

Family Letters

From 5th December 1962

To

Dearest Family,

"Although I am present everywhere eternally in my formless Infinite state, from time to time I take form. This taking of the form and leaving it is termed my physical birth and death. In this sense I am born and (in this sense) I die when my universal work is finished."

- MEHER BABA -

On 30th July 1968, Baba said:

"My work is done. It is completed 100% to my satisfaction."

Two weeks after this, Baba remarked that there were a few touches He had to give to His completed work before releasing it and setting it in motion.

On 13th October 1968, Baba said:

"Today I say: THE TIME HAS COME. Remember this!"

On 30th January 1969, Baba reminded us, saying to a visiting doctor:
"My Time has come."

On 31st January 1969, news went out from Adi's office to Baba's lovers all over the world:

AVATAR MEHER BABA DROPPED HIS PHYSICAL BODY AT TWELVE NOON

31 JANUARY AT MEHERAZAD TO LIVE ETERNALLY IN THE HEARTS

OF ALL HIS LOVERS. BELOVED BABA'S BODY WILL BE INTERRED

AT MEHERABAD ARANGACON ON 1 FEBRUARY AT 10 A.M. IN THE TOMB

HE HAD ORDERED TO BE BUILT LONG AGO.

Most Baba-lovers' first reaction to this news was utter disbelief -- they could not believe it. Some thought a prankster had wired them false news in Adi's name, and they frantically wired back 'Please confirm news'. Ironically, a message confirming the news was wrongly relayed in some instances and complicated matters. Adi and his small staff were busy night and day coping with phone calls and telegrams to and from inland and overseas. Disbelief at the news was followed by shock and anguish -- many thousands of individuals felt orphaned by this Event. They longed to rush to Meherabad to pay their last respects to the beloved body of the Ancient One. Lovers from Bombay and Poona and other parts of Maharashtra state got there long before sunrise. Lovers from distant states in India entreated us to postpone interment till they could reach Meherabad. The declared time of interment -- February 1, 10 a.m. -- caused confusion, deterring many from starting out as they thought they would be too late. But many, regardless of this, came from different parts of India and from abroad, to lay their heads at the threshold of the place where rested the body of their Beloved. And they found that even at the last their Beloved obliged them, that He was indeed the slave of the love of His lovers. For seven days Beloved Baba lay in the open crypt of the Tomb, His face softly radiant, looking as though He were simply asleep. For seven days and

nights Baba gave His silent darshan to thousands of His lovers, gave His darshan "reclining" as He had said He would do. It was Darshan indeed - an unforgettable week of Darshan on Meherabad Hill where His lovers thronged to bow down at His feet, offer Him garlands of roses, songs of praise, tears of love. As they filed out after having His darshan in the Tomb, many a lover was heard exclaiming: "Oh, how beautiful He looks! How young He looks!" We saw Baba shining from their tear-drowned eyes, Baba who said "I am Love". Language was no problem, just "Baba" "Baba" "Baba" was complete exchange for hearts eloquent with His Love. The breath that stirred this gathering of lovers of various religions and tongues, was not so much a sighing of "Come, let us weep together" but a crying of "Come, let us adore Him!"

Meherabad*, down-the-hill and up-the-hill, Baba's first headquarters created by Him in 1922, was for many years the stage of His divine play as God-Man. There unfolded the scenes of His activities with the early disciples, with the boys of Prem Ashram and Babajan School, with the masts and the mad, the poor, the lepers, the sick, the villagers and the untouchables. There on Meherabad Hill is the Tomb which Baba had ordered to be built for the burying of His body when He dropped it -- the Tomb in which He stayed in seclusion twice, once for a period of six months. (When it was built in 1927 it had an ordinary tin roof; in 1938 this was replaced by the dome as it now stands, and its interior painted with pictures by the Swiss artist Helen Dahm.) Since 1944 when Baba moved to Meherazad**, His second abode where He has stayed longer than at any other place, Meherabad gradually 'retired'. Except for the glorious periods of sahavas and darshan, the last of which was held on 10th July 1958, it stayed in retirement -- basking in the glory of its past, waiting for a visit from the Master, peering dimly into the future that would fulfil His words: "Meherabad will one day become the greatest place of pilgrimage on earth."

The 'future' began at sunset on the 31st of January 1969, when we placed the body of our Beloved in the Tomb on Meherabad Hill. Overnight Meherabad was transformed from an isolated retreat into a crowded pilgrimage-ground. It swarmed with people, buses, cycles, taxis, cars, tongas, bullock carts. Padri, who has looked after the place all these years, had a tough job trying to accommodate the hourly growing number of lovers. Every foot of indoor and outdoor space was used for their camping in during those days and nights. A 'Meher Baba Restaurant' sprang up by the roadside; and a signpost pointed to the footpath leading to the Hill. A railway track runs between upper and lower Meherabad, and trains obliged by stopping there to disgorge their load of lovers from Bombay and Andhra. Throughout the seven days, and for days after, we could hear passing trains give a long whistle as they went by the Hill -- the drivers were saluting the Avatar of the Age.

Meherabad has no electricity, but there was enough light. There was God's lantern lighting the way for His pilgrims -- the full moon shone in a clear sky during the entire Week. Neon lights blazed around the Tomb, shining with the love of His lovers of Vijayawada (Andhra) who had a generator installed and working all night throughout the Week and after. Crowded at all times was the improvised shade put up near the Tomb to shelter His lovers from the blistering sun. Outside the Tomb's east window is a stone platform

* Meher-abad ('abad' meaning prosperous), on the outskirts of Arangaon village, is five miles south of Ahmednagar.

** Meher-azad ('azad' meaning free), outside Pimpalgaon-Malvi village, is nine miles north of Ahmednagar.

where the Prem Ashram boys often gathered to hear the discourses the Beloved gave them through the window, at the time when He was there in seclusion and did not step out. Now the platform was serving as a stage for groups of Bababhajan singers from Arangaon village, Ahmednagar, Poona, Bombay, Nizamabad, Navsari, Andhra State, and other places. The singing and music went on from evening till four in the morning, and we thought of the smiling remark the Beloved had made on His return from His Andhra tour years ago: "My lovers sang outside my window all night while I rested." They were doing the same thing now.

None wanted to leave Meherabad until the Beloved's body was interred. None could say when this would be. The time of 10 a.m. on February 1 as first declared, was based on medical advice that as the body was not embalmed the interment could not be delayed longer than 20 hours, even though surrounded by a border of ice-blocks as arranged. Mehera and I felt that the Beloved Himself would give an indication of when it should be done, that as long as His dear body remained fresh and lovely we would not have it covered up. Even after a week it was not found necessary to place the covering! But as Baba had told us on the last day, the morning of 31st January, that after seven days He would be 100% free (from suffering, as we interpreted His hand gestures to mean), we took that as an indication. And so, seven days after the Event, at 12.15 noon on Friday the 7th of February 1969, the interment took place amid thousands of voices singing His glorious Name and resonant cries of AVATAR MEHER BABA KI JAI!!!

For all the lovers physically absent and eager to know details about the Beloved's dropping His body, a written account of the facts was among the tasks of first importance. Francis took it over and did a wonderful job. The account was circulated by Adi to all in India and abroad. I reproduce it here:

2nd Day, 50th Week, Meher Year 74

This is the true account of Avatar Meher Baba's dropping His body, according to the resident mandali.

The three years of intense work in seclusion had had an untold effect upon His body, and a faint reflection of this on us caused a deep depression among us. But beloved Baba warned us that this was disobeying His order to be always cheerful in His presence. And He quoted, as He had many times over the years, Hafiz's couplet: "Befitting a fortunate slave carry out every command of the Master without any question of why and what."

On 13th October 1968 Baba told us that He would give His darshan to all His lovers all over the world from 10th April to 10th June 1969. Considering His physical condition we were apprehensive of His body standing such a strain. But He said, "It will be easy for me to give my lovers my darshan, so you are not to feel concerned about it. I will give darshan reclining and that will be no strain on my body. It will be different from all previous darshans and it will be the last in silence. Although I will be reclining I will be very strong. My physical condition now is because of my work, but by then my work will be complete and my exultation will be great. A very poor man winning a rich lottery can become so excited over his fortune that he collapses and dies. My fortune will be in my work being finished and in the knowledge of its certain results; but my exultation will not cause my collapse - it will be my glory."

Despite these assurances, Baba's health became worse. But the symptoms were completely confusing to the doctors we called from Poona and Bombay. His blood urea was so high that the doctors said usually an ordinary man in such a condition would go into a coma, but there was not even the least sign of mental confusion or the faintest trace of uremic odour. Similarly, when muscular

spasms were occurring, when a specialist from Bombay examined Him he asked why he had been called, because there were no symptoms at all - Baba's condition was quite normal.

Outwardly, to our eyes, Baba's condition deteriorated still further, and we wanted to take Him to Poona so that further tests could be carried out, but He refused to go and warned us that we should not try and take Him against His wish. He said, "If you want me to drop my body now, then take me to Poona. My condition has no medical grounds at all; it is due purely to the strain of my work. Do not call the doctors again until I tell you." And so, helpless before His will, we had to obey His will.

Over the last days Baba's body manifested severe spasms, and He told us, "This is my crucifixion." Two days before He dropped His body He told us to call the doctors. The one from Poona came the next morning and said he could do nothing until further tests were done so that a definite diagnosis could be arrived at; and this could only be done if Baba went to Poona. Baba said to him, "My time has come."

The next day the doctor from Bombay came, and also one from Ahmednagar. By the time they arrived a great spasm shook His body, the pulse rate fell to nothing, and breathing ceased. This was at 12.15 p.m. At 12 noon He had been joking with us about all the medicines He had been given.

In the evening we brought His body to Meherabad. The sun was setting and the moon was rising as we placed it in the tomb for His lovers to take His darshan, fulfilling beloved Baba's word that He would give His darshan reclining.

* * *

Of the Meherazad men and women mandali who accompanies His body on that unbelievable journey to Meherabad, the role of Baba's beloved Mehera was the hardest. But she played it supremely, surrendering the anguish of her heart to the wish of her Beloved who had asked her to "Keep courage". And even now, through her overwhelming pain of separation from Him, He helps her to keep courage.

Although we started out from Meherazad on that Friday evening with hearts numbed and empty, our hands had been kept occupied in doing the things that the Beloved would want us to do. In the midst of many practical details that Eruch was seeing to, he reminded me to take along our gramophone and the record of 'Begin the Beguine'. Eruch said that Baba had told him, many times over the years, to play this song by His side when He dropped His body. And so on that night of 31st January, and the next day, seven times I played the song of Begin the Beguine by His side - at first in the Cabin where His body rested for a while and later in the Tomb. And while the song played, it seemed to convey to us His message that this was not an end but the beginning -- the beginning of His completed work bearing fruit. A day before dropping the body, even while the movement of His fingers brought on a renewed spasm, Baba told us, "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!"

Being wiser after the Event, we now see deeper significance in the message that beloved Baba had dictated on 17th January 1968, His message for the 43rd anniversary of His Silence to be released on 10th July 1968. It was not released, and Baba did not have any other message sent out in its place. Feeling that perhaps it was meant to be released now, I give it here:

DIVINE FATHER HELP YOUR BELOVED SON TO CARRY OUT

ALL YOUR WORK THIS YEAR, FOR JULY OF THIS YEAR WILL

MARK THE LAST YEAR OF HIS SILENCE.

- MEHER BABA -

The Silence of Meher Baba -- as unheard, as un-understood, as unfathomable, as ever. And as ever, more than ever, His lovers talk about His Silence. They ask themselves, so that they might answer the sceptics: Has the Silence been unbroken? Has the Silence been broken and not been heard? Baba said He will break His Silence while in the body -- which body does it mean? Did He mean His universal body? Will the breaking of His Silence be manifest in the shape of events to come, rather than in Sound form? A hundred questions, having as many answers as there are lovers. Not only has each lover his or her answer, each lover is an answer. That the questions don't question the breaking of His Silence, but simply seek to know 'when' and 'how', is enough answer for the sceptics of the world. In His lovers' unwavering faith and love, Baba's Silence is heard continuously.

The 10th of July, a day for the world to observe in honour of the Silence observed by God as Man for men. As beloved Baba had wished His lovers to observe silence (without the option of a fast) for twenty-four hours on 10th July of last year, 1968, so we feel that all His lovers must observe silence from midnight of July 9 to midnight of July 10 of this year, 1969 -- and for all years to come. There will not be any circular going out in regard to this -- please do not expect or await any.

Meher Year 75 was celebrated by His lovers everywhere. Never was the Beloved's presence felt as much as it was on this 75th anniversary of His Birth, felt by His lovers and by the people who witnessed its celebration. The scale on which it was celebrated is not in measure to the size and shape of the celebration -- although in many instances these were tremendous by any standard -- but to the force of love that moved it. It was as though the dam of past prejudices and problems had burst, and Baba's Love went out to all. This was very evident in the Birthday activities of many Baba-Centres, including Ahmednagar and Poona.

It is customary in India to give a "bhandara", a feast for the poor, in the name of a Master. On this 25th of February, the Baba-Centre at Ahmednagar gave a massive bhandara in beloved Baba's Name. Some twenty thousand people, from Ahmednagar city and neighbouring villages, came to the Centre that Day and had their fill of the feast which continued for twelve hours! They feasted on the delicious food prepared and served by the lovers, they feasted on His Name that rang to the skies in 'Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai', they feasted on His Love that brought them there. The citizens of Poona had a feast of another kind. Their eyes had never feasted on such a sight as greeted them on the streets of Poona on that evening of February 25. They were witnessing the Baba-procession planned by Baba's Centre in Poona. It was a jubilant procession of 2000 men women and children, starting from the Centre at 7 o'clock and winding through the streets of the city for nearly four hours, streets that were lined thick with spectators who outnumbered the procession! People crowded the windows and balconies of their homes, watching the Beloved's lifesize portrait riding in a four-horse chariot decked with flowers and lights, listening to the accompanying music and bhajans, fascinated by the 'lejhim' danced by groups of men, amazed that Meher Baba's lovers were even now celebrating His Birthday. One young group of lovers who spontaneously joined in the dancing, consisted of Iranis including Baba's twin nephews. They danced non-stop, danced rapturously as though intoxicated, as Ramakrishnan later told us. Eruch's brother Meherwan wrote: "At every crossroad the procession stopped while the lejhim was danced, and traffic came to a halt in all directions, while shouts of 'Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai' continually rent the air. By the end, we had all shouted ourselves hoarse!"

This is the spirit in which His lovers at many places, in the East and West, celebrated their Beloved's 75th Birth Day. The lovers of Andhra continued their daily celebration for 75 days without a break -- Baba could drop His body, but He could not drop out of their hearts! "In short", as Eruch wrote in a letter, "it is obvious that the lovers of Baba believe that Baba is in their

midst, although His physical presence is out of sight. He seems to have come into their hearts more forcefully than ever before. They feel His presence without seeing Him, and I can quite believe that, because I too feel that way. Although I miss Him, I feel His presence without seeing Him -- the same as when Baba used to send me away on some errand, He being where He was."

Baba's presence was felt very much by us on the 25th. Meherazad celebrated the Day as usual -- the decorations, the birthday cake with the one candle for the One Beloved, all of us calling out 'Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai' at the stroke of 5 in the morning; then the Arti, the Prayers, the Birthday song, the gramophone music played over a loud-speaker hired from the village. We had a dear guest with us that day: Maharani Shantadevi of Baroda. One unusual item was our visit to Meherabad, to Beloved Baba at the Tomb. There we witnessed His lovers of Arangaon celebrating His Day. All night they sang songs composed for Him, all morning they played their drums and cymbals while they danced for Him -- we never saw such exultant and rhythmic dancing! The whole village seemed to have turned up for Baba's darshan. Young and old, in tatters and in finery, the villagers came up the Hill and filed into the Tomb for Baba's darshan. On the stone floor at His feet they placed their heads in obeisance, and taught their children to do the same (sometimes with the help of a firm hand on their heads). The garlands of jasmine and roses piling up beside Him, were a fragrant reminder of His words: "I will give Darshan in silence."

On an earlier visit to Meherabad, a visitor asked me whether we felt that Baba's dropping the body at this time had been a 'miscalculation' on His part. The answer was an emphatic NO. It is we who hadn't reckoned for it, were completely unprepared, taken entirely unawares. And yet, looking back, we find that beloved Baba had prepared us, had given us many hints that now stand out glaringly in the light of the Event. But what He had disclosed with one hand, He had covered with the other. As for instance, on the morning of that Friday the 31st of January (1969) Baba said to us, "Today is my crucifixion". But several times in the past He had said, "Christ was crucified once. I am crucified daily." In November (1968) Baba told a visitor to Meherazad, "Come again in the month of July. Don't wait for me to call you; come without being called." We assumed it was His way of assuring the lover that his coming would not be postponed. Long before the Darshan circular went out, Baba casually remarked that soon when He started giving His darshan to His lovers, it would not be for a limited period but for all time. We interpreted this in different ways. Whenever some lovers came to Meherazad hoping to see Him, Baba sent them word "Come for my darshan in Poona -- I will not be in seclusion then." Just before the last family letter went out, Eruch pointed out to Baba that (considering the condition of His health) if He wished to cancel the approaching Darshan it was yet possible to do so. Baba smiled and said "No, it is not to be cancelled. I will give my Darshan to my lovers. I will give it on my own terms."

And we find that many of His lovers in the East and West*, those who had planned to come to Poona for the Darshan, are going ahead with their plans, honouring His invitation to them which said:

"... how beloved Baba will give His darshan to the thousands who will come, yet remains to be determined; but it will be. He will give His darshan. This darshan, Baba says, will be the last given in Silence -- the last before He speaks His world-renewing Word of words."

In response to the lovers' wish to come to Poona for the Darshan, Adi had sent out this intimation to all concerned on February 8 :

p.t.o.

* Each Western lover coming to Poona, please remember to bring a wide-brimmed hat to protect you from the Indian summer sun; and a flash-light for use when electricity fails (or is turned off during thunderstorms in May and June).

