST OF THE HIGH"

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

"I am neither a Mahatma nor a Mahapurush, neither a Sadhu nor a Saint, neither a Yogi nor a Wali. Those who approach me with the desire to gain wealth or to retain their possessions, those who seek through me relief from distress and suffering, those who ask my help to 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, this disappointment is itself invariably instrumental in bringing about the complete transformation of mundane wants and desires."

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

We can hardly give full justice to the volume of work Meher Baba accomplished during the last three decades and a half and to the amount of love and knowledge He expressed to and lavished upon everyone who met Him. We feel ourselves hardly equal to the task of representing or interpreting what Meher Baba is, what He stands for or what He lives for.

Realization and Knowledge

Born in Poona in February, 1894, Merwan S. Irani received his education at the town of his birth. Temperamentally, he was extremely loving and genial and made himself popular among his friends and acquaintances, excelling in sports, literature and Poetry.

Whilst studying at the Deccan College, Poona, at the age of 19, he was touched and blessed by a well-known spiritually Perfect Woman Hazrat Babajan of Poona. She transformed his life so completely that Meher Baba lost human consciousness and got merged in the ocean of Divine Love. Babajan once told about Merwan (as Baba was then called by all): "*You will shake the world to its foundation.*"

Sri Sai Baba, the great Spiritual Master of Shirdi, bequeathed to Merwan the powers of spiritual perfection through Sadguru Upasani Maharaj of Sakori who brought him down to the level of human consciousness making him fully equipped with the all-pervading knowledge of creation, its foundation and its purpose.

Meher Baba once said: "*Sai Baba made me what I am, Baba Jan made me feel what I am; and Upasani Maharaj made me know what I am.*"

Meher Baba met Sai Baba at Shirdi in 1915 and thereafter, kept himself in close contact with Upasani Maharaj at Sakori for nearly seven years. Night after night, Upasani Maharaj and Meher Baba sat in close communion in the thatched hut abode of Upasani Maharaj at Sakori which later on was reconstructed into a strong stone building that became a sanctuary of worship to the seekers of Truth.

"Manzil-e-Meem"

Being in full possession of universal as well as human consciousness, Meher Baba from 1921 onwards launched upon his work of awakening people to the unity of spiritual knowledge and love. He gathered around him a band of trusted devotees whose allegiance from Upasani Maharaj was transferred to Meher Baba by an open declaration made by Upasani Maharaj in the presence of his devotees at Sakori in 1922. These devotees belonging to different religions—Muslim, Hindu, Zoroastrian and Christian—lived, worked and dined together at Manzil-e-Meem, Main Road, Dadar, Bombay and received a training of moral discipline, love of God, spiritual understanding and selfless service under direct care, instructions and supervision of the spiritual Master, Meher Baba.

Meherabad

Soon after, Meher Baba opened a colony near Arangaon, about six miles from Ahmednagar, called Meherabad, where he started a school admitting boys of all castes and creeds freely and without fees; and started a free boarding school for a selected number of boys called "Prem Ashram." In addition, he established a free dispensary, a Sadhak Ashram for spiritual upliftment of seekers of Truth and a "Mast" (Majzoob) Ashram for God-intoxicated men who were not conscious of their physical bodies because of the overpowering love of God they were steeped in.

In all these establishments, there was not a tinge of caste or religious distinction whatsoever in thought, word and deed; and all the inmates felt and lived together like a happy community of one human family wherein the only surviving force that kept them together was love and brotherhood.

Silence

On and from 10th July, 1925, Meher Baba began His "silence," i.e., not uttering a word. Nevertheless He is intensively active. For conveying His thoughts and ideas, He used an English alphabet board, spelling out speedily every word and thus forming sentences and addressing people, giving discourses and messages, dictating replies to letters as and when he found them necessary. From 7th October, 1954, onwards, Baba discarded the use of even this alphabet board. Ever since, He expresses thoughts through gestures and movements of hands and figure which the interpreter, being used to, readily translates into audible words.