DESPITE BABA'S PHYSICAL ABSENCE THOSE LOVERS WHO DESIRE TO VISIT GURUPRASAD POONA TO HONOUR BABA'S INVITATION FOR DARSHAN UP TO TENTH JUNE CAN STILL COME ABIDING STRICTLY TO THE SCHEDULED DATES AND CONDITIONS AS PER FAMILY LETTER DATED FIRST NOVEMBER. JOURNEY WILL NOW INCLUDE HALF DAY VISIT TO MEHERABAD TO PAY HOMAGE AT BABA'S TOMB. AFTER TENTH JUNE ANYONE CAN MAKE PILGRIMAGE TO POONA AND BABA'S TOMB INDIVIDUALLY OR COLLECTIVELY, UNDERSTANDING THAT ALL ARRANGEMENTS MUST BE MADE ON ONE'S OWN. INFORM ALL CONCERNED YOUR AREA. JAIBABA.

The Meherazad mandali too, men and women, will be going to Poona for the Darshan. As usual, from April beginning till June end, we will be at: Guruprasad, 24 Bund Road, Poona-1.

Often has Baba told us, "I am not this body that you see". Now we cannot see that which He was not, that which made God's infinite Love and Compassion tangible to us, that which was our constant companion. Often have we written to His many lovers who were physically absent from Him, "Beloved Baba is with you every moment. Baba says He is with His lovers always." Now the Meherazad mandali are learning to live these words, while occupied in the daily routine of duties which continue as before. Of the mandali at Meherazad (women mandali: Mehera, Mani, Goher, Naja, Meheroo, Rano; men mandali: Eruch, Pendu, Bhau, Francis, Aloba, Kaikobad, Kaka, Baidul), Kaka is no longer with us.

Twenty seven days after the Beloved dropped His body, His very dear Kaka passed away from heart failure and was buried at Meherazad as was Baba's wish. Kaka's passing away was sudden and swift, while he was resting in his easy-chair outside his room. Moments before, he was pottering about the compound in his endearing "hobbit" manner. Kaka has had a damaged heart for years, and his continuing to live so actively was a constant amazement to Goher and the other doctors. It was as if Kaka had willed himself to live for as long as he could serve his beloved Master -- which he did to the last. Even on 30th January he had made Baba 'laugh' with his usual daily entertainment, lightened Baba's burden as he had always done. The evening before he left us, Kaka repeatedly and forcefully declared what he had been telling us for days: "Baba has not gone away. Baba will come, will come. Remember, remember. Baba will come! Kaka says so. Remember!" We remember.

All the dear letters and cables that the Meherazad family has received from the Beloved's world Family, are a testimony to His IS-ness. They make it clear that for Baba's lovers Baba is and always will be. In fact it seems that Baba is with His lovers more than ever; that the jolt of the Event has thrown them closer in the unity of His Love, bound them firmer in their resolve to live His Message. Beloved Baba completed His Work. Now the lovers have work to do. As Francis said in a cable to Australia, "Let us now begin the real work of loving Him as He should be loved."

That the Beloved's lovers are testifying to His Presence is not surprising. But we find strangers doing so too -- men and women who had not known of Baba, who were simply acquainted with His Name! Several individuals tell of having seen Baba since He dropped the body, and personally recounted their experiences to Baba's lovers who have recounted them to us. The first we heard of was the experience of a Zoroastrian High Priest - he had known of Baba and revered Him, but had neither love nor belief. As told by him, Baba appeared to him in the early hours of the morning of the Event. He saw Baba, a bright light round His head, riding speedily past him on a white horse and saying "I am going to my Manzil (destination)." Overpowered by this vision, the priest felt compelled to visit Meherabad. There he asked permission to enter the Tomb and pray for a while. After doing this, he went down the steps of the crypt and took Baba's darshan by reverently touching His feet -- an unprecedented act on the part of a Zoroastrian priest! On the final day too he had a glimpse of the Beloved's compassion. After leaving the Tomb, the priest felt drawn to take yet another look at Baba, and jostled his way back through the crowd. But however much he craned over the solid front row of lovers' shoulders, he could not see into the crypt. Then, all of a sudden, Baba's face appeared to his vision! The priest says that Baba actually raised His head and smiled at him, and then gradually reclined again.

Since then we have heard the experiences of a number of people in different parts of India. A few days ago when Nana Kher came from Nagpur, he told us how beloved Baba had been seen within the last month by three different citizens of Nagpur residing in different localities. Visiting the Baba-Centre in Nagpur for the first time, each of the three had related his and her experience, declaring that "Meher Baba is not dead. Meher Baba can never die. Meher Baba is alive. We have seen Him, seen Him in the body." These persons were not lovers of Baba, they were not even acquainted with lovers of Baba. Their only contact with Baba was that they had at some time heard the name of Meher Baba. This is a sketch of their accounts as heard by me!

On 3rd February (1969), a clerk working in a Sales Tax department, was sitting in his bedroom before starting out for the office. While seated there, he saw a jeep approach and stop by his front door. From it he saw Baba step out with a few other men, stopping to converse with them for a while. The clerk also saw and heard some people standing around the jeep calling out "Meher Baba has come", and instantly he bowed down with reverence and love that surged over him. Just then Baba turned His face towards him and smiled. The clerk says that he was fully awake at the time; that until this scene before his eyes disappeared, he took it to be an actual occurrence.

The second man who had a similar experience, is a deputy collector. An ardent devotee of Lord Rama, he daily meditated before Rama's picture and recited Sanskrit couplets which invoke Rama's protection and guidance. On the 7th of February, while he was doing this, he was confronted by a blinding light. Opening his eyes he saw a man before him, a man whom he instinctively recognized as Meher Baba. Filled with a happiness he had never experienced, he gazed adoringly at Baba. This went on for over an hour, during which Baba appeared in various garbs and headgears -- now in a sadra, now in Western suit, now in a kafni, now wearing a scarf, now a fez cap. It continued even after his wife interrupted by coming in to remind him that it was long past supper time. Although she managed to coax him away for a while, when he returned Baba was again with him for nearly two hours more. It amazed him to learn that his wife had not seen Baba when she had entered the room, had seen no one in the room beside her husband! This deputy collector now tells others, "Meher Baba is the Avatar - He was Rama, He is Meher Baba. He is the one and the same Avatar. He is, and always will be."

A middle-aged housewife was the third person - she had come across Baba's name in some booklet, years ago. Recounting her experience she said that on 25th February she had been busy all day attending to a sick relative. Returning home, she tried to catch up on her neglected household chores and

started at the sink. Being fond of devotional singing, she sang while she washed the dishes. Suddenly the room lighted up with a dazzling light. She turned to see what had caused it, and beheld a smiling figure reclining on a tiger skin, the right hand forming the sign that means "Good!". Instinctively she knew that this was Meher Baba. Bathed in a bliss she didn't know could exist, she bowed low before Him. She felt inspired to compose a song for Him, and wrote it down then and there -- a song that touched the hearts of Baba's lovers to whom she presented it at the Centre. There at the Centre she saw the picture of beloved Baba that is exactly as He had appeared to her at her home. She had never set eyes on it before, nor on any other picture of the Beloved.

Hearing of these and other experiences had by other people, makes us feel that perhaps, in a way, the Darshan has begun. If so, it seems that Baba is starting from the fringe of the outermost circle and that His lovers' turn will follow. Recently a lover asked me if any of us had had any extraordinary experience since the Event, whether Baba had appeared to any of the mandali in a Vision. Perhaps he was startled at my reply that "Nowadays Baba does not appear even in our dreams". I went on to tell him what the Beloved had explained long ago, giving us the simile of a lighted lantern placed on the floor. While the lantern sheds light all over the room, the circle close to its base is in shadow. Beloved Baba had said: "When I give my close circle that which I have to give, it will be the real thing." As again Baba said, in His last message to His lovers:

"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."

Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai!

Ever lovingly,

MANI

Meherazad, 26th January 1969

Dearest Family,

A prosperous 1969 to all of us — prosperous in the wealth of Baba's Love which thrives on poverty of the lover's self!

We stand on the last step of the 1960's, arms laden with gifts of His Compassion, hearts singing in tune with these lines from a lover in the West:

Amidst the holiday conventions of giving and receiving gifts, more and more hearts are rejoicing in the only Real Gift.

God has given Himself to His Creation.

The glory of this Gift is that the joy of receiving is the joy of giving. Receiving the Beloved means giving Him love. Giving Him love means receiving His Love. Receiving the Love of the Beloved means sharing it with all. Sharing Beloved's Love means receiving Him in all.

O God, most Beloved Baba, may we show our gratitude for Your supreme Gift of Yourself by receiving Your Love and giving Your Love and living Your Message of Love in our lives.

Although 1969 begins with clouded skies — the clouds of personal trials and tribulations in the lives of a number of His close ones, the clouds of world-wide disunity and violence — for His lovers there is the resplendent silver lining promising fulfilment of the long longed-for darshan of their Beloved. Even through the great cloud of Baba's health there is a small soft light shining. I wrote to Fredella some days ago: "Beloved Baba's health has not been at all good for some time, from the tremendous strain of His Seclusion work. And although the extreme anaemia (which a recent routine test showed) has been promptly remedied, His physical condition is very weak. Goher and the other doctors strongly feel there should be a thorough check-up done. As this is not possible at Meherazad-Ahmednagar, we're trying to persuade Baba to make an early move to have it done in Poona. We are hoping He will agree."

Baba did NOT agree. He refuses moving to Poona before the usual date, which is about the end of March, in time for the Darshan beginning 10th April. 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 the light of recent tests made, the doctors are much puzzled and amazed by certain favourable factors that are contrary to all rules of medical science!

Baba tells us that He is both God & 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 over-anxious or worried, He reminds us: "Don't forget I am God. I know all. Simply do as I say." We bow to His Will.

I did not expect to write to you before February. What actually launches this letter on its course round the world at this time, is another circular just issued by Adi — Life Circular No.71, which I give here for all of His Western family:

Beloved Avatar Meher Baba wishes all His lovers to know that His three years of intense work has shattered His health.

In spite of this He has invited His lovers from all over the world to come to Him for His darshan next summer, for it is the time for them to come to Him and receive His Love.

It is the time; and the place, Guruprasad, Poona has been fixed.

But with the present condition of His health, how beloved Baba will give His darshan to the thousands who will come, yet remains to be determined; but it will be. He will give His darshan.

This darshan, Baba says, will be the last given in Silence — the last before He speaks His world-renewing Word of words.

- NOTE: 1) No one should write, telegraph or cable for Baba's blessings for persons or events or programs, but remain content in the knowledge that His blessings are continually with His lovers. No such communications will be conveyed to Baba and so cannot be acknowledged.
- 2) No one should attempt to see Baba until 10th April onwards in accordance with Avatar Meher Baba's conditions printed in Life Circular No.70 dated 1st November 1968.
- 3) No one should write to Baba or to the resident mandali and Adi about problems of Baba-work or conduct of centres, or of inquiry about Baba's health, as time and circumstance will not permit our attention.
- 4) Change of postal and telegraphic address only should be communicated to Adi.

* * * * *

Remarking on this last darshan to be given in Silence, Baba said it will not only be last it will be unparalleled. This He tells us from His omniscience. But viewed even from our angle it appears so, when we compare it with just the figures of past darshans. Taking a single point: At the one week of East-West Gathering held in Poona in 1962, the total number of His lovers from overseas was less than 200. For this 1969 Darshan of eight weeks' duration, in the first week alone, the number of Western lovers expected is 250 — the limit laid down for each week! It is astonishing but not surprising, for His Family has grown massively in the last few years. His children have waited long for this homecoming, and now that the way is open they are toiling towards the means. Baba's Moochewalla (Rick Chapman, U.S.A.), directed to

write to Him, wrote after receiving the last Family-letter:

"The latest Family-Letter has made a tremendous impact on the Family of Your lovers, who have so long been so eager for a glimpse of their Beloved. While most Western lovers look with awe at the love of Your Eastern lovers, many of whom will journey long distances at great hardship to see You, only once, they seem to give no second thought to the prospect of settling down to five months of hard working and tight saving to fly to India for a mere week, and that at knowing they will see none of the 'sights' in India. Powerful evidence of the love in so many of these new lovers, who have their sights on One Sight only and will do anything they can for a few moments with their eternal Beloved.

"May we all come to You, dear Baba, with our hearts in our hands, with no expectation and no purpose except to be totally resigned to Your Perfect Will of Love, to obey You down to the last thread of the Daaman, to take Your Love with us in our hearts to every corner of the world, as evidence that the Christ has come."

There are the many who know the Christ has come, and adore Him; the many who know but cannot believe; the many who do not know and await Him; and those who sit on the fence, waiting. Not so long ago Baba said to a sincere visitor: "I am the Expected One who will also be the Accepted One while I am yet in this body. All will know me when I manifest, but those who know and love me now are the really fortunate." That in this Advent the privilege of accepting the Expected One will not be left to history, but given to the people of today's world, is witnessed by us constantly. Among the most recent happenings that testify to this, is the public and official cognizance given to the place where He was born. As one who heard reports of it remarked: That the AVATAR is honoured in His lifetime and in His hometown, honoured not only by the people but by the People's Government — this is surely unique!

On a wall of one of the cottage-wards standing in the grounds of the Sassoon General Hospitals in Poona, is a marble slab with these words engraved on it in English and Marathi: "AVATAR MEHER BABA WAS BORN IN SASSOON GENERAL HOSPITALS on 25th February 1894." Sanction to install this marble inscription was given telegraphically by the Government of Maharashtra. Its unveiling, done by the deputy Speaker of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly, was attended by dignitaries and staff of the Hospital, by representatives of the Press, and of course by lovers of Baba. This was on 9th December 1968 — it was the second honouring of the place honoured by our Beloved's birth. The first, inaugurated by the Dean of the Sassoon Hospitals, was on 1st December 1968 — the first of the ten days when the Hospital was celebrating its 100th year. On that day, Baba-lovers from all parts of Poona assembled in the Auditorium of the B.J. Medical College (adjoining Sassoon Hospital) where the Parvardigar and Repentance prayers were recited, speeches made by some of His lovers from different parts of India, a Baba-film shown, and the Arti sung. A proud day for the assembly of Baba's lovers, particularly for His brother Jal who was responsible for the idea and labour of bringing about these unique events that mark an Event of universal importance.

Adi, who played a chief role on both occasions, has given a detailed account in the Christmas issue of 'Divya Vani'. English and vernacular newspapers also recorded the events in words and pictures — some went as far as to give pictures of Baba, of His parents, and of the maternity cottage where He was born. A number of papers, which surprisingly included the Times of India, published this message given by Baba for the occasion of the hospital's centenary:

I GIVE MY BLESSINGS TO THE ADMINISTRATIVE

MEDICAL AND WORKER STAFF OF THIS HOSPITAL

IN WHICH I, THE DELIVERER OF THE WORLD,

WAS DELIVERED TO THE WORLD.

- MEHER BABA -

The message was in response to a letter from Prof. Dr.G.S.Mutalik, Organizing Secretary for the Centenary celebrations of the Sassoon General Hospitals, asking for His blessings on the occasion.

In 1894, before the expansion of the hospital had begun, the main building with its adjoining cottages and private wards was known as the David Sassoon Hospital. The wall that now bears the marble engraving shows the ward where seventy-five years ago a sixteen year old girl named Shireen gave birth to the God-Child. His birth was heralded by a strangely prophetic dream which the young mother had the night before He was born. Sheriar, the father, on hearing his wife's dream had exclaimed "Shireen, you do not know Who this Child is that is to be born unto us!" I might add here, that even now when Baba speaks of His father, He says "There was none like him. It was because of him that I was born as his child."

Dreams and visions - beloved Baba discourages us from attaching importance to them, for all life is a dreaming that the Soul must go through before awakening to Reality. But dreams and visions are also His servants who may serve to awaken hearts to His Love. Over the years, as we have known from personal recountings and letters, a number of individuals who are Baba-lovers were first awakened to Baba through a vision of Him. Of late we've been hearing of such episodes more often, which is what inspires me to touch on the subject and to give this small selection of accounts heard at different times:

The following experience, as narrated to us by Eruch's family, was had by a woman living in Aden. A staunch and pious Zoroastrian, she had heard of Baba but refused to entertain the preposterous idea that He could be the same as Lord Zoroaster (the Christ)! One morning, while she was praying before a framed portrait of Zoroaster, she saw the picture fade away before her eyes and in its place appeared a Face she had never seen before - it wore an expression of ineffable love, and hair that was down to the shoulders of a brown fur coat. For a long time she believed it to have been a vision of St. Peter, until one day she saw a picture of Baba in the home of a dear friend in India, a head study that seemed to her a replica of her vision - and then she knew that it was Meher Baba she had seen in Zoroaster's picture! She and her family are devoted Baba-lovers.

Another instance is of a woman in U.S.A. who hadn't even heard of Baba. She was lying critically ill in hospital, when she saw the form of a man approach her bedside. He was dressed in a soft white robe, bathed in a light that was dazzling but cool. Smiling with love, He bent down and placed a hand on her brow that soothed her to sleep. Years later she came across a picture of Baba in some magazine, and recognized her Visitor of the hospital! As far as I recall, this was related to us by Norina (Princess Matchabelli) during the years she was with us in the ashram at Meherabad.

Among the very recent we have heard of, is the experience of a man in Bombay, a Parsi who denied and challenged Baba's divinity whenever he heard his acquaintances and friends talk about Him. One night, in an agonizingly vivid dream, he saw a sky overcast with dark clouds. While he was gazing up, a great light shot out from the clouds like a big sun, from which a figure emerged walking towards him. Dazed, the man moved forward and kneeling before the figure he bowed his head to the ground and cried out "Meher Baba, forgive me for all that I have said about you; it was said in my ignorance. O forgive me!" The Figure then bent over him and caressed his back for a long while, until he felt his back was beginning to bleed. Looking up he found himself alone, and woke up. His wife related this dream to a Baba-lover family she visited in Ahmednagar. Understandably, both man and wife are very keen to have Baba's darshan. They have been asked to await April.

This last I quote from a letter to Baba received last month from a man in U.S.A., a complete stranger to us till now who addressed the cover of his letter so incorrectly that it's a marvel it reached us! As the letter was personal I omit his name, but I feel sure he will understand my wanting to share its heartwarming contents with the rest of the Baba Family. Beginning his letter to Baba with, "Excuse my ignorance, I do not know how to address you properly", he writes on:

"I am sure that you know about me, and that what I will tell you is not new for you. After much reflection and hesitation I have decided to communicate first with you, since from what you will read you will see that I have some justification. I have been in the U.S.A. since 1967. I was born in, Bulgaria, where for 23 years I experienced all the horrors and difficulties that people have who are characterized as enemies of the state. In addition, I was accused of having taken part in sabotage Later it was proved that I was innocent, but that did not ease my situation.

"I first quite tangibly observed help from 'invisible helpers'; when escaping, they conducted me together with my wife across the frontier in daytime, at 2.30 on a bright sunny day through wire entanglements, among mines and heavily armed guards. When I arrived in U.S. I began to work, but on July 19 I fell down the stairs and my spinal column was injured and my left arm atrophied. I was immediately operated. Two months later my wife underwent a very complicated operation for a tumour. Medical care here may be the finest in the world, but at the same time it is terribly expensive..... A few days ago I was told that I would soon have to undergo the same operation again. This was truly a great trial for me. Then unexpectedly there occurred what is actually the subject of this letter. I don't know whether to call it a miracle or a vision, and if I had not been fully conscious I would not have believed it myself.

"During the night of November 26-27 I was awakened by a strange noise; the next moment the room was filled with a blinding light, in the center of which I saw a completely normal human figure, which pronounced in pure Bulgarian: 'DO NOT FEAR. DO YOU RECOGNIZE ME?'

'Yes' I answered mechanically, 'YOU ARE MEHER BABA'.

"I must confess that I had known nothing about the bearer of that name although it is true that about four months ago I merely heard it pronounced, without any other details. What led me to answer immediately thus I can still not understand.

"The human figure with a kind glance and meek words continued: 'BELIEVE FIRMLY, I SHALL HELP YOU.'

"It became dark again; I heard the same strange noise, which also awakened my wife. She found me in a state of feverish excitement which lasted two days -- like a frenzy or trance. All this impels me to seek a means to get in touch with you. I now already believe deeply that you will help me. I will joyfully wait to receive your instructions. My greatest hope is, if I can, to be of service to you.

Yours sincerely,

....."

And so another lover is born, from the womb of suffering into a life of His Love. In replying to his letter, Adi conveyed this from beloved Baba: "Meher Baba wants you to know that your sufferings have brought you to Him He says that He has been with you in your dark hours, and will continue to be with you and help you if you hold firmly to Him."

This does not always imply that Baba removes our material sufferings, but when His Love is our strength they are lighter to bear. A man, badly crippled, once wrote to Baba: "For fourteen years I have been confined to a wheel chair. Since a year I have come to know of you, and believe in you. I am still confined to my chair, but it is not the same any more because you are with me. Now I not only can bear my affliction without bitterness, I know it to be the tool that prepared me to receive your Love."

I don't know when the next letter will be going out, but at least I know it cannot be before the Darshan in Guruprasad — unless of course another Circular causes a premature delivery like this one! Although this letter is pretty long it is not complete, in that it fails to include a report of the work that Baba's lover-workers in the East and West are doing in reaching out His Love to others. But this is not because there is little to report, it is because there is too much! And even that is but a part of the whole, for what we know of is what we gather from stray reports and printed matter (invitations to Baba-gatherings, News letters, posters and cards with the Beloved's pictures and sayings, pamphlets from the various Meher Baba Information outlets); and from what we see through the windows of regular Baba-magazines that store the precious grains of words and works relating to Him: "The Awakener" and "The Glow" and "Divya Vani" (in English), "Meher Pukar" (in Hindi), and "Avatar Meher" (in Telugu). In recent issues, through an account given by May Lundquist we have shared the joy and glory of an unprecedented Baba-procession in this year's Warana Spring Festival of Australia; and of the dynamic visit to England by (Dr.) Allan Cohen who crashed barriers of official and human reserve, reaching His Message to the people through radio and television, bringing the Beloved closer to His growing family of young lovers. We only wish more accounts, as well written, were sent in to the editors of Baba-magazines by lovers in different countries for all the Family to feast on.

In this happy Birthday season welcoming Meher Year 75, which has begun with a number of His Centres observing seventy-five days of celebration of His Birthday, the Baba-magazines will have a bumper crop I'm sure. But they are waiting, as His lovers are, for the touch that will give life to the fields of their endeavours in loving and serving Him — a message from the Beloved. Beloved Baba has given the message. I convey it here; please circulate it among all His lovers in your locality before the 25th of February:

AVATAR MEHER BABA'S MESSAGE

on the occasion of

His 75th Birthday — 25th February, 1969

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.

- MEHER BABA -

Ever lovingly,

MANDLI

Meherazad, 1st November 1968

Dearest Family,

This unexpected letter following on the heels of the last one, is a momentous messenger carrying momentous tidings: the announcement from Beloved Baba for which His lovers have been waiting, waiting, waiting. That which seemed so far away such a short while ago, is now so close and large that the years of waiting appear small beside it. The first hint Baba gave us of it, was scarcely a month before His announcement was finalised and formulated in a Circular to reach all His lovers. The Circular, issued on 1st November 1968, is being sent out by Adi to all lovers in the East, and given here by me for all lovers in the West:-

On the 13th October some local workers and a few from other places were called to Meherazad to hear this new circular (Life Circular No.70) informing Avatar Meher Baba's lovers all over the world of His decision to give them His darshan next year from 10th April to 10th June in Poona.

Baba said: "No doubt you people and my lovers everywhere have been wondering why, when my period of intense Work in seclusion has finished, I have still not allowed my lovers to see me.

"The strain of that 18 months' Work 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. Now, although my health is good, and I would like to fulfil immediately the longing of my lovers to come to me — many to see me for the first time — it will yet take some time for all traces of the strain to disappear and for me to be 100% fit to see them all; and so because of this, and for practical considerations also, I have decided to give my darshan only to my lovers but not to the general public.

"This is the time for my lovers. The time for the world's crowds to come to me will be when I break my Silence and Manifest my Divinity.

"The 1962 East-West Gathering was nothing compared with what this Gathering will be. For while I was working intensely in seclusion, my worker-lovers all over the world were intensely active telling the world about me, and my Message is spreading in many parts of the West now as a forest fire before a strong wind — as it had already done in many areas of India.

"I will give my darshan daily for two hours in the morning and for two hours in the afternoon to small numbers up to 500 (Five hundred) at a time, but I will not see any of my lovers individually or give private interviews, for it would not be possible. This is my part of the bargain. How the lovers come to Poona and are accommodated will be the concern of each one who comes."

* * * * *

The following is the text of the Circular (Life Circular No.70) which is issued and being sent out to all lovers of Avatar Meher Baba as directed by Him.

All lovers of Avatar Meher Baba in the East and the West, are eagerly awaiting word from Him regarding His giving His darshan "some-time, somewhere, somehow".

Avatar Meher Baba now declares that He will give darshan to His lovers, BUT only on the terms laid down by Him in this Circular.

CONDITIONS for DARSHAN

of

AVATAR MEHER BABA

10th April -- 10th June 1969

- 1) Baba will give His darshan in Poona, for a fixed number of hours each day, from April 10 to June 10, 1969.
- 2) The Darshan will be in the central hall of Guruprasad bungalow at 24 Bund Garden Road, Poona -1. (India).
- 3) The Darshan will be strictly for his lovers, old and new, Eastern and Western. IT WILL NOT BE AN OPEN DARSHAN FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC.
- 4) Baba will give His darshan daily for two hours in the morning to Westerners and for two hours in the afternoon to Easterners separately. Morning hours will be from 9 to 11 A.M. Afternoon hours will be from 2 to 4 P.M.
- 5) a) The two hours in the morning will be exclusively for His lovers from the West from 9 to 11 A.M. upto 10th June.
b) The two hours in the afternoon will be for His lovers in the East, including Pakistan, Iran and Africa. None of these lovers should come to Guruprasad in the morning or wait at the gate in the morning for their time of Darshan in the afternoon, from 2 to 4 P.M. up to 29th May.
- 6) The lovers from the West should stay in Poona for not more than a week. They may see Baba only FOUR times during their one week's stay in Poona.
- 7) The lovers from Pakistan, Iran and Africa should stay in Poona for not more than four days. They should see Baba only TWICE during their four days' stay in Poona.
- 8) Lovers coming from anywhere in India should stay in Poona for not more than three days. They should see Baba only ONCE during their three days' stay in Poona.
- 9) Lovers residing in Poona should see Baba only ONCE during the Darshan period.
- 10) Baba will not see any one individually.
- 11) Baba will NOT give any private interviews, and no one should ask Baba for any advice or directive on their personal affairs, group activities or spiritual matters.
- 12) Group-heads may introduce new lovers to Baba. For the purpose of identity of Baba-lovers and to prevent infiltration of the public, group-heads of zonal centres should devise and issue tokens to all in their zone coming to Poona for the Darshan.

- 13) As the Darshan will be given solely in the Hall of Guruprasad bungalow, only a limited number of lovers can be accommodated at a time. Hence the Eastern lovers are divided into zones, and each zonal group must abide by the date allotted to it. The term "Eastern lovers" includes those coming from Pakistan, Iran and Africa, and they must keep to the dates fixed for their seeing Baba and arrive in Poona accordingly.

To enable all of them to have Baba's darshan, particular dates have been fixed for particular groups in the particular zones. Group-heads in their respective zones should divide the number of Baba-lovers in their zone into one or two or more groups according to the number of groups each zone contains, as follows:

<u>ZONES</u>	<u>Afternoon hours from 2 to 4 P.M.</u>	<u>GROUPS</u>	<u>1969</u>
a) POONA (& suburbs and Panshet) .....	)	Group I ---	10th April
	)	Group II --	11th April
	)	Group III -	12th April
b) BOMBAY (& Parel Village & suburbs) .....	)	Group I ----	13th April
	)	Group II --	14th April
	)	Group III -	15th April
c) GUJERAT .....	)	Group I ---	16th April
d) PAKISTAN ... (for TWO days) .....	)	...	17th & 18th April
e) HAMIRPUR (& Jalaun Dist. only) .....	)	Group I ---	19th April
	)	Group II --	20th April
	)	Group III -	22nd April
	)	Group IV -	23rd April
f) UTTAR PRADESH (Kanpur, Jhansi, Varanasi,))		
(Dehra Dun, Agra, Lucknow, )	)	Group I ---	25th April
(Allahabad, Saharanpur, )	)	Group II --	26th April
(Sultanpur, Mokimpur, )	)	Group III -	27th April
(Aligarh, Mathura, Roorkee))		
(etc.))		
g) DELHI, KASHMIR, W.BENGAL, HARYANA )	)	Group I ---	29th April
PUNJAB, BIHAR, ORISSA .....	)	Group II --	30th April
	)	Group III -	1st May
h) NAGPUR (& Saoner & rest of Maharashtra )	)	Group I ---	3rd May
(State. ....)	)	Group II --	4th May
	)	Group III -	5th May
i) MADHYA PRADESH (Jabalpur, Raipur, )	)	Group I ---	7th May
(Bilaspur, Bhopal, )	)	Group II --	8th May
(Indore, etc. ....)	)	Group III -	9th May
j) ANDHRA PRADESH (Srikakulam, Vizagapatnam )	)	Group I ---	11th May
& East Godavari Dists. ....)	)	Group II --	12th May
	)	Group III -	13th May
k) ANDHRA PRADESH (West Godavari Dist. ....)	)	Group I ---	15th May
	)	Group II --	16th May
l) ANDHRA PRADESH (Krishna Dist. ....)	)	Group I ---	18th May
	)	Group II --	19th May
m) ANDHRA PRADESH (Guntur Dist. ....)	)	Group I ---	21st May
	)	Group II --	22nd May

- n) ANDHRA PRADESH (Hyderabad, Secunderabad,) Group I — 24th May
 (& rest of Andhra,) Group II -- 25th May
 (Madras, & Kerala States) Group III - 26th May
- o) IRAN & AFRICA ... (for TWO days)) ... 28th & 29th May
- p) AHMEDNAGAR DIST. (Pathordi, Kup, Bhalawani, Padali, Pimpalgaon, Arangaon,
 (etc., Baba will fix the dates of these places later.)

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- 14) Western lovers should try and spread out their arrivals in Poona over the two months of the Darshan period. This is in view of the shortage of good hotels and accommodation suited to Western needs, and to help avoid crowding in Guruprasad Hall at darshan time.
- 15) Baba wants all His lovers, both Eastern and Western, to return home directly on leaving Poona after seeing Him. Therefore, any who plan to do sightseeing in India or outside of India should do so before coming to Poona.
- 16) Only those who can afford to make the trip for His darshan should do so, and it must be on their own responsibility in all respects and without risk to health or livelihood.
- 17) No one from abroad should come for Baba's darshan without guaranteed passage for their return home soon after the week's stay in Poona.
- 18) Baba wants all of His lovers coming for His darshan from overseas, to transact their financial dealings through the Indian banks and authorized agents according to the law of the country.
- 19) Baba does not wish any of His lovers to bring gifts for Him or for any of His people.
- 20) No one should seek or expect to receive any special permission or instructions from Baba about coming for His darshan. Any lover who wishes to come, and who can afford to come, and who is well enough in health to come, is free to do so. Each one visiting Poona for Baba's darshan must understand that he or she comes on his or her own responsibility in every respect.
- 21) Baba does not wish His lovers to write to anyone at Meherazad, or to Adi K. Irani, on any problems or queries regarding their visit to Poona for the Darshan.
- 22) Baba wants all His Eastern lovers visiting Poona for His darshan to make their own arrangements as regards conveyance, stay, food and other personal comforts. These arrangements must be seen to by individuals or their own group-heads concerned without seeking the least aid from Meherazad Mandali or from Adi and his office.
- 23) Western lovers may seek help in fixing hotel accommodation for their stay in Poona from Meherjee who has been appointed to this task by Baba. For this, the individual Western lovers should intimate Meherjee by a short letter as soon as passage has been booked, informing him of date of arrival in Poona and duration of stay in Poona, with his or her full name and address given in clear block letters. Please note his home address: Meherjee Karkaria, Meher Villa, Salisbury Park Road, Poona -1, India. Cable address is: WHITECLOUD, Poona, (India).

- 24) As appointed by Baba, His brother Jal will be in charge as general assistant and guide to the Western lovers during their stay in Poona. Taking the help of some Eastern lovers, Jal will, on request, assist in arranging transport to and from Guruprasad or a sightseeing drive of Baba-places in Poona for the Western lovers who wish it.

(To facilitate arrangement for transport to and from Guruprasad, the Western lovers should also intimate Jal, after passage has been booked, their date of arrival in Poona and duration of stay in Poona, giving full name and address in clear block letters. Address: Jal S. Irani, Meher Moholla, 765 Dastur Meher Road, Camp Poona -1, India).

- 25) Baba says that those who want to come and cannot come to Poona for His darshan should not feel upset or disheartened but remain resigned to His Love knowing that "sometime, somewhere, somehow" His darshan is assured to them also.
- 26) Baba wants the present restriction on correspondence to continue as now and be MORE STRICTLY OBSERVED.

Kindly share all the information given in this Circular with all lovers of Avatar Meher Baba in your sphere of Baba-work. Please NOTE that this Circular is NOT meant for the GENERAL PUBLIC as Baba has made it quite clear that this DARSHAN is ONLY FOR HIS LOVERS old and new.

* * * * *

The above Circular was read out to those gathered before Baba at Meherazad on 13th October. Among them was Baba's beloved 'Child', Kishinchand Gajwani, called from Bombay along with Sorabjee Siganporia - the twins in His service, as Baba has always referred to them. On the 16th, at his home in Bombay, right after his morning prayer and worship before the Beloved's picture, our Kishinchand Gajwani passed away from sudden heart failure. In the message that was cabled to the Gajwani family, Baba said:

My child Kishinchand Gajwani was fortunate to see me physically just before his coming to me for eternal rest in my divine Bliss. His deep love for and faith in me has made his whole family blessed.

I'm wondering how to shape the ending of this letter. Happily no comments are needed to frame such a letter as this one, nor would they stand up before the dazzling content of the Circular. The light of Beloved Baba's message will set aglow the hearts of His lovers who can come to Poona to be in His presence, and of His lovers who cannot come but have His presence in their hearts in the eternal assurance of His Love.

At the darshan-discussion gathering in Meherazad, Beloved Baba said:

"I have been saying: the Time is near,

it is fast approaching, it is close at hand.

Today I say: the Time has come. Remember this!"

JAI BABA!

Ever lovingly,

MANDLI

Meherazad, 9th September 1968

Dearest Family,

By the many calendars at Meherazad and other gentler reminders, I know that you are waiting to receive this letter. I too have been waiting to write it, waiting till I might capture the only news that you are waiting to receive: that Baba has announced He will give Darshan. But alas, this much wooed announcement continues to elude, appearing joyfully close at hand and painfully out of reach, seemingly near but far off as the horizon. While the world of Baba-lovers is suspended in the vacuum of a breathless waiting, while the lovers yearn for His smile and strain for His call, Beloved Baba gives no indication yet as to when they will see them. He tells them:

BE PATIENT. WAIT IN MY LOVE. THOSE WHO WAIT FOR ME

NEVER WAIT IN VAIN. YOU WILL SEE ME, BUT WAIT TILL I CALL.

HOLD ON TO MY DAAMAN - AND WAIT FOR MY CALL.

The 21st of May 1968 marked both an end and a beginning — end of the interminable seclusion (when Baba secluded Himself from seeing His lovers), and beginning of a period referred to as 'exclusion' (when His lovers are excluded from seeing Him). In short, on May 21 Baba came out of Seclusion and stepped into Exclusion without a change of the restrictions that covered the former. And, we understand from Him, this period of exclusion is the threshold leading to Inclusion, the time that will include all to His darshan!