Baba's Inner Avataric Work

Being stationed by virtue of experience and authority at the very source of everything creative, His *duty* which we call *Spiritual Work* which is performed for the spiritual good of humanity in general and for His circle members and special lovers in particular, is ever bound to remain beyond the power of our understanding and also beyond the understanding of those who are spiritually advanced, Sant, Saint, Wali or maybe even Satpurush. Only another Perfect Master can understand it. Baba's own words may give us glimpse into the transcendent nature of *Avatar's Work*:

"God is absolutely Independent, and the universe is entirely dependent upon God. Yet when the Perfect Masters effect the descent of God on earth as the Avatar, they make Reality and illusion interdependent, each upon the other. And thus it is that His Infinite Mercy and Unbounded Love are eternally drawn upon by those who are immersed in Illusion.

"Between God and the Universe, infinite Mercy and unbounded Love act as a prominent link which is eternally made use of by men who become God (Sadgurus, Perfect Masters or Qutubs) and by God who becomes Man (Avatar, Christ or Rasool), and so the Universe becomes the eternal playmate of God. Through this prominent link, the Avatar not only established life in His Divine Play, but also established Law in illusion. And, this law being established by the God-man or Avatar is the law of the law-less Infinite and it is eternally Real and at the same time illusory. It is this Law that governs the universe; all its 'ups and downs' consruction and devastation are guided by this law.

"At the Cyclic period, God's independent Absoluteness is made to work upon this Law by the God-man as God's Will, and this means that anything and everything that the Avatar wills is ordained by God."

Masts or Avadhuts

An important part of Meher Baba's work is silent contact with "Masts," viz., spiritually advanced souls having partial or no normal consciousness, and with the mad and the poor. Baba sums up different states of consciousness in relation to "Mind" thus:

Mind stopped is God.

Mind working is man.

Mind slowed down is Mast.

Mind working fast is mad.

It is most difficult to conceive what exactly Meher Baba does with Masts. It may according to general interpretation be classified under two heads; one, is to draw out a Mast from

his immersed state of bliss or bewilderment in order to make him contribute (according to his level of consciousness) his share towards the cause of Universal Spiritual Work; and, another, is to raise him from his immersed state of bliss or bewilderment to higher and higher states of consciousness towards reaching the Ultimate. A full account of Baba's numerous tours and travels covering thousands of miles in car, train, tonga, bullock cart, and on camel, horse-back and on foot all over India, Pakistan, Ceylon and Kashmir with their maps, distances and pictures of Masts illustrated, is given in a 400-page book "THE WAY-FARERS" by Dr. William Donkin, available from Meher Publications, King's Road, Ahmednagar (Bombay State).

Publication

Amongst the works of Meher Baba, there are His "Discourses," "Divine Theme," "Gems from the Teachings of Meher Baba," "Listen Humanity," "Life at Its Best," "Beams from Meher Baba on the Spiritual Panorama" and His numerous messages. By far the best is His "God Speaks," a piece of profoundly placed correct intellectual understanding of spirituality. All these are available from Meher Publications, King's Road, Ahmednagar. "God Speaks" was dictated by Baba on His alphabet board and by means of gestures. "Stay with God" is the latest work on Baba and His spirituality, by Francis Brabazon that "gives life" to "God Speaks" as pronounced by Baba. There is as yet an abundance of hand-written notes by Meher Baba, some of them put down by Him many years ago whilst sitting in the garden (Zhopadi) room at Lower Meherabad and the rest of them whilst staying in the wooden cabin built underneath the huge table placed near the Dhuni under the shade of Neem tree on the roadside of Meherabad. These notes are yet unpublished and it is difficult to say when Baba will direct their publication.

Journeys to Foreign Countries

Baba's first trip to England was in 1931. The second was 1932 and then, there were some in quick succession between 1932 and 1936. The next one was in 1952 and the next to that was in 1956 and the latest was in 1958. There were in all six journeys to foreign countries including England, Europe, China, Japan, Iran and Australia.