The Work that walked hand in hand with the seclusion, did not stop when the seclusion did — it went on till the end of July. "How I kept it going over the last stretch to its completion, I alone know!" Baba told us. He said, "You cannot have a seed of an idea how crushing the pressure was, for it is beyond human understanding. On the final day my body felt as though it had been through a wringer." We had at least some measure of visual evidence of the impact borne by the body, when He looked so infinitely tired after the work. And we had occasional crumbs for our imagination, when He was in the mood to let fall some remark on some angle of the work. From one of these we learnt that a labour it was for Baba, during these specific hours daily when He worked entirely away from the gross plane, to retain the link with His physical body. He had to take great pains, He said, to keep the thread-fine link from snapping! Another absorbing remark fell on another angle. It was at one of those times when we begged Him to be less neglectful of His health, to go slower by working less hours, and Baba said: "That would mean once again prolonging the Work and postponing the date of its conclusion. If now I allow that to happen, it will indefinitely postpone the result and set it on a different course."! And so He kept working on, while we were in Poona and for weeks after we returned on 1st July to Meherazad.

While the universal Master slaved for His creation, we struggled to be worthy slaves to His wishes. With all the bans and restrictions on visitors and correspondence, we were yet unable to punch a hole in our work-lined days for a breath of idle leisure. We were occupied as ever, doing the endless little nothings that are everything when they are done at the Master's bidding. There wasn't much difference in the duties allotted usually to each. The difference was in the mettle of our obedience, obedience that was constantly tested and sharpened against our thousand weaknesses. Baba does not mow down one's shortcomings — He often makes them serve one in serving Him. When He accepts the 'all' that we surrender to Him, He accepts the myriad weaknesses that bind us and makes them serve Him for our release. In His hands, our chains become reins. How often have we seen this transformation! As a single instance, take the

inordinate inquisitiveness that is part of our Baidul's nature, a weak point that exasperates those around him. That weak point became his strong point in serving his Master, in his years of arduous service as an expert Mast-hunter. Baidul's nosy nature was an indispensable asset in ferreting out from inconceivable sources, the whereabouts and history of masts (God-intoxicated ones of the Path) whom Baba wished to contact during His many Mast-tours - information that often was jealously guarded by the masts' devotees! And so, in diverse ways, He lets our imperfections serve His perfect plan. As Baba once remarked to the disciples around Him, with a twinkle that He could not hide, "You are all nothing but broken-down furniture. But, it is I who have selected you, so you must be what I want."

It was on Tuesday the 30th of July 1968, that the work was concluded. On that evening Beloved Baba declared:

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.

At the time when we crossed the date-line of May 21, we barely glanced at it. But later when we looked back and saw it receding rapidly, we were surprised to see that it had raised no dust storm from agitated minds. Beloved Baba's statement that something great will happen soon after 21st May had filtered through newspapers to the public's ear. So it was hardly surprising that a number of His lover were apprehensive about being questioned and challenged by individuals they met, and armed themselves with answers. But when they were questioned, as sure enough they were and still continue to be - by friends, neighbours, acquaintances, strangers -- they found themselves disarmed, for the question most often put to the lovers was the same one that the lovers were asking themselves: "When will Meher Baba give darshan?"!!!

The greatest event for Baba-lovers is being with Baba. In their heart-scales no event can weigh more. Knowing their longing, as only the Beloved can who suffers His separation in them, Baba says: "I know that they are impatient to see me. And what about me? I also am impatient for them to see me. But the time has yet not come - so my lovers and I, we must wait a while longer."

With the expectancy rising higher, the impatience sometimes spills over, specially from the Western sea of His young lovers whose eyes thirst for their first glimpse of Him. To be nearer to His abode when His call comes, a number of these young ones have hitch-hiked from America, and from France and Australia. Some have hung on to the outskirts, waiting out their vigil close to Delhi and managing to renew their visas again and again. Some have come up to the threshold, to Adi's office at Ahmednagar. Each one's longing, conveyed in a letter to Adi, reached Baba. Each one received from Baba a message and instructions. The message was a treasure of His Love, the instructions were a test of their love. One and all proved true lovers. Rubbed against the Beloved's flint-hard instructions to return home without seeing Him, to wait till He calls them, their love was not found wanting. They carried out the instructions, not just on the whole but in each part. We old-timers bow down to these young ones' love that has the strength to bow down to His will so completely. To give a breath of the agony of longing and obedience that came in all their letters, I quote from one boy's letter. J.P., waiting in Delhi since many months, wrote in reply to Adi's advice to return to U.S.: "My heart has been so long set on seeing Beloved Baba that it won't listen to reason. I have been longing to proceed south to be nearer to Baba. Leaving India, turning even my physical back on Him, is beyond my powers at this point. But I am not saying I won't go home or can't go home or that I wish in any way to go against Beloved Baba's wishes. I wish to do exactly what Baba wishes me

to do. If it is His Will that I return, then I have faith that it will be revealed to me and that Baba will help me carry out His Will. Avatar Meher Baba Ki Jai!"

If the longing of His lovers is mounting, so is their number. In East and West, the number has grown to such an extent that we cannot imagine the next Darshan being arranged on the lines of any gathering or sahasas held in the past. We wonder how it is going to be managed when Baba's call bursts the dam of waiting to let His lovers in! But there is an old saying "When God tells you to ride, He will provide a horse." When the Beloved calls, His lovers will be shown the way. At times we find that in answer to their call, some are shown the way to His darshan within them. As we have come to know over the years, such experience is not so very rare among newly awakened ones -- and quite a few times it has happened to individuals who had never heard of Baba! Each time we come to know of someone having received His darshan inwardly, we are reawakened to the fact that He is everywhere. Take the instance that was mentioned in a letter received by Jal from James Taylor, one of the Baba-boys in U.S.A. : "The other day a recent vintage Baba-lover in Berkeley told us that he and a friend had planned to go to India to see Baba. They were going to write to Adi to that effect, when one night Baba gave them His loving Presence internally ... they were so overwhelmed by His shower of Love ... they now know He is everywhere."

Some others He has called to Himself in eternal darshan. They lived for Him and now live in Him, for Beloved Baba tells us:

THOSE WHO LOVE ME NEVER DIE. THEY LIVE IN ME ETERNALLY. Baba also says:

NO ONE COMES AND NO ONE GOES, AND NONE KNOWS HAPPINESS OR WOES.

The occasion that gave birth to this rhyme was a cable recently received from His dear lovers Adi & Dolly Arjani of Pakistan, conveying news of the fatal accident to His teen-age lover, their son Faredoon. Every now and then we receive a telegram or a cable, from inland or overseas, informing us that some lover and worker of Baba has dropped his or her body -- the body that housed His Love-flame and served as a beacon for others. Within two months, two of His beloved and dedicated workers in the U.S.A. -- Beryl Williams, and Warren Healy -- have come to Him. So also has His stalwart worker in England, Douglas Eve. "Beryl was and is mine for ever." "Warren's love for me was unique". "Douglas is eternally blessed." These are the first words we received from Beloved Baba when the cables concerning their passing away were read to Him -- words from the Eternal Source -- undying testimony of their love for Him, of His Love for them.

For the world, while oblivious of it, the greatest event is when God visits the earth as Man. Of all the planets in all the galaxies among all the universes, Earth alone is where this miracle happens, again and again. But when it happens, poor Earth is unconscious; it is like a king who is crowned in his sleep and misses his coronation. The God-Man (Avatar) visits the Earth when it is dark in pain and sorrow. He comes in the dead of night, and only a few see Him by the light of His Love and follow Him in adoration. The Dawn comes after He leaves, and with it comes the growing awakening, the remorse, the agonized waiting for His return, the resolution not to miss Him the next time ... many a 'next time' slipping through many a worn out resolution ... until, at last, that time is here. It is in this time, now! This God-visit is to be different. Our Earth-world will not be left asleep in darkness. The Compassionate One will shake it awake, and it will witness His Love's rising in the dawn of His Word. All the world, our God-Man tells us, will know Him when He breaks open His silence and gives to it The Word.

Already we see it is different this time. In bygone Advents it was after the God-Man dropped His body that His faithfuls set out with His message across and over the lands, brought out books on His teachings and life, made pilgrimages to the places where His feet had walked, set up houses of worship in His name and service. In the present Advent, all of this is being done now — all this and much more, while God is among us in the Man-form of Meher Baba.

Meher Baba's Message-carriers, His "workers", starting out in handfuls are now moving on in landfuls. They are a continually expanding body covering many lands, its thousand limbs moving forward with a swiftness that astonishes them. As a reporter, I find it more bewildering than astonishing. It is not possible any more to keep up with the agility of each limb, one can only follow the movement of the whole! Phrases in the reports that come in, phrases like the ones I am quoting here, give an idea of the course His Love is taking in different lands. (Australia): "... the flow and movement of beloved Baba in Australia is quickening, the root structure is strengthening & spreading." (England): "It is amazing how Baba has brought things about — His work is indeed speeding up, and there is an extraordinary sense of urgency!" (Iran): "In the Love of beloved Hazrat Meherbaba, Muslims and Zoroastrians get together, work together, eat together, as children of the One Father, as members of His ever growing Persian family — what can one call this except a miracle?" (U.S.A.): "There is a growing sense of Baba-consolidation and a firming of deeper love and commitment in more and more individuals, while the general public is becoming more familiar with the Name of the Highest of the High." "The many new lovers that are cropping up in all places in every corner of the United States, are clearly the Beloved's children, in the Beloved's family." We see many countries coming to life, part by part, with Baba's Love-touch. The world is like a huge mansion at night, and window after window lights up as the switch is turned on in each room. The latest window we see lit up in His brilliance is the state of Texas in U.S.A., where a Baba-group has formed — a sturdy young group of boys and girls who have set out to proclaim His Message through "HEMISFAIR 68" being held in San Antonio, Texas. A group newly born, whose first step is a stride!

The books on and by Meher Baba, so far published, are over a hundred. Avatar Meher Baba Centres are all over the world — the 'houses of worship' that have the fragrance of His living presence — trees in bloom, not pressed flowers from the pages of a past. Each Baba Centre, the product of the joint love of His lovers, is christened with His Name combined with its birth-place or some expression of the lovers' love-fancy. His Name is woven into their personal lives too, as when naming their home and children. For example, place-names: Meher Cottage, Meher House, Meher Manzil (abode), Meher Astana (threshold). And, personal names: Meher-prasad (boon), Meher-kumar (son), Meher-prem (love), Meher-jyoti (flame), Meher-dil (heart), and so on. As there are many young lovers by the name of Meherwan (or Merwan), in our conversations we refer to them by their parents, like 'Rhoda's Meherwan' or 'Gaimai's Meherwan' or 'Burjor's Merwan'! In Satara we knew a Christian carpenter who named his first grandson after Baba. We were so proud to hear that, so happy to see the bonny baby boy — and so startled to hear grandma calling him 'Meherbaba'! It took quite a bit of gentle persuasion to convince the family that this was not the way to do it, that the name should simply be Meherwan. Either they could not remember or pronounce the name properly, but a happy compromise was reached and the boy was named Meherban (associated in their minds with 'meher-banee', an Indian word for 'thanks').

The Beloved's Name is not confined to heart and home. It often enters His lovers' business or public interests. Today, in different parts of India, there are private businesses and public establishments that are registered under these names: Meher Pharmacy, Meher Tea Shop, Meher Foundry, Meher Agencies, Meher Cloth Shop, Meher Dispensary, Meher Farm, Meher Park, Meher Market, Meher Cafe, Meher Nagar (township), Meher Puri (housing colony), Meher Vihar, Meher Academy & Tutorial College, Meher Poultry Farm, Meher Gardens —

and perhaps others that I am not aware of. And now there is to be a Meher Cinema! Being constructed in Agra (near Delhi) by His devoted Krishna Prasad family, the 'MEHER' Cinema will be equipped for showing 70 mm films, the first of its kind in the U.P. (northern India). Lastly, I must mention one locality named after Him which was not named by His lovers, but by a governmental body. In Poona, the locality where Baba's childhood home is situated, the section with the alleys where Baba played as Meherwan, was officially named "Meher Moholla" by the Board of Poona Cantonement a number of years ago.

This Advent, this God-Man era, is indeed different!

In a message to His lovers, Beloved Baba said:

"Love makes the Formless and Infinite become enformed and finite as the God-Man among men. Love me more and more because for the sake of Love I have come among you."

Baba tells us to love Him more and more, for to love Him is to love our Self. He has come to awaken us to the knowledge of what Love means, for we have forgotten. We have forgotten to love our neighbours because we have forgotten to love our selves — else, there would be no room in us for the greed and hatred and jealousy and fear that is lording over men and nations. When Baba refers to the world and its affairs, His fingers form a cup-like hollow circle denoting a Zero — the nonentity that points to the Entity, the illusion that is the clue to Reality. Smilingly, Beloved Baba also refers to it as a Potato. Surely, we tell ourselves, He has a rotten potato on His hands at the moment, with a lot of cutting and cleaning out to do! But He is being infinitely patient, as He was telling the mandali a few days ago. Baba said: "Of all my Advents, in the present one I am exercising my patience to the utmost!"

Since the Beloved completed His work on 30th July, we receive more of His company. Every morning and afternoon He spends some hours in the Hall with His men. Before settling in the chair, Baba takes a walk up and down the Hall, with dear Kaka waddling beside Him like a protective hen. This touches and delights Baba. Kaka also provides a variety of light-hearted entertainment every day, with some act of merriment, or with his many mispronunciations of names and words that he cannot remember. Undaunted by his loss of memory for the commonly used words, Kaka has practically invented a new language which he speaks with supreme confidence and relish. A further touch of jollity is added when Francis gives his own translation of the Kaka-language. More than once Baba has said, "While everybody adds to my burden, Kaka removes a fraction of it!" When Baba leaves the Hall, it is at the time appointed by Himself. No matter how keenly He may appear to attend to discussions that come up or listen to articles and news items that are read out, He never fails to keep an eye on the wall clock. Baba's punctiliousness in the matter of time has always amazed us. But, as one lover puts it: the Eternal One, having bound Himself in Time, observes the minute rules of the game! Although Baba does not give spiritual discourses or explanations these days, the mandali receive an occasional pearl from the ocean of His whim. This is sometimes in the shape of a rhyme. Among the ones received in the last two months, are the following.

One morning in July, His fingers moving rapidly to spell out words read by Eruch, Beloved Baba said:

"GOD ALWAYS EXISTED
GOD WILL ALWAYS EXIST.
HE IS NEVER CHANGING, EVER THE SAME -
AND ILLUSION IS HIS ETERNAL GAME."

This one was given by Baba in August:

"EVERLASTING, NEVER ENDING
NEVER CHANGING, EVER THE SAME
AND HIS ONENESS IN ITS FULLNESS
PLAYS IN MANYNESS HIS GAME."

At another time, His fingers spelt out:

"Coming, Coming, Coming -- CAME!

One of the mandali said it sounded like the auctioneer's call in reverse! With a smile in His eyes, Baba said: "None of you can know what it means." A few days later Beloved Baba added on another line, making it:

"COMING, COMING, COMING -- CAME!
I AM TIRED OF THE ILLUSION GAME."

!!! Jai Baba!

Lovingly,

MANDLI.

Guruprasad, Poona, 12th May 1968

Dearest Family,

The month of May has come. Into the world of Baba-lovers it has come with a gale of promise, stirring hope in all hearts, bringing to the surface the question in all minds: Will Baba see His lovers after 21st May? Only Baba has the answer. And Baba, the Beloved, the All Knowing, Infinitely Knowing, the Knower of all minds and hearts, gives this message to all His lovers:

"I know how you feel. I know your love. I know the agony of your longing to see me. I know what I am doing and what I have to do. I know when the time will be right for you to see me, and at that time I will call you. Until that time comes, until I announce that I will see my lovers, I want you all to be patient, to wait with complete trust in my word, with complete faith in my Love for you, with complete obedience to my wishes. Until I announce that I will give my darshan to my lovers, none of you must try to come, none of you must ask to come, none of you must come. Whether I am at Guruprasad or at Meherazad, you will receive my announcement through a circular; and until such a circular is sent out you must all wait in perfect obedience to my wish.

"I am happy with your love for me which makes you proclaim to the world my message of Love and Truth. I am happy with your obedience which has helped me in my work for the universe. I am with you. I give my Love to you."

More and more we hear of lovers who travel about from place to place, often in groups, telling all men about God on earth, giving His Message to the masses. And we see the Beloved's smile reflected in their love-efforts as long as they are kept unclouded by the breath of disobedience. Never must the lovers be so busy telling the people about Baba, that they can fail to listen to what Baba tells them! This is not impossible, for in love we are children and Baba tells us that Love is no child's play. Take the instance of a group in India's northern province -- some two dozen lovers, mostly new ones, who came to Poona with the determination to have Baba's darshan in spite of Baba repeatedly saying that none must come. Their longing to see Him moved them to 'demand' His darshan by staging a silent rally outside the gates of Guruprasad! It fell to the lot of Poona veterans to convince them that this was not love's way, that we who are given the grace to love Him cannot ask for the right to disobey. When at last they left to continue their tour of spreading Baba's Message they were no doubt sadder at heart, but infinitely wiser we hope!

"Obedience is a gift from Master to man." It is the means we are given to express our love, the means by which our love may be tested and strengthened. A line from one of Baba's favourite ghazals says: "Every step I take in Your Love, is a test of my love for You." Obedience is a flight of steps that alone lead to His Darshan, steps that we must climb of our own effort. But He is always beside us, holding our hand, helping us on to Himself.

In the West there are countless new lovers of Baba, men and women who have given Him their love and their obedience, who have yet to see Him and who silently long to see Him. Sometimes this longing escapes in words, touching the hearts of those who catch it. When a new young lover wrote of separation's pain and his longing to see beloved Baba, it moved Francis to write to him in reply, a beautiful reply which I quote here in part:

"We all, dear Bob, are in the same boat. We have entangled ourselves with a Beloved we cannot measure -- who is the Ocean of our dropness; a Beloved whom we cannot see -- who is the sun of our match-flames; a Beloved whom we cannot feel -- whatever our hands touch is not Him.

"Those of us who live with Him are no better off than those who, because of His order, live away. No doubt you think that we are immeasurably more fortunate than you: you have not yet even seen Him physically, while we see Him every day. But we do not see Him whom we desire to see. We are as far away from Him as you are; our separation is as vast as yours.

"The only way out of our plight is to become perfect in waiting. Let others become perfect in whatever quality they wish; let us become perfect in waiting until our Beloved has the Whim to end our separation. And, in the meanwhile, busy ourselves in His service, telling all we can about the fact of His being here, about the fact that He loves us more than we can ever love ourselves.

"Wait, and work. Wait in obedience to His word and will; work because one has to fill in the days of waiting. Obedience is greater than love. So beloved Baba has told us over and over again."

We will be at Guruprasad for eleven days longer than our usual limit of stay, for Baba has decided to leave Poona for Meherazad on the 12th of July. The favourable weather in Poona has helped to make Baba's work easier. Even April, our hottest month, has been cool and pleasant for the most part. Perhaps the weather has also contributed toward His health which has kept well on the whole, despite the familiar fluctuations. Now we see Him looking so well and radiant, moving with such a swift stride that the mandali have a hard time keeping up with Him. Now we see Him weighed down and so infinitely tired, that they move along at snail's pace to keep in step with Him. Baba tells us that these ups and downs in His physical health are caused by the shifting pressures of His universal work.

As I sit typing on the palatial verandah of Guruprasad, I can see a fraction of the city's life coursing along the Bund Road a little distance from where we are. There is the ceaseless criss-cross of pedestrians, cyclists, buses, cars, taxis, scooters, jingling horse carriages, rumbling bullock carts, peddlers' hand carts, droning auto-rickshaws (which we call bumble-bees), backfiring motorcycles, and trucks and lorries that thunder by them all. This current of movement and sound sweeping past us all day, is a storm when compared with the stillness which abides within Guruprasad: no visitor steps in, none of us who are with Baba step out; absolute quiet is maintained during the hours when Baba does His work in the solitude of His room, so that we practically speak in whispers and move about on tiptoe. No matter how loud the cacophany of traffic from the road, the roar of a plane overhead, the piercing cheep-cheep of sparrows right at His door, the least sound from any of us near His room would disturb Baba in His work. The quiet prevailing in Guruprasad is a continuation from Meherazad. Thus in effect, except for the change of environment, we are still at Meherazad! A letter I wrote shortly before we came to Poona, tells how it was at Meherazad: "While I'm writing this Beloved Baba is sitting in the Hall, alone, for the special work He does every morning and afternoon, when we must not make the least noise. During these hours of utter quiet it is startling to hear a crow caw, or the sudden rattling of a window when the wind comes up. To walk on the gravel paths by the Hall is like walking on eggshells; and a sneeze from dear old Baidul is a threat to the sound barrier at any time, he is made to sit a good distance away under the mango tree. While we go about our daily chores 'fast fast' as usual, we are constantly reminding one another 'softly, softly'. And when these soundless sessions are over and we are again with Baba, another kind of quiet is maintained: no correspondence can be read to Him, no questions asked, no argument or excuses offered in carrying out the smallest of His day to day orders, no cause given for the least disturbance -- so fragile is the container of His momentous seclusion. But strong is the love and obedience of His lovers helping to keep it intact, for Beloved Baba informs us from time to time: 'My work is being done very satisfactorily'."

The lovers in Poona have helped supremely in this, temptingly close as they are to the place where their Master resides. One of them wrote to Adi, "Just that our Beloved will be in Poona, is the greatest thing for us. We are content to breathe in the air charged with His presence and fill our lungs to bursting point!" He could've been speaking for them all, so united has been their resolve to help by not approaching Guruprasad in any manner. How the children too have been no less aware of the strict seclusion can be imagined from an amusing incident that concerns Merwan, Baba's three year old grand-nephew living in Poona. It happened a few days after we arrived at Guruprasad. Merwan was out for a walk with his daddy, Jehangir Sukhadwala, when they came across a dead crow lying on the road. Inevitably the toddler's volley of questions began: "What is this?" "A crow" said daddy. "What's the matter with it?" "It has been shot." "Why doesn't it move?" "Because it is dead and gone." "Where has it gone?" "It has gone to Baba." At this, Merwan halted in his tracks and excitedly demanded, "What?! When Baba is in Seclusion? How come a crow can go to Baba and I can't?" I'm still wondering how daddy managed to get out of that!

What with literally a hundred and one passenger buses throughout Poona carrying Baba's picture and His message given by the 'Avatar Meher Baba Poona Centre', and the Poona press coming out in a rash of Baba-news, the mandali have had to be vigilant for possible inquirers and seekers. The Marathi papers gave the two recent Circulars in complete or condensed form. "Poona Herald", the English daily, gave condensed versions and topped them with eye-catching headlines. It gave the latest Circular declaring the continuing of Avatar Meher Baba's Seclusion until the 21st of May 1968, with the heading: CALAMITY DATE POSTPONED! -- thus inadvertently conveying a sense of the Avatar's compassion for all. On the other hand the "Free Press" of Bombay, publishing the item in its 'Talk of the town' column, headlined it: COMING CATASTROPHE! Although Baba has never actually referred to the "something great" as a calamity or a catastrophe, the newspapers' interpretation is a natural one, reflecting the world's condition which not only makes it easy for people to anticipate disaster but makes it a dreaded conclusion. Knowing it is all in the hands of the Compassionate Father, whichever way we look at it we see it as nothing less than a Blessing. But no matter how it is interpreted, how far we stretch our guesses as to the form the Blessing will assume, we are bound to fall short of the mark because Baba tells us it will be something that has never happened before. As He said to His mandali a few days after we arrived here:

"That which is to happen after 21st May 1968, will be something great, something that has never happened before, something that will not happen again for billions and billions of years."

Baba further remarked that the 'something great' will happen of a sudden, not in developing stages. People will go about their daily affairs unaware till the moment of its happening.

On the morning of 20th February, the day Baba told us of His decision to continue the Seclusion till 21st May, an extraordinary thing happened at Meherazad. A large monkey, black faced and long limbed, appeared as it were from nowhere and was seen sitting on the goldmohur tree by the house just as Baba entered His room on returning from the mandali. This lone monkey was obviously an exile from its tribe. At sight of it there was an excited chorus of suggestions from us women: "Shoo it away or its commotion will disturb Baba"; "leave it alone it will go away"; "give it a banana it must be hungry"; "don't go too near it's sure to attack"; "keep away or you'll frighten the poor thing". As it turned out, each suggestion was followed, beginning with the banana offering placed discreetly on the roof so as not to scare it. That didn't improve relations. 'The poor thing' gnashed its teeth and furiously shook the branches, using the same brand of contempt for all friendly moves. In the end we decided to try the "leave it alone" formula, ignoring Monkey com-

pletely. Nothing could have been worse, as we soon found out. After an hour of peaceful indifference, Monkey suddenly went mad. Leaping on to the main house, it jumped about with astounding speed and force, from roof to roof to roof, of rooms on both floors, sending tiles flying and crashing. The climax of this swift crescendo of sound and fury, came when Monkey leapt down from the topmost point of the house on to Baba's room below with a tremendous crash and impact. Baba was resting in His room at the time, and the mandali members who were with Him said they felt the ceiling would cave in! After that of course the "shoo away" operation was immediately put into effect -- a fantastic chase involving more than a dozen Meherazadians waving bamboos, brooms, branches, umbrellas, round and round the compound as Monkey dodged from treetop to treetop, roof to roof. It was not far to sunset time before Monkey made up its mind to give up, making for the village of Pimpalgaon about a mile away. There, as we heard the villagers tell, it settled down quietly for over a month before vanishing as suddenly as it had appeared.

Interesting as this Monkey episode is, ordinarily it might not have been given space here. What makes it profoundly news worthy is Beloved Baba's comments after it was over. Baba said that the havoc played by the monkey on the roof of His room on the day He had decided to lengthen the Seclusion, was deeply significant to His work and that which is to happen after 21st May.

After this, it was natural for us not to dismiss as 'coincidence' a couple of incidents that made a tailpiece to the Monkey chapter. One was, that just two mornings prior to our arrival in Poona a large black-faced monkey visited Baba House in Poona, the house where Baba's brother Behram lives with his family, where Beloved Baba lived as a youth. As reported by His niece Gulnar, the monkey settled down on the roof of Baba's Room. It sat there for quite a while, seeming content and very much at home, enjoying the fruits it found on trees in the patio of the house. Then it loped off gracefully over the network of neighbouring rooftops, and has not been seen around since then. The other incident relates to the Irani New Year, 'Jamshedi Navroz', which falls on 21st March when day and night are of equal length. Signifying the season of Spring and a day of thanksgiving, Jamshedi Navroz is believed to be Persia's most ancient festival dating back to over 10,000 years, and is observed with much rejoicing in the home of every Irani. The turn of each new year is worked out with astronomical precision: the exact time it will begin to turn, the colour it will signify, the form of animal it will symbolically assume. And this year, Navroz has assumed the form of a Monkey! This is predicted to indicate a lot of world trouble and chaos in the current year.

Predictions from astrologers, clairvoyants and the like, make irresistible reading in magazines and Sunday papers everywhere. What news space is not devoted to violence and disasters, seems devoted to the predicting of worse to follow. Amid the black clouds of these many forecasts, it is refreshing to see a brilliant star heralding hope for the world, as seen through the eyes of Mir Bashir, renowned palmist of London. The 'Poona Herald' of 7th March 1968 gives Mr. Bashir's prediction under the heading: A NEW PROPHET TO COME SOON.

It goes on to say, "Mir Bashir, the internationally known palmist clairvoyant, who claims Indian princes and British politicians and other prominent people among his clientele, has made an important announcement on the eve of a pilgrimage to Mecca. Mir Bashir said:

'While I shall devote myself to the religious significance of the haj, I am hoping that I shall experience something specially significant relating to the coming of a great personage of tremendous spiritual stature.

'For many years I have been seeing signs in the hands of countless people I have met in all parts of the world, that there will be a great awakening -- a great spiritual regeneration coinciding with the appearance of this personage. I have seen the signs most often in the hands of children.'

He predicted that the arrival of the 'person' would have great global impact on people of all faiths."

Signs hidden in countless hands and revealed to countless hearts, they point to Beloved Baba's words: "The whole world will come to know who I am when I break my Silence." Baba has also said that "The fortunate ones are they who know me now, before I manifest universally." Many years ago, when His Silence was in its teens, Baba told His disciples (to the effect) that "Now I am like a Lion that is caged -- people come to see it and admire it, can afford to trifle with the majesty of its power, are indifferent or ignorant of its might. But none would be left in ignorance or doubt were the lion to spring from its cage! When I come out of my Silence, my Divine Identity will be manifest to all, my Glory will reveal itself, the impact of my Love will be felt universally."

The number of 'fortunate ones' is growing every day, everywhere, along with their longing to spread His word. In U.S.A., as a letter informs us, "Beloved Baba's Message is moving like an avalanche. There are Baba Groups coming into existence everywhere, especially those formed by University students, most brilliant and loving young people who are taking Baba spontaneously into their hearts and lives." The more His Family grows, the more frequently we receive a 'birth announcement' telling us of yet another Baba Group or Baba Centre born in some part of some country. Round the world, the rejoicers of Avatar Meher Baba's 74th Birthday represented many countries, many religions. "People of various faiths" figured conspicuously in reports from Iran, Pakistan, Africa, and Centres in other Eastern countries. In multi-religioned India they figured in celebrations everywhere. They were there among the 30,000 at Ahmednagar who took part in the six-hour procession winding through the maze of streets to the accompaniment of music, dancing and fireworks; they were there in the mammoth processions at Nagpur, Kanpur, Dehra Dun, Masulipatam, and in the more intimate ones at other places; they were there at Bombay's function presided over by a renowned cricketer; at Poona's function presided over by the Speaker of Maharashtra's legislative assembly; at Delhi's function led by three Ministers of the Central Government. Everywhere, in gatherings and processions, at entertainments and Prayers, at bhajan-singing and feast-giving to the poor in His Name, they were there -- people of various faiths, of various communities, from various walks of life, rejoicing in the birth of the birthless One. The message that Baba sent to His lovers on the Day, was:

ON THIS MY APPARENT PHYSICAL BIRTHDAY
I SEND MY HOMAGE AND OBEISANCE TO MY LOVERS
WHO LIVE FOR ME AND WOULD IF ORDERED DIE FOR ME.

All that His lovers in the West and East put into making this Birthday an occasion 'befitting to the Avatar' could be added up to the one word: BABA. And the result, whether judged in size or form, can be simply called colossal. It certainly cannot be put into the nutshell of a letter, nor will I try. One refrain heard in most of the reports was "We wished it would go on and on, that the Day would never end." A child was heard to ask his mother "Why can't we have Baba's Birthday every day?" Well, many lovers in India did just that. In the states of Andhra, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, a fair number of Baba's Centres publicly celebrated the Birthday for 74 days, some keeping it up for over a 100 days!

But if the universal celebrating of the 74th Birthday is properly described as gigantic, it was not a giant that sprang up overnight to honour the Occasion. It was a structure made up of 365 days and built with the love and energy of His lovers, a culmination of their labours in bearing His Message to all peoples at all times of the year. And with the impetus of the rising body of His new lovers, His Message is being borne over every land, spreading so swiftly that it is difficult to focus on any single area of progress to report on! As an impartial editor put it in a recent publication, "the world is on the threshold of a new BABA ERA".

Until some years ago, finding a mention of Baba in the press was as unexpected as coming across a daisy in a field of withered grass. Now the daisies are dotted all over the field, springing up in the toughest patches. Around this Birthday time more than a few Indian papers and magazines printed news of Baba. Those in Marathi (language of Maharashtra) covered pages with His messages, circulars, biography, articles by His lovers, and reports of His Birthday celebrations -- including some of the most notably conservative papers! When I remarked to a Maharashtrian Baba-lover that this was surely a surprise, he said that the more correct word would be a 'miracle'. Birthday time is also a favourite time for His lovers to present a fresh bouquet of Baba-material in various languages: books, booklets, folders, pamphlets, posters, cards. Among the rare flowers of this year's offering is 'Dari Be Sooye Abadiyyat' (Door To Eternity), an extremely well printed book published by Baba-lovers of Teheran and Shiraz, Iran. Written by Dr. Jehangir Meherabampur, it is the first book of its kind in Persian, giving the life and works and discourses of Meher Baba and having colour portraits of Him. Of the five thousand that were printed, the lovers sent individual copies to all the religious heads of Iran.

Throughout the vast background of India's spiritual history there have been rishis, maharishis, yogis, mahayogis, mahatmas, gurus, saints, sadhus, and the like. India still abounds with them. Like the shells swept ashore when the Tide comes in, at Avataric times they appear in profusion. A few among them are genuine. I recall how, when we were watching a conglomeration of 8,000 of them at Benares in 1939, Baba turned to us and gestured, "Of these 8,000, only 8 are real." False and real, wherever they are found, whatever their titles and claims, they are folds of the veil that help the Avatar hide Himself from us. As such, their stirring and billowing out into public prominence at the present, shows that the moment is nearing for the Avatar to emerge from behind the veil and reveal Himself. But in the meantime, lest we get involved in these folds that veil Reality, Beloved Baba again and again reminds us and warns us to keep away from any and all of them.

As in the market of drugs, the wares of maharishis, mahatmas and others, offer many palliatives that give one a feeling of relief from pain of material problems, that deaden one's sense of frustration or boredom. But when the momentary effect wears off, the ghosts rise again and loom bigger than ever. Only the Divine Surgeon -- the God Man, Perfect Master -- can remove the root of all symptoms. The average searcher finds the sugar-coated palliatives easy to swallow -- they lull him gently into the belief that they are a cure, they add to his false sense of security, they do not remove the burden that he groans under and hates to part with, and the price to his ego is cheap. Babajan, one of the five Perfect Masters who brought about the present Avatar's advent, said shortly before she dropped her body, "It is time for me to leave now -- work is over -- must close shop." A devotee protested; 'Do not say that Babajan, we need you with us.' With a quizzical look Babajan said: "Nobody wants my wares -- nobody can afford the price -- I've turned the goods over to the Proprietor." And right now, while the Proprietor has the Shop's doors wide open for all, how many who enter can yet afford the 'price'? We may yet walk in and ask the Highest of the High for material boons worthy of a ten-cent store -- like walking into the biggest jewellers and asking for a packet of pins. Of course we can have our pins, for God-Shop is All-Complete and there are all things for all customers. Once in a while comes one who recognizes the Jewel and is prepared to denude himself of his 'self' for its possession, to eventually discover that it is only by the grace and mercy of the 'Shop Keeper' that he can attain the Gem of no price. How immeasurable our good fortune that the Shop Keeper of our time is Mercy Incarnate, as even His Name reveals either way we look at it: MEHER means compassion or grace; REHEM means mercy. All He asks of us is all of our imperfect love, from which may be born perfect obedience and perfect patience.

Over and over again Baba tells His lovers: I AM WITH YOU. His lovers are given the opportunity to realize this more and more, as attested by them. It is as if the farther He goes into seclusion the nearer He is to His lovers, the more they remember and feel and experience that He is with them!

One morning the mail brought a postcard from a very young Baba-lover in Jabalpur, a boy named Raju. In a laborious scrawl Raju had written in English:

Dear Baba

on 25 Feb I took part in your
birthday celebration. I gave a small speech :-

Baba is our Father
Baba is our Mother
Baba is our Brother
Baba is our Sister

But

Baba is my dear Friend
because He plays with me
He eats with me
He sleeps with me
He walks with me

He always with me.

Reading my letter through I find that it is as usual a surprisingly long letter. And as usual I assure myself it is better this way, in case the next letter is much delayed or too short. For the lazy ones, however few, who might glide across the central expanse of this letter, the messages of utmost importance are placed at both ends of the letter where none can miss them..