Except on special occasions, the primary purpose, according to me, for which He undertakes to travel far and wide is in conformity with His inner working which is wholly spiritual and universal. The other considerations, such as, the pull of the disciples' and devotee's love for darshan, receiving instructions or getting "Sahavas" and the spreading of His Messages exoterically do have a place in His decision, but are only secondary. Baba has always an ingenious way of coinciding time and convenience for fulfillment of the greatest of objects with those of the smallest ones.

He demonstrates that the events that take place in illusion, however great they are from human and practical point of view, if not insignificant, are as small as or smaller than those that are caused to take place with a view to give some one spiritual aid or uplift.

Every foreign journey undertaken had its own significance spiritually and outwardly. More interesting than all the previous ones was that of 1956—one month's cyclonic round-to-world tour from 16th July to 16th August, 1956. Unlike on previous occasions, only four disciples accompanied Him, including the writer.

It is only Baba who could give strength to fly about 30,000 miles over the five continents in 10 days and allot

20 days for stay and programs. On an average, we flew about 3,000 miles a day and Baba had to attend to nearly 25 programs, to give darshan and interviews in cities, and towns, centers and airports, answering TV, broadcasting and pressmen. It included Zurich, Paris, London, New York, Myrtle Beach (South Carolina), Washington, Los Angeles, Meher Mount (Ojai-California), San Francisco, and Sydney and Melbourne with their suburbs. In addition, there were 25 house visits including outings and dinners. During trans-continental travel, there was hardly a flight when someone who knew Baba was not contacted and Baba had to extend a hand of blessing and gesture of grace.

The New Life

It was launched on 16th October, 1949, and ended on 26th February, 1952. It may better be explained in His own words:

"The role, which God has willed for me, has 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 "Man-o-nash" (annihilation of the limiting Mind) and the triparite Free Life, which emerged after the attainment of "Man-o-nash," have all happened by God's will.

"In the first part of this Free Life, culminating on the 10th July, 1952, bindings dominated freedom. It was in this first part that the personal disaster, for some years foretold by me, took place in the form of an auto accident, while crossing the American continent, causing me through facial injuries, a broken leg and a broken arm, much mental and physical suffering. It was necessary that it should happen in America. God willed it so. In the second part of this Free Life, freedom had dominated bindings. And in the third

part of this Free Life, Commencing from 15th November, 1952, both freedom and bindings are consumed in the fire of Divine Love, which destroys the very basis of the illusion of duality and all its paraphernalia.

"I am not concerned with individual reactions to me as an individual. They will be as various as there are individual temperaments. My sole concern in the Fiery Free Life, commencing from November 15th, 1952, will be with the Divine Truth of my realization, which I would like to share with those who seek it. The consuming of freedom and bindings (which is characteristic of the Fiery Free Life) means that there is a complete blending of the God-state and the man-state, so that the one does not live through opposition to the other and there can be no question of the one encroaching upon the province of the other.

"Spiritual freedom is essentially a positive state of conscious enjoyment of Infinite Divinity. It does not have to maintain itself through the constant overcoming of any bindings, for these come to be realized as not bindings of the soul, in its essence, but as temporary bindings of the body and the mind, which can in no way curtail the Bliss, Power or Understanding of conscious Divinity. In other words, the binding, to which the soul seems to be subject, turns out to be no binding of the soul, in its true essence. The binding is realized as only illusory. After the annihilation of the limited mind, the Infinite Consciousness of the soul, with all its KNOWLEDGE, POWER and BLISS, remains unaffected by any weaknesses or diseases, to which the body might yield, as a result of natural laws.

"The Perfect Ones who retain normal consciousness and the body, even after realizing the Unchanging and Absolute Truth, dwell eternally in Divine Love, which transcends all duality and surpasseth all understanding. They enjoy Abiding and Unassailable Peace; for they have at last arrived at the final goal of creation."