BABA'S MESSAGE TO HIS LOVERS:

"I want all my lovers to continue reciting the Parvardigar Prayer and the Prayer of Repentance every day till the 9th of July 1968. On the 10th of July, the 43rd anniversary of my Silence, I want all my lovers to observe complete silence for twentyfour hours, from midnight of 9th July to midnight of 10th July 1968."

Please note that Baba has given no option of a fast for those who may find it impractical to observe silence. His lovers know what their Beloved's wish is, and it is left to them how they can manage to carry it out. None must write concerning it to any of us here or at the Ahmednagar office.

Moreover, Baba desires the present restriction on correspondence to continue as now and be more strictly observed. The "more strictly" applies mainly to those of His lovers in India who have been increasingly forgetful of the restriction and have lapsed into pre-restriction letter writing.

To those who receive this letter before 19th May, I would like to make it clear that apart from the silence on 10th July the silence to be observed on Sunday the 19th of May (as per Circular sent out in March) stands good.

Ever lovingly,

MANDLI

Meherazad, 25th January 1968

Dearest Family,

A BABAFULL 1968 to all of us!

"I can wish me no wishes, for naught but Your wish is.

May Your wish be my wish - let that be my wishes."

An old prayer dressed up in a new year, the prayer of all lovers whose world is BABA, who strive to be less of self, the more to be full of Him.

With the stepping in of the new year, we find a quick stepping up of Baba's seclusion work, not so much by what we can perceive as by what we can dare to conceive. Baba says "You can only see what you see me doing outwardly, but I am continually working on all planes of consciousness at the same time. As my manifestation time is closing in, the pressure of my work is tremendous. You cannot have an iota of an idea of it." We can however faintly imagine it from what His infinite tiredness reveals to us; watch it in the cauldron of world chaos that is boiling over; see it in the dawn of His Love rising gloriously over new horizons every day. But all that is happening is nothing compared to what will happen, Beloved Baba tells us. To help us imagine the measure of difference between the "is" and "will", Baba compared the small height of the Seclusion Hill at Meherazad to the awesome stature of Mount Everest!

We do not need to see what the year holds, we need only to hold fast to the Seer. All we have to do, Baba tells us, is to hold on to Him with unshakable faith and love -- all who are attached to Him, whether deserving or otherwise, are bound to reach the goal. He gave the simple illustration of a goods train: every wagon that is linked to the Engine, whether it contains gold or rubble, gets borne to the Terminus. But many are the jolts and distractions along this journey with God, and He has to keep warning us "hold fast - hold fast" as He pulls us along. He has provided us with the means to hold fast. He has given us the love that feeds our faith. Faith is like a lighted lamp, it shines only in the dark. And while its brightness is proof of darkness, its light reveals His grace that keeps it burning.

Those who deprive themselves of the light of God's grace by their blind unbelief, are nevertheless never deprived of His compassion. Baba recently commented to the mandali: "Jesus said 'Father forgive them for they know not what they do'. I say 'Father have pity on them for they know not what will happen.'" To His lovers, Baba says: "I alone Am. Remember me wholeheartedly. Repeat my name constantly. I am with you." Over and over again His lovers experience the sublime truth of His being the Slave of the love of His lovers. With every wholehearted call of BABA!, His reply I AM HERE materializes. He is with each one at all times, but asks us to wake Him up with remembrance. He says, "I am in each heart but I am sleeping there. It is my old, old habit. In order to awaken me you should always call out to me, saying 'Baba, Baba, Baba' continuously. Then I, who am in your heart, will not find any pleasure in remaining asleep. Let alone sleep, I shall not find time even to doze!"

With the clamour of a myriad hearts calling out BABA BABA with one voice, Baba couldn't have enjoyed a wink of sleep during the earthquake India experienced last month! Classified as a shock of major intensity, it rocked most of the western coast in the predawn hours of December 11. Ahmednagar and Meherabad-Meherazad too were severely shaken -- it was like having a 50 second ride on a roaring dragon running under the earth. It wiped out the township of Koynanagar that lay near its epicentre, but

spared the mighty Koyna Dam which supplies electricity to the state of Maharashtra! That the many cities involved were also spared, seemed as incredible as the quake itself. Newspapers quoted experts saying that the quake could have wrecked Bombay, Poona and other cities of Maharashtra had it lasted half a minute longer. But though not wrecked the cities were badly rocked, throwing the people into an hysteria of panic and bewilderment. While crowds ran out shouting into the dark streets, Baba families kept to their homes in the shelter of His Presence, all members (from grandparents to toddlers) calling out His Name in unison - such is the real "arti" sung to the Beloved! The populace too was violently jolted into remembrance of God. The morning after, churches were crowded to overflowing; while the candles that were offered in thanksgiving and prayer were enough to have lit up the sky. The 'Poona Herald' reported, "Even the diehard people who never looked up to heaven are praying!" The milder tremors that kept following daily for weeks (and even now are felt occasionally) kept on serving as reminders. In the 'mail-bag' column of a newspaper, a reader's letter said, "Yes sir, tremor is the talk of the town, and we know not how long it will last. But this less than a minute's shock has taught us the lesson of our lifetime: how petty is man, how pettier his possessions. It has made man meeker and brought him nearer to his Maker."

There is another kind of shake-up taking place in India at this time, not an earthquake but an 'earthwake'. It is caused by Baba Centres who are holding a continual round of public meetings, every day for seventy-four days, in celebration of His 74th Birthday. And we can imagine what it must be like in Andhra, a state which have over a hundred and fifty Avatar Meher Baba Centres! "These people would dive into the ocean if they could tell the fishes about Baba!", a Meherazadian once remarked. The remark was made quite some time ago, when lovers of Baba in the regions of Hamirpur and Andhra (in north & south India) were pioneering areas of narrow prejudice and over-crowded tradition, ringing out His Message from the rooftop of every occasion. Since then, with each year the peals have grown in number and strength, Baba Centres everywhere joining in, so that now a carillion of His Name delights our hearts' ears. A powerful note was played last year by the Baba Stalls that His lovers put up at Fairs and Exhibitions held in India: at Bombay, Poona and Nagpur in Maharashtra; at Jabalpur in M.P.; at Hyderabad and Rajahmundry in Andhra. This last was during the two-week Pushkaram festival, a colossal affair where millions of Hindu pilgrims come from all over India for a dip in the sacred river Godavari. As reported by Dr. Dhanapathy Rao, president of the 'Avatar Meher Baba Andhra Centre, Kakinada', "Almost all the pilgrims, comprising all walks of life, rich and poor, young and old, were attracted to the Stall." And then there were the actual Baba Fairs, held in northern and central states: at Dehra Dun, Nauranga, Hamirpur, Khandarka, Bagda. The district of Hamirpur virtually becomes a Baba-Fair ground at a special time of year. There the lovers don't wait for public Fairs to have stall in - they make their own Fairs to celebrate every visit of their Beloved! There every place that is blessed by Baba's visit is a Baba Centre, where they hold the "Meher Mela" (Meher Fair) every year: at Meher Dham in Nauranga, Meher Astana in Mahewa, Meher Puri in Hamirpur town. Thousands of people from all distances come by all manner of transport to take part in the feasts of gaiety and God. No lover has returned from a Meher Mela in Hamirpur District without being drenched with the Baba-atmosphere that reigns there, where entire villages are Baba-villages in love, where every man woman and child greets each other at meeting and parting with "JAI BABA"!

Delhi too has a special date with itself, in remembrance of the first public darshan that Beloved Baba gave there in December of 1952. Its eleventh commemoration was observed last month at a Public Meeting in New Delhi, with a number of M.Ps and cabinet ministers of the Central Government among the large attendance. Inaugurating, presiding and speaking were the Minister for Irrigation and Power, Dr. K.L.Rao; the Minister for Steel, Mines and Metals, Dr. M.Channa Reddy; and the Minister for Education, Dr. Triguna Sen; each garlanding the Beloved's portrait before his speech, each speaking on the need for mankind to receive and follow Baba's Message, to awaken to His Love.

"AVATAR MEHER BABA THE AWAKENER". Over a million pairs of lips uttered these words in the course of a few weeks, in an environment of gaiety and hubub that could hardly be described as spiritual. But "as surely as His Name is a prayer, where it be spoken is a church." The church in this instance was the huge open space of the 'Cross Maidan' in Bombay city, where the International Tourist Fair was held from October end to mid December 1967. Presenting a typical blend of the ancient and modern, inseparable profiles of India's image, the Fair proved a very fair attraction for Bombay's teeming populace and for visitors from other parts. Many spectacular stalls, national and foreign, featured art, culture, trade, industry. Dramas and dances, films and fashion shows, and a wide variety of fun and entertainment, figured largely. Pains-takingly the Fair organisers had taken into account the educational and recreational need of the people, while utterly ignoring their most urgent need - the spiritual! But then, neither had they taken into account the Baba-lovers of Bombay who set their hearts on getting a foothold in the Fair grounds to serve the Avatar's Message to the people. Against fantastic odds, their perseverance succeeded. And so it was that the huge cosmopolitan crowds surging on the Cross Maidan every evening (from about 5 in the afternoon till 1 o'clock in the morning) came by the Baba Stall, looking up at the big name-board that read AVATAR MEHER BABA THE AWAKENER, looking in at the beautiful full-length colour portrait of Beloved Baba facing them. Most of the lookers entered, while the remaining passed on after reading aloud His Name and staring at His portrait.

It all began a month before the Fair was to open, when Sorabjee Siganporia (of the Avatar Meher Baba Bombay Centre) read out the last family-letter at the Centre's meeting. Struck by Baba's message "now is the time to spread my Message", Sorabjee felt it was high time for Bombay to bestir itself. Calling an urgent meeting of Baba-lovers, he put forward his suggestion of acquiring a stall at the I.T.F. (International Tourist Fair) as their golden opportunity to give Baba's Message to the multitude. He hoped for encouragement from them. What he was unprepared for was the immediate and staggering response and enthusiasm with which the idea was caught up and started rolling! With Nariman and Arnavaz Dadachanji taking the lead, contributions were pledged, ideas put forth, plans sketched, problems measured. In no time all shoulders got to the yoke in a fine piece of teamwork. But although plans and work raced ahead, they could not start! Obtaining a suitable stall, or at least ground space for the building of a stall, was the king-size obstacle. At the "last minute" it was hurdled, solely through the influence and persistence of Dr. Ram Ginde, to whom the authorities in charge did not like saying 'no', and who would not take 'no' for an answer! Take one step in His direction and He will take ten steps towards you to help. The 750 square feet of ground space that was finally obtained was not just suitable, it was the most ideally situated imaginable. Facing the central imposing structure of the Government of India pavilion and next to Air India booth, no Fair goer could miss it!

Creating of the Stall and mass printing of Baba literature were items that seemed too big to be covered by the fragment of time they now had in hand. It was done, and done superbly. The Bombay group was like a race horse that had long been nodding at the post, but at the first sharp prod had started off at a full gallop, winning with flying colours! The Baba Stall was, in the words of Burjor Mehta from Ahmednagar "Simple as God, and so grand." The credit for its elegance and beauty goes mainly to dear Arnavaz, who worked herself to a frazzle over the myriad details of planning and decor, helped by others of the large Dadachanji clan who are wholly a Baba clan in the deepest devoted sense. As one fair Dadachanji member wrote not long ago, "We heard someone remark that 'the Dadachanjis eat, drink and breathe BABA'; and Oh! how satisfying and wonderful it is, only the Dadachanjis know!" Jim Mistry took up the printing reins. Jim's biggest joy is to have his modest printing press, Mekda Corp., work in the cause of his Beloved - and never had Jim worked 'Mekda' so hard and fast as now! The "Universal Message" in English, Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, printed by the hundred thousand for giving free to Stall visitors, was ready on time. So was the priceless little book "Who is Meher Baba?" planned by Arnavaz, sold at a very nominal price.

The grain of Sorabjee's idea multiplied into a granary of accomplishment when the lovers manned the Stall, prepared with answers to the variety of questions expected from those whom the Beloved would draw.* What the volunteers had least anticipated was the overwhelming attendance and interest that kept up through the weeks, from the day the Fair was inaugurated by the Prime Minister. Mrs. Indira Gandhi did not visit any stall, but rode round the grounds in an open jeep. As the jeep neared the Baba Stall, our Kishinchand Gajwani went up and drew her attention to the name-board "Avatar Meher Baba The Awakener". She responded with quick interest, reading out the Name and bowing with deep reverence to the Beloved's portrait as the jeep drove by. Some days after that Jim wrote to Eruch, "What is happening today at the Baba Stall is a tremendous mass enquiry and awareness of Baba. Waves upon waves of humanity surging into the Stall are carrying away some literature free or paid for. The 'Universal Message' in all languages is being gobbled up very fast and we'll keep printing more. I once timed a count of the people entering the Stall at the rate of 30 a minute — easily 10 to 12 thousand a day. Bombay lovers will henceforth walk tall — I hope Beloved Baba permits them to do so for some time at least!"

I'm sure Baba's smile glowed warmest on the little visitors who flocked to the Stall between 4 & 5 in the evening, the schoolchildren's hour. They would sweep in like a merry tornado, trailing clouds of dust, bubbling with exclamations and questions, determined to see everything, eager for their copy of the Universal Message, surrounding Baba's portrait and wanting to know which country He was Raja of! When told He was the Maharaja of the universe, they would stand before Him with joined hands and pray "Baba, please help us pass in our exams."

As Sorabjee said, by Beloved Baba's grace the location of the Stall was such that hardly a few unlucky ones missed seeing it. When Baba sent a telegraphic message expressing His happiness with Dr. Ram Ginde's success in procuring the Stall space in such a good location, His dear Ram replied:

I AM GRATEFUL FOR YOUR WIRE. STRANGE AND MYSTERIOUS ARE YOUR WAYS
WHICH WE IN OUR IGNORANCE DO NOT UNDERSTAND. THE BABA STALL AT THE
I.T.F. IS PART OF YOUR OWN PLAN WHICH MATERIALIZED THROUGH YOUR OWN
INSPIRATION AND GUIDANCE TO YOUR LOVERS, AN EXPRESSION OF YOUR
INFINITE AND ABIDING LOVE FOR ALL OF YOUR CREATION. JAI BABA.

In attempting to report Baba-work on the Overseas front, I don't know where to start or stop! Whereas the apostles of Jesus preached to hundreds in the crowded market-place, those of today's Avatar are reaching millions by television and radio. In the U.S.A. they're doing it so frequently, I feel I'd need a computer to keep count and track of all the shows and their sequels! Among the more recent televised talks on Baba was the Joe Franklyn show in New York, where two million viewers could see the Beloved's picture (on the book "The Everything & The Nothing"), and hear about Him at length from Judge Henry Kashouty of Virginia, a speaker of outstanding calibre. Next Henry appeared on the Allan Burke show, arranged with the help of Adele McCuen and other lovers in New York, a show that was taped and later shown in other States. The sequel? I'll quote Kitty Davy's letter of Dec. 19th, from Myrtle Beach: "We're surrounded by mail.** Nearly 300 letters to date have arrived at the

* See DIVYA VANI, November 1967 issue, "Questions and Answers, on Meher Baba."

** On the show, Mr. Burke gave the address of the Baba Centre in Myrtle Beach.

Center since the weekend — all requiring answers plus the Universal Message and book lists! And all the result of Henry Kashouty's talk on Allan Burke's show. Henry tells me that this show retaped goes over the States also. How much love Baba must have poured out through Henry that people could write as they did! Many tuned in only the last 15 minutes of the show and yet were spell-bound, impelled to listen, to believe, to write. Not one letter was scoffing, disbelieving, cynical or ironic; all long to hear as soon as possible more, more, more about Baba!" As Dr. Allan Cohen, himself a stalwart Baba-speaker over the air, put the situation in U.S. in a letter to Adi: "It certainly is happening fast! In Baba-Love, what used to be astounding is now commonplace and the chain reaction of His Truth is exploding incredibly quickly.... Baba is awakening the Americans to Him on all fronts. The 'minor miracles' (of newly tuned hearts) are daily occurrences. The point is passed where we can even keep up with news of broken hearts Baba-renewed, of seekers finding Him, and of He ferreting out places and people in which His Love-seed is implanted...."

How often have we seen that no matter what the seed is wrapped in — LSD, art, business, pleasure — the covering soon melts and desire is transferred to the Object. A delightful instance of this, was recently given in a letter to Francis from Bill LePage of Sydney (Australia). Resolutely and confidently Bill is going about Baba's business of igniting sparks in as many hearts as can be reached — in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Hobart — through newspaper articles, radio and television interviews, public meetings, Baba-films, group-talks. Commenting on a recent extensive trip, Bill wrote, "Everywhere I turned I found keen interest and responsiveness, and fresh contacts kept arising unexpectedly and leading to others.... During the talk (at Melbourne public meeting) you could have heard a pin drop the whole time, and after the film very good constructive questions.... The radio interview (at Adelaide) I've told you about. The interviewer helped me get two newspaper interviews.... It is interesting that even hardened worldly men like journalists are responding to Beloved Baba." Bill's work as an industrial personnel consultant takes him to various state capitals, and so his business walks hand in hand with work for Baba, who always walks many steps ahead! Regarding the Company that he did work for in Adelaide, Bill wrote, "The men were far more interested in talking to me about Baba than about business. They all took introductory booklets, and wanted me to arrange another business trip with the directors so that we could continue to talk about Baba! One also wanted me to give a talk at his business-men's club...."

There is surely nothing more hardened than the orthodox shell of a religion, and it is wonderful to see Baba's Love penetrating the hearts of religious teachers and preachers. This miracle is often witnessed by Baba-lovers in Iran, where mullahs and tutors of Koranic doctrine are awakening the Muslim community to the divinity of Meher Baba. Jehangir Mehrabanpur, a doctor of medicine practising in Shiraz, is one of the main Baba-workers in Iran. He and his pretty wife were among the Iranian group that came to India in 1965 for Beloved Baba's darshan. In one of his letters to Ali Akbar (Aloba) the young doctor spoke of Sadruddin Mahalatti, a professor at Shiraz University who is a celebrated exponent of the Koran and holds regular Koranic meetings at various places. When one such meeting took place at the home of Haji Mohamed Saleky, a prominent businessman who is devoted to Baba, it was but natural that Dr. Jehangir was invited to attend. Dr. Jehangir did more than that — he managed to give a showing of a Baba-film to this imposing gathering of businessmen, scholars and mullahs, who had met to discuss the Koran! But more surprising was the effect it had on one and all of the audience. Their reaction to seeing Baba on the screen was reflected in varying shades of wonder, amazement, interest, reverence, and love. On Prof. Mahalatti the impact was deep. He has since seen Baba three times in a vision, and now concerns himself with awakening Shirazis to Baba's Love. Writing a letter to Baba, he began it with: "O High Status One! O Parvardigar!"

For lack of room I cite just one other instance, reported by Khodabakhsh Kalantary, a Baba-worker in Tehran. It concerns Mohamed Sayeedi, a Mullah who is a Baba-lover. Along with his Baba-lover friend Mohamed Ali Fanayee, he went about declaring to the people the divinity of Meher Baba "the God-personified". Such apparent heresy from a representative of Islam roused a furor of angry protest amongst Muslims he was addressing at Rasht; they lodged a complaint against him and had him arrested! When Mohamed Sayeedi's case was brought to court, he was found 'Not Guilty' and was 'honourably acquitted'. The judge who tried him happened to be well acquainted with Sufic writings, and summing up the case he told the court that it was not an offense to declare the Godhood of an individual, as it was possible for man to realize God. He said that if people had no belief in this it was because their knowledge and understanding had not advanced enough for it, but that as a judge he could not refute what he accepted to be an irrefutable fact!

In an age of speed and automation, when a modern city's life is like a spinning top that holds up simply by the force of its crazy tempo, when it pulsates in its wheels, there can hardly be a better conductor of the Avatar's message than a city bus. This occurred to Girard Brilliant of New York; and converting the thought into action he had it rolling along the streets of over a dozen cities! In his 'Meher Baba's Lovers Newsletter' of Nov. 20, 1967, issued from the 'Meher Baba Workshop' in New York, Girard told us, "A quote from Baba's discourse THE NEW HUMANITY: 'Love is essentially communicative....' has been accepted by The Traveller's Time, 880 Third Ave., N.Y. 10022, to be placed in the buses of more than a dozen of the largest cities." Soon after that came Ella Winterfeldt's letter saying "Have just heard from dear Margaret (Craske) that the saying of BABA, with HIS BELOVED NAME, is now appearing in all city buses! It is nicely placed above the bus windows, and is ever, ever so lovely!"

At about the same time, another unprecedented and lovely happening was taking place in North Carolina, in the field of art. As a character in an E. Wallace thriller said, "Art is me second heart." And when such a worthy twain belong wholly to Beloved Baba, it can add up to something quite extraordinary. It did in the case of Lynn Ott, an American artist of whom Hugo Munsterberg, Professor of Art History at the State University of New York, has said: "Combining in his work the freedom of brushwork characteristic of the School of New York with the deeply moving human content derived from an earlier tradition, Lynn Ott creates paintings of rare beauty and great sensitivity." From the Meher Spiritual Centre in Myrtle Beach, where he lives at 'Sheriar Gate House' with his wife Phyllis (herself an artist) and children, Lyn's art and heart have produced a number of very beautiful paintings of Baba, paintings that were recently exhibited at the Other Ear Gallery in Chapel Hill, N.C. Named "IMAGE OF THE GOD-MAN - Avatar Of Our Age", it was the first complete exhibition of Baba paintings held in America or anywhere else! Arranged entirely by the young Baba-group there, the showing was from Oct. 28 to Nov. 21 (1967). Lyn wrote: "I feel it appropriate that Chapel Hill should be the place for this exhibition to be shown. Chapel Hill is the place in the West right now where interest and love for Meher Baba has erupted on a momentous scale. In Chapel Hill love for Baba is literally spilling out on the streets, and I am proud and glad to be able to lend my work for the advancement of Baba's work in that beautiful and brand new Baba Center."

Youth today is a spicy dish of paradoxes. Impregably individualistic and unreservedly congenial, steeped in the artificial and scorning the spurious, serenely self-confident and warring with self-complacency, rebellious of restraint and willing to relinquish all for an ideal, shunning security and seeking certainty, it is drifting to an Aim. Not content with the ready-made ideology of an older generation, the young are passionately resolved to cut out their own pattern of idealism. Driven by a sense of urgency they are restless and impatient, they want what they want to happen fast; to happen NOW. Is it surprising then that they should be the readier to receive the now

Avatar, the quicker to discern the Pearl amongst the pebbles of the human shore, the keener to share their Find with others? And yet we are amazed each time we see it happening in one light or another, reflecting individuals or groups or crowds. Using the language of youth, and with the force of their deep conviction and personal experience, Baba's young lovers are slowly turning the student world towards the Sun of Baba's Love. University campuses are becoming gathering places for Baba meetings. On the Berkeley Campus of the University of California regular meetings are held by a young Baba-group called "Meher Baba League" which was formed by Paula Gordon and Peter Brookes of Sufism Reoriented. They read from Baba's writings, give talks to University crowds, hand out Baba-literature, show Baba-films. And now we hear that some of the students have started a branch of the Meher Baba League at the San Francisco State College! Baba's young ones are decidedly on the move, stirring up the laggards wherever they go. England's youth has at last begun to wake up too. The beginning is represented by a heartwarming bunch of artists, musicians, students, who have fallen in love with Baba; who keep bringing their friends, and friends' friends, and friends of their friends' friends, to hear of Baba from His older lovers. Delia de Leon (of the earliest Baba Group in England) writes about it: "What a stirring up is taking place! I feel I have plunged into a whirlpool of young people. What is amazing is their natural understanding of Him without wordy explanations, the way they seem to know and accept Him. It is wonderful!"

And so the Beloved's minstrels in many lands, East and West, in different tongues and in different tunes, sing of Him. His Love is their music, their hearts His instrument.

At Meherazad Baba's bard, Francis, sings to Him the songs he makes for Him — songs in which the words tell of the lover's delight in the Beloved and of the difficulties which the lover experiences, in which the melodies so fit the words that the flavour of the words is fully brought out. Many a song he weaves for Him from the sunbeams of His Love, that the burden of his songs may ease the Beloved's burden to the extent of each refrain. And at the end of each song Baba tells him, beaming with pleasure, "This one is the best you have done Francis — this time you have surpassed yourself!" Here is but one of the many "best" songs that Francis has sung to Him:

A thousand times I've said: What a beloved you are!
A thousand times I've fled from your glances Meher —
Only to return to the shelter of your smile.
Certainty is mine — yet never can I be sure
Save of one thing: one day I will arrive at Nowhere,
And you will be everywhere. And I shall sing.

On that glad day of Grace when my song has become one note —
The pure note of your Name, the heavens will tremble
And blush with shame because they caused me to dissemble
Before you, beloved Meher.

A thousand times in joy I have set out for your door
Hoping you would employ my hands to sweep your floor —
Only to find that you had spread a feast for me.
Certainty is mine — yet never can I be sure
Save of one thing: one day I will arrive at Nowhere,
And you will be everywhere. And I shall sing.

Ever lovingly,

MANDLI

P. T. O.

P.S. An earlier circular announced Beloved Baba's permission to His lovers to publicly celebrate His 74th Birthday. Now He has made it clear that He wishes His Centres, in the East and in the West, to go all out in celebrating this Birthday on a big scale. Baba is pleased that many of them have planned to do so; and that Harry Kenmore, with the help and co-operation of other lovers, is working to make this year's Birthday celebration in New York a unique public celebration.

NOTE: The next letter is expected to be sent in May or June, from Guruprasad, Poona, where Baba and the Meherazad family spend three months of summer each year from April through June.

I M P O R T A N T

Just before this letter was posted, Beloved Baba directed a circular to be issued by Adi for the Easterners and given here by me for the Westerners. The Circular is as follows:-

Avatar Meher Baba wishes all His lovers to know that His Seclusion which was to continue until the 25th of February 1968 will continue until the 25th of March 1968, when He will complete His Seclusion.

Baba wants His lovers to know that by this date the phase of His universal work in Seclusion will end, and that there will be no further Seclusions.

Baba wants all His lovers to realize what He has said before, that the fate of the universe hangs on His Seclusion and the redemption of mankind depends on His Mani_festation. He says that His having prolonged His universal work in Seclusion is an act of His divine Compassion and Love preceding His Manifestation.

To help Him in this work, Baba wants all His lovers to recite once daily the Master's Prayer (O Parvardigar) and the Prayer of Repentance, individually or collectively, from the time they receive this Circular until the 25th of March 1968. And, also to observe complete silence for 24 hours from midnight of 16th March to midnight of 17th March 1968.

Baba wants to remain absolutely undisturbed till the 25th of March 1968. Therefore under no circumstances should anyone try to visit Him unless He Himself calls anyone specially for work. It should carefully be noted that the restriction on correspondence will continue and should be strictly observed.

Until such time when Baba announces that He will see His lovers or give darshan to them, no one should come of his own accord to see Him but should patiently and in Baba's Love await Baba's own announcement.

Baba wishes all His lovers, Easterners and Westerners, to keep in mind that they must not come for His darshan before His announcement is circulated.

M.

Meherazad, 1st September 1967

Dearest Family,

Greetings to you in Baba's Love, from your Meherazad family.

Our sojourn at Guruprasad concluded in the manner it had begun - with beloved Baba taking a brisk walk on its verandah. But whereas the walk on our first morning was witnessed by the few who were with Him, on the last two days at Guruprasad the witnesses were many more - men women and children of the intimate group of Baba-lovers in Poona, whom Baba had allowed to come just to see Him walk. They stood in rows along both sides of the entire verandah; women and children on 1st July, men on the 2nd morning. Smiling and radiant Baba emerged from His room and walked through the rows of His lovers, striding past them in the 'twinkling of an eye', filling their hearts with wonder and joy. They who had never expected to see Baba walk as in the old days, could not help calling it 'a miracle'! When Baba heard of this He said it was not a miracle; what His lovers had witnessed was the fulfilment of His words, for He had said "I will walk as before". Baba added that the time is near ripening when we will witness the fulfilment of all that He has said, for nothing can be fruitless that comes from Him. As He had told us years ago: "Whatever I have said must and will come true, My words can never be in vain. When it appears otherwise it is due to your ignorance and lack of patience." Even as He had said some two thousand years ago: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

We left Poona on the morning of 2nd July, reaching Meherazad well before noon. To return to Meherazad is to be greeted with twin emotions - not identical. One emotion says "Look what we missed!" The other says "Look what we escaped!" The first one is on feeling anew the incomparable atmosphere and quiet beauty of Meherazad which is Home to us. The other is on seeing around us the scars left by a ravaging summer, and realizing anew the invaluable function of Guruprasad which is Haven to us during the hottest months. Among the Meherazad trees that died this April from the shrivelling blast of a heat-wave, were three of the seven 'mastwala' mango trees which stood as tender reminders of a Mast's gift of mangoes to Baba - Baba had sucked the mangoes and had the stones planted. That many other trees survived despite our well-water being down to saucer level, the Pimpalgaon lake bone dry, and Ahmednagar's water situation as substantial as a ghost in daytime, was due to desperate salvage attempts by Padri - he cares for Meherazad in our absence. Then a month later, at a spot just a few feet away from the stricken mango trees lining the field, there came forth water; clear soft water from a depth of 83 feet, water that transfused life into the animal and vegetable kingdom of Meherazad - the Bore-Well project, carried out as directed by Baba, was a sweet success! This striking of precious water here seemed an omen for plenty of it all around, as the widespread rains in July showed. After years we experienced the delight of a real monsoon and the unfamiliar emotion of longing for the sun! In several other parts of India the blessing poured down too bountifully, submerging places, putting rivers in spate, pushing Poona onto front pages of national papers as she barely escaped another flood like the one she had in 1961. By mid August it looked as though the rainfall had spent itself out, and its feeble efforts since then have renewed the farmers' anxiety. Meanwhile, the Meherazad garden and landscape wear a contented smile. No more is the earth around us naked, it is dressed in a hundred shades of green. From the window of His room Baba likes to see the colourful patch of garden where the robins play hopscotch, and the east hills whose crusty features have softened with a veil of grass that turns to velvet in the evening light.

Morning and afternoon Beloved Baba goes over to the Mandali's hall, and is with His men (mandali) for a number of hours. The hours that His mandali spend daily in His company, follow the lines of a pattern drawn up by Baba in minutest detail. The sameness of the daily procedure continues for quite some time, until it appears to set and harden. Then unexpectedly the expected happens: suddenly Baba declares some major change or specific variation in the settled routine, precisely as He finds it necessary for the next stage of His Work. The last time when this happened was about three weeks after we returned from Poona.

One morning Baba announced to us that from 21st of July to the 21st of November, He would be in much stricter seclusion. He said the Time for His manifestation was drawing very close, and proportionately His universal work was greatly intensified and had to be carried out without disturbance. He told us that He would not attend to any correspondence during these four months, and that none must visit Meherazad unless when on His own He calls anyone for His work. Accordingly, we do not read correspondence to Him; nor does anyone visit here without being called. Apart from these two variations, the rest of the Meherazad activities go on as usual.

Baba has also announced that He will step out of seclusion one morning before November, for three hours only. He will do this in order to wash the feet of twenty-one lepers, men and women, who will be brought from Ahmednagar to Meherazad for this purpose. After washing their feet and bowing down to them, the Beloved will give to each one of them some wearing-apparel or material that will serve to clothe the recipient's body. And with this tangible prasad will be the unseen gift of the Avatar's blessing, His unbounded Love that heals all pain of ignorance, that melts away sanskaras of lifetimes - the Gift from the Only Giver, given in silence. Many a time Baba has bathed the lepers - "beautiful souls in ugly cages" as He once said of them - and bowed down to them. This time it will be from His Seclusion. Baba has not yet fixed the day. His coming out for this work with the lepers will not mean the end of His seclusion. It will mean only a 'stepping out' for the duration of three hours, after which He will resume His strict seclusion.

Only those who have been directed to make arrangements for this leper-work are to be present at Meherazad on the day. However, an exception has been made for certain individuals who are concerned with the completing of a film being made by Louis van Gasteren, a film-maker of Holland. In response to Louis van Gasteren's earnest request to film Baba, Baba has granted him permission to be present during the three hours when He will step out of seclusion, and to film Baba during His work with the lepers.

From Mr. van Gasteren's letter to Adi we get an idea of the uncommon theme of this 35mm colour film he is making: "Nema Aviona Za Zagreb", which he expects to show throughout the world. It is a film which does not confine itself to a story, but reveals glimpses of the poignancy of human experiences, of joy and sorrow, birth and death, of things happening on both sides of the globe - on which is Meher Baba, The Avatar. Mr. van Gasteren writes: "The appearance of the Avatar in my film is more than functional, it is necessary, to give all the other happenings and sequences the final and right dimension. Now you will understand how happy I am with the Avatar's permission."

This making of a film with Baba to be seen round the world, is an endeavour initiated by Baba's brother Jal, who has worked hard towards it for a long time, pleading for Baba's permission again and again. The reward of Jal's endeavour is in sight, for at last the Beloved has given His permission for such a filming. Louis van Gasteren, in concluding his letter to Adi, spoke of the impact that the Avatar's Message had on him. He wrote, "I tell you frankly that the first time I heard of Baba, the line HE LOVES YOU MORE THAN YOU CAN EVER LOVE YOURSELF struck me, struck me through the New York cab driver Irwin Luck, struck me since Robert Dreyfuss entered my house with Baba's photograph. It became a line used many times a day within the circle of my friends."

"MEHER BABA IS LOVE". These words are a constant experience in the lives of His lovers. It is a line that has become His lovers' life line. It is now also the title of a Book that has been recently published, a book for children from 4 to 100 years of age, a book whose every word and picture goes to show just that: Meher Baba Is Love! Its pages are filled with beautiful pictures: Baba with children, Baba with animals, Baba with birds, Baba and Mehera with the calves that years later accompanied us in the New Life. It has enchanting colour drawings of animals, birds, trees, flowers, insects, fish, who confide to each other the secret of Baba's Love! Every line is alight with love and twinkles

with humour. "Meher Baba Is Love"* is the result of team work by members of the Baba-Family in Miami (Florida, U.S.A.) - sharing idea, labour, expense, as they share the love of Meher Baba, who is Love. It fills the long-felt need for a book that His little ones will understand, that ALL His children will love. The first copy reached Meherazad before the stricter Seclusion began, and Baba's cable to Adah Shifrin said: "Your book Meher Baba Is Love has made me very happy, your labour of love has touched me. It will delight children young and old and draw them closer to me. I send my Love and blessing to you Shifrins, Sargeants, Bondys, Forbes, and all who helped bring the book out."

Milestones are for the travellers, not for the Way. Another 10th July milestone tells us we have come to the 42nd year of beloved Baba's silence - His immeasurable silence which we measure by the distance our time-vehicle has crossed. And as we travel we are joined by more and more companions who have heard of the Way and realize it is the One they had been wandering through many a by-lane in search of. They in turn call out to others who might hear and heed them. And Baba tells us that whatever we would do to proclaim His Message to others we should do it now; that the Time for the breaking of His Silence is fast approaching, and when He gives The Word there will not be the need for His lovers to give His Message to the world - the breaking of His Silence will proclaim to the world the manifestation of God on earth.

Till we come to the moment when He releases The Word that will shatter our deafness, our voices are raised to speak of His Silence that all may hear us. And when among us there are voices that the people recognize and flock to listen to, our hearts are gladdened. Such voices were heard at a number of places this year, at public meetings held by Avatar Meher Baba Centres to mark the 42nd anniversary of the Beloved's Silence:

In Bombay the meeting was presided over by its Sheriff, Mr.H.H. Ismail, J.P. In Calcutta it was Mr. Justice F.B.Mukherji, a senior Judge of the Calcutta High Court, who presided. His speech, a fine treatise on 'The Eloquence of Silence' has been printed in booklet form by Chari.** The meeting at Dacca, capital of East Pakistan, was presided over by Mr. Justice S.M. Murshed, Chief Justice of the High Court of East Pakistan. His speech appeared in full in the 'Morning News', Dacca's standard paper, which reported the function under the heading "Glowing Tributes to Meher Baba". Adi and Dolly Arjani, who arranged the program, reported: "The Hall was packed to capacity, comprising all communities." Similarly worded was the telegram from Minoo Kharas: "..... audience comprising all communities including Catholic nuns." He was referring to the well attended meeting held in Karachi, presided over by Mr. B.S.Rustomjee, Ex-Principal of the Parsee Boys School.