Seclusion

For awakening the masses and enlightening those in close contact with Him, to the existence of one God, one Truth and love, as the most effective means to attain knowledge of God, He often alternates His activities with Seclusions, fasts and silent absorption in spiritual work.

Amongst numerous seclusions which Baba has observed so, one of the recent ones was of one year's duration from 15th February, 1956, to 14th February, 1957. He gave one month's temporary break as a special case when He went in responses to Westerners' ardent love and longing on the global tour, returning to India on 17th August, 1956. Nevertheless, before taking off from Bombay, none was allowed to give him a send-off and on landing back, none was permitted to meet him.

During this period of intense and prolonged "Seclusion," and fasts, he often undertook "incognito" tours for contacting "Masts" in different parts of India. Baba and four of His disciples who accompanied Him during one of such trips, all met with a severe motor accident on 2nd December, 1956, 12 miles away from Satara which caused death of a disciple and confined Baba and the rest to a prolonged treatment. In spite of these events, the "Seclusion" was continued with the same severity till 15th February, 1957.

One full day of 24 hours (14th February midnight to 15th February midnight 1957), almost all Baba devotees and lovers throughout the world observed (on Baba's orders given several months in advance) complete fast without water and spent the whole day in continuous meditation or Japa or Bhajan of God's names. In addition the devotees were directed to feed the poor on that day, at each center.

There were two seclusions from 14th July to 30th November in 1958 and from 14th August to 31st December in 1959.

All the foregoing have undoubtedly very great significance spiritually. And who except the Avatar knows how exactly the inner purposeful suffering is made to act upon the outward functioning of world affairs.

"Seclusion" for Baba is a partial or complete detachment (whichever He decides) from seeing people and corresponding with them. At the same time, it is for Him an intensive spiritual activity of Inner Work which includes for its outward expression, frequent rigorous fasts, occasional movements from place to place, with or without the exigency of "Mast" contacts, giving to the poor, children and lepers prasad of grain, cloth and money. Before performing these acts of giving, Baba washes their feet (including those of lepers) and bows down low on their feet, for, He says, He sees Himself as God in them. There is no sense of obligation whatsoever felt or created by Him other than that these souls give Him an occasion to worship Himself as God in their forms; this is beside the spiritual significance of His work. The activities of fast, travel and the giving are in no way analogous to a seeker's strivings for spiritual attainment or merit of which Baba is known Himself to be the highest personification. It is for the general spiritual good of humanity that His work or "duty" stands for (as gradually sensed by His disciples through long years of contact), the symbolic expressions of such work to have a spiritually considered bearing upon the world-situations for time, intensity and events. Avatar having a Universal Mind becomes a barometer of world events and correspondingly suffers or enjoys vicariously; and being identified with Sat-Chit-Anand state, He becomes the Causative Source of all action as exemplified by the Divine Will.

“I Sow the Seed of Love in Heart”

Baba always avoids self admiration but He is deeply interested in receiving and giving unselfish love. The Avatar is not interested in making Himself known to the world that He is the head of Spiritual Hierarchy except for the truth of it and a purpose at once altruistic. Time and again, mass-darshan programs at various places and congregations at Meherabad, Ahmednagar, for giving Messages and Sahavas, were held, when thousands were invited to share the love-feast served by Baba.

An unprecedented one month “Sahavas” Congregation was held at Meherabad during second of February, 1958, where about 1,500 men and women from India, Pakistan, Colombo and Africa were invited. For the Westerners in May-June of the same year a Sahavas was held in America and another in Australia.

Being ever consciously immersed in All Knowledge, Power and Bliss, Baba needs hardly anything extraneous to keep up to these heights. He is only interested in face of misery and happiness of mankind, to see that man's journey to realize God is speeded up. His sight, darshan and His touch immensely become helpful towards self-enfoldment. He has the potency when pleased of transforming a soul in a flash from “Nara to Narayana,” that is, from man to God. To make people derive His blessings alone He longs them to know Him and to go to Him, to love Him and obey Him.

Munoo J Bharucha





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