The Vice President of India, Shri V.V. Giri, inaugurated the function held in the capital of India - at the Community Hall in New Delhi on 9th July. The form of Shri Giri's address was as unique as it was apt to the Occasion he was honouring - he inaugurated the program in silence! Going up to Beloved Baba's portrait he garlanded it with reverence. The audience packed the hall, with the overflow filling the verandah. They listened with absorbed interest to the speakers: to Shri C.M.Poonacha, Minister for Railways, who was Chairman; to Dr. M.Channa Reddy, Minister for Steel, Mines and Metals, who was guest of honour; to Shri Thirumala Rao, M.P.; and to Shri Amar Singh Saigal, M.P., who recited the Master's Prayer. Was Deo Kain said in his report: The inauguration was done in silence by the Vice-President garlanding the picture of dear Baba. Dr. Channa Reddy, Shri Poonacha and Shri Thirumala Rao spoke very well; the audience was impressed by their talks, and loudly cheered when Baba's

* Please note that the price of the book is \$ 2.00, and may be ordered through group-heads or directly from Mrs. Ann Forbes, 3340 N.W. 99th St., Miami, Florida 33147, U.S.A.

** free copies can be had from: Shri A.C.S.Chari, Advocate; Komala Vilas, 73 Rashbehari Ave., Calcutta-26, India.

message and Love and Blessing were conveyed to them. The hall rang with Jai, Jai, of Avatar Meher Baba. "*"

Magnificent was the program held at Bahadurgarh (Haryana), about 15 miles from Delhi, arranged by T.D.Verma and other Baba-lovers in Delhi. Although held in August, it marked the completion of fortytwo years of Baba's Silence. Part of the program was a remarkable procession of some seven to eight thousand people through the main roads of Bahadurgarh. The function was inaugurated by Shri V.K.R.V. Rao, Minister for Transport and Shipping, and attended by a huge gathering. The most unexpected and welcome guest at the function was the sun! This sunny day was the first break in the torrential rainfall that for days lashed Delhi and its neighbourhood, breaching roads and bridges, and provoking the Jumna river to roaring heights of danger. Due to the rains the Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Shri K.K.Shah, was held up and could not make it to Bahadurgarh to participate as intended. Those managing the program were deeply anxious over its success in the face of the rain's fury. But deeper was their faith that said "It is all in Beloved Baba's hands - we have done our best, He will do the rest." Beloved Baba responded - His smile was reflected in the sun that shone over Bahadurgarh and blessed their efforts to success. All India Radio, reporting on highlights of the week 'Around the Capital' spoke of the program, and relayed part of Shri V.K.R.V. Rao's splendid speech and of a Baba-bhajan sung by the women group.

As a ship crossing the vast ocean, the Time has been coming steadily nearer and is now near enough to be visible, a dot on the horizon. We cannot define its shape, we cannot fathom its speed, but we can clearly see it approach in the light of Baba's words given us in the past. Of the many things Baba said, was: "As the time for my Manifestation draws close it will draw in more people to me, and my Message will go out to more and more people and spread round the world. Among the many who will recognize my Divinity, will be leaders and prominent personalities who will join my followers in publicly declaring my Message of Love and Truth." All this we see coming to pass, gathering speed and momentum day by day, place by place. His lovers are taking His Message to every field of opportunity, for the breath of His Love to blow on it and carry it far and wide. Fast multiplying are opportunities in the field of radio and television, and these brain-products of Science are communicating with growing frequency the Heart-message of God to men. Take these instances:

In a three months' report on Baba-work in the San Francisco Bay area, carried out among the great youth-force of America, Allan Cohen lists no less than four radio interviews and five television shows! Rick Chapman, or Moochewala (his Indian name meaning 'one with a moustache'), since his return to the United States from India in May, has been ceaselessly busy "telling the Americans about the Truth which Baba alone is", often through radio and television interview. Reporting his activities, Rick wrote from various places. I quote from some of his letters that illustrate how the air waves are carrying word of The Avatar and spreading it to the masses. His report from Denver says:

"Dear Beloved Baba, What a night last night was! From midnight until six in the morning, your Moochewala was talking to Denver people over the radio about The Only One - which, as only You know, is You! This kind of radio program is called a 'talk show', where the radio broadcaster, sometimes with a guest, talks about some current topic or issue over the air. After talking for an hour or so, the broadcaster will invite telephone calls from the listeners, so that they can discuss the topic with the broadcaster or with the guest. These telephone calls are part of the radio program and are broadcast over the air as they take place. Every kind of person called in after hearing me talk about You - from narrowly orthodox Christians to people genuinely interested in discovering about You. It was a challenge to try to answer each person in a way understandable to him, and a great joy to have so much time to talk freely about my secret Beloved."

(Later). "In these past few weeks in Denver, I have had the chance to appear on four radio programs and to talk with a number of people individually. There is not more than a handful of actual lovers in this area that I know about,

* Shri W.D.Kain's full reports of the Delhi and Bahadurgarh programs appear in "DIVYA VANI", the English monthly Baba-magazine printed in India (address: The Meher Vihar Trust, 3-6-441, 5th St., Himayatnagar, Hyderabad (A.P.), India.

but many persons have become interested in reading and finding out more about the living God in human form."

Rick writes about Boston: "One night I was on a 'talk show' in Boston - a program on which Allan had previously appeared - and on the whim of the broadcaster (inspired by the Whim of the Avatar!) he called up Allan in Berkeley and had him participate in the show for almost an hour by long distance telephone! Two other radio interviews took place in Boston. The necessity of using the 'hot topic' of LSD as a channel for talking about You had almost completely vanished - the interviewer urged me to tell about You at length. Finally, part of an hour-long television show was filmed while the key personality in the show asked me questions about You."

(Later). "Since I last wrote You in New York, You have stirred up a real storm of action. After returning to New York from Myrtle Beach, Chapel Hill and Hampton, I had a half-hour radio interview discussing You and Your views on LSD. I was told that the interview, which was taped, would not be broadcast until July, but the station played it that very night (May 19) and the following morning.... This unexpected broadcast was perfectly timed, since many people who heard the program came to the public talk which was arranged two days later in the heart of New York's bohemia...."

New York also scooped a nation-wide Air triumph through the "Society for Avatar Meher Baba", who produced and broadcast a half hour program marking the forty-second anniversary of Baba's Silence. The broadcast was relayed over eight stations in the U.S.A., filling all Baba-lovers who heard it with joy. A number of them expressed it in their letters, describing the program as "wonderful", "splendid", saying "we would like to hear it again and again." Directed by Harry Kenmore and Annarosa Karrasch, it was a concerted production, unique in the fact that a number of Baba-lovers from different parts of U.S.A. joined their voices to it. Each of them spoke for 2 to 3 minutes about Baba, and their tape-recorded talks were played between the Commentator's superb prelude and the finale of Harry's recital of 'Meher Baba's Universal Message'. It was thrilling to hear their voices in the hall at Meherazad, when the tape of the program sent by Harry was played before Baba on the morning of 10th July.

All the more heartwarming because it was unexpected, was a radio program in Paris which carried the Beloved's Name to the people of France. Anita Vieillard, one of the very early group of His lovers, wrote to Mehera in a recent letter from Paris: "Dearest Mehera, you will all be pleased to know that I spoke on the French Radio. They gave 3 programs during 3 weeks. It was all on India, with some French ambassadors, philosophers etc. talking. In the interview I spoke on Baba. They found my talk so interesting that they opened the talks with my interview being the first! You can imagine what a joy it was for me! It is the first time I spoke on the Radio. I was questioned on India, for the talks were all connected with India. Krishnamurti also spoke in French, he came last. I can't give you all the names of the people as I don't know them; they all have to do with culture and spiritual search. I was questioned on my being in India. I spoke on our Baba, I also spoke of the incredible atmosphere one felt during the 'arti' with Baba standing in our midst. I hope I was able to give a bit of all the wonders He has given us all!"

But if this first opening in French reserve has been such a happy surprise, what has been happening in 'the Land of the Southern Cross' is astounding. A few months ago Baba called Bill LePage from Australia for a two weeks' stay at Meherazad. Soon after his return he found that every wall that had prevented him from spreading Baba's Message now had a door which opened to the sound of His Name! One contact he made, a hard-headed young journalist, Mike Agostini, led to the first radio and T.V. interviews in Australia on beloved Baba. In a letter dated 19th June, Bill wrote: "The possibilities coming from the contact are already staggering. He (Mike) not only has newspaper contacts but also T.V. and radio ones. He has already approached A.B.C. and said to the national show, 'I have a sane, rational, normal man who says that God is on earth now', and the producer has expressed interest and asked for the submission of definite details for an interview between Mike and myself. He also approached newspapers, again with good

reception, and has planned a lengthy radio interview with me after the T.V. show."

All this happened within the space of a month. On the front page of "The Australian" (a daily national newspaper) dated July 6, 1967, this intimation appeared under the prominent heading of 'THE MAN WHO SAYS HE IS GOD': "Meher Baba says he is God. And, although he works no miracles and has lived for more than 70 years in relative obscurity, millions of people around the world believe him. This extraordinary man and one of his leading Australian disciples are described by M.G. Agostini in 'The Australian' on Saturday." The article appeared as announced, followed by letters from other Australian Baba-lovers in later issues. Then on 17th July, Bill wrote:

"Beloved Baba, You and I appeared on television last night in a program shown throughout Australia! It was not for long Baba, but at least two photos of You were shown and I was interviewed for about 10 minutes. (I took the photos on the chance that I could show them, and the T.V. people were keen on the idea). I wasn't nervous, a bit anxious to do a good job, and very happy that You were going to be seen and talked about. I didn't really have a feeling of happiness with the radio interviews, I think I was too anxious about doing You justice, but they were satisfactory and I had relaxed by the time of the T.V. interview. I did not watch the T.V. program, but the family said it was very good.... I am writing this in the office, and a few moments ago rang a company where the telephonist knows me. As soon as I spoke to her she said 'Oh! I saw you on T.V.' She was with her family, and they all were most interested. This is an example of what has been happening since the article appeared in the newspapers, and since the radio interviews. Businessmen have rung me, neighbours are talking about it, there have been letters and phone-calls to the newspaper and radio stations; friends of friends have been talking about the interview - even though they did not know me. I am amazed at the number of people who listen to the radio, and who listen to interviews. After the T.V. interview, the interviewer who is one of Australia's best-known interviewers, asked me to speak on one of his radio programs, which I am doing next Wednesday - he asked me without prompting. Two business-men who rang me said they found the interview excellent, hoped there would be many more of them, and one of them has asked me to his home to meet some of his friends.... Another T.V. interview will be done shortly, but the date has not been decided. It appears all round that something really has started in making You known here, but now I must give thought to making 'the something started' grow."

Now Bill is occupied in plans to keep alive the interest that this recent publicity has aroused, fanning it vigorously with whatever comes to hand, knowing Baba will do the rest. I like the way Bill put it, in his letter to Baba: "I am determined not to let this opportunity for publicity die away, and also to be more provocative in my interviews. You have given me teeth, and with Your 'go ahead' message, I am prepared and very willing to nip the ankles of fellow Australians until they are thoroughly aware of You!"

A country where awareness of Baba has been brought to people from all over the world, is Canada. It has done this within the last few months, in its role of host to the world while celebrating the 100th year of its nationhood. It continues to do so, through Montreal's EXPO 67, the colossal International Exhibition where the height of man's ingenuity and skill have been challenged and met, where the art and culture of over sixty countries is housed and displayed. Its spectacular array of pavilions are as members of the world-family gathered round the Montreal table, where the fare is rich in thought and vision, where the exchange of ideas and inspiration is brilliant.

And what the Indian pavilion has to offer among its ancient and modern contribution, to palates unfamiliar with the simple ingredients of Truth, is a taste of the highest purpose of man's existence. In its literary section it has books on and by Meher Baba, reportedly the only books on spirituality so far seen at the pavilion - they are displayed in a separate compartment of the rotating glass case where books are accommodated. On its Information counter it has "Meher Baba's Universal Message", in large quantities that are replenished

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daily, for thousands of copies are taken by visitors to the pavilion every day. These Universal Message folders are given free, in Baba's Love. Another touch of Baba's Love: the space given to Baba-material was given free - not a cent was charged, when space was being rented at \$ 100 per square foot! Catherine Draper, who has laboured most over this project, wrote from Montreal: "So far 'Meher Baba's Universal Message' is the only free pamphlet I have seen offered at the pavilion. This fact plus the superb location gives the appearance of an endorsement on the part of the India Government. Mr. K.S.Luthra (India's representative at the India Pavilion) chose to have them placed on the Information Desk instead of with the books. This is truly a coup-de-grace, for every person who enters the pavilion files past the Information desk. Mr. Luthra told me the public is picking up the Universal Message at the rate of 10,000 per week. I phoned Kitty (Myrtle Beach) for another shipment immediately..." The shipment was soon exhausted, and a reprint rushed under way. Catherine writes: "Kitty may have told you that they raised funds for us to have another 100,000 copies of the Message printed here in Montreal. And 25,000 of these have already been taken! I don't yet know the exact number which the Kashoutys shipped here, but estimate there were 50,000. Expo-goers have taken all of these, plus 10,000 French ones we had, plus the 25,000 mentioned above. Thus, at the Fair's half-way mark, about 85,000 of the Universal Message have been taken."

For His followers in Canada, this Baba-blessed opportunity given to their country is a dream come true, a prayer answered. "It is beyond my wildest dream" writes Catherine Draper. Stella DuFresne writes: "I prayed to Baba for all the years I know Him to help my natal country Canada - now I can say that He has answered my prayer, by having His Universal Message at the Expo..."

Meher Baba's Universal Message at the Expo - a drop of Reality in an ocean of illusory grandeur, the Drop that swallows the ocean - reaches out to all creation, and declares:

"I veil myself from man by his own curtain of ignorance, and manifest my Glory to a few. My present Avataric Form is the last Incarnation of this cycle of time, hence my Manifestation will be the greatest. 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."

Ever lovingly,

c/o Adi K. Irani
King's Road
Ahmednagar (M.S.)
India.

MANDLI

Guruprasad, Poona.

1st June 1957.

Dearest Family,

Two thirds of our Guruprasad stay is over, with four weeks left to departure time. We arrived here on the morning of April 2nd, the usual odd procession on wheels starting from Meherazad soon after breakfast: the large truck carrying all personal and household stuff (including bicycles and lift-chair), the hired Station-wagon and the De Soto accommodating most of the Meherazad family, and Dr. Donkin's new Wolseley carrying Beloved Baba and some of us. As good to look at as to drive in, the Wolseley glided over the rough roads like a drake on a lake. During the drive Baba repeatedly remarked how comfortable He felt, and told Donk to be here with his car on 1st July to drive Him back to Meherazad.

The first thing Baba did on stepping into Guruprasad was something we have not seen Him do for umpteen years - taking a brisk walk up & down its long verandah, His hand on the arm of one of the mandali who was having quite a job keeping in step with Him! Others, usually snail-walking behind Baba, were comparatively running. It made me remember the time we told Harry Kenmore how in bygone days Baba used to walk so fast that the mandali had to run after Him, and Harry had promptly punned "Well, they're still running after Him!" Now, I thought, they are beginning to do so literally again.

Each morning and afternoon we have seen the Beloved striding the length of the marble tiled verandah, to and from the mandali's hall. Added to our joy at seeing Him walk like this is seeing the pleasure it gives Him, when at the end of a stride He may ask with a delighted smile "How do I walk?"! Just as He asked Dr. Ram Ginde when he was here in April, called by Baba "for five minutes" specially to see Him walking. And Ram's reply shone from his beaming face with that eloquence which makes words look pale before it. How Baba appeared to him during his fifty minutes with Baba, Dr. Ginde expressed in his letter to Eruch:

"Beloved Baba looked a picture of radiant health with bright shining eyes, rosy cheeks, exuding joy and happiness. He did not seem to have much pain in His neck and His movements were relatively free and spontaneous. His gait was strong. I have never seen Him walk like that before; one stretch and back along the verandah was enough to make me breathe heavily. It was really a unique and thrilling experience."

If Beloved Baba appeared in such glowing health and radiance to Dr. Ginde, that's how He appeared to us. But that is not to say we see Him always in this light, as we do when His radiance is turned on full for those whom He calls for a while. For us who see Him all the time, He often keeps the shade down or we could be dazzled into forgetfulness of His humanity. Baba made a statement on this one morning recently in Meherazad when He was seated with His mandali. Baba said: "I am both divine and human. Those who live with me feel more of my humanity than my divinity. Those whom I permit to come and see me for a while see more of my divinity than my humanity. All my intimate lovers whether living with me or away from me will, in the end, experience my divinity."

Baba's sudden decision to call Dr. Ginde when He did, was explained by His remark: "Later I may not be walking so fast". We were to remember that casual remark some weeks later, when Baba strained a muscle in His back which made movement painful. But although the back considerably slowed down His pace Baba continued the daily verandah walks, until it became too painful to take a step. Then the little wheel-chair was unpacked and put into service again after its long holiday - the chair sent by His 'Big Ben'

(Dr. Ben Hayman) by Air from U.S.A. three years ago. Last two summers Baba used it all the time, but this year it was out of sight and out of mind till the back strain made its use imperative for a while.

The cervical collar too has been hardly in use this summer. With the temperature up to 109 F. during May, we didn't dare imagine the discomfort it would have meant for Baba if the collar had to be on longer! Happily, substantial improvement in the neck pain made this unnecessary. Some time ago in Meherazad, when there were darshan-seekers in spite of Baba's repeated announcement that He is in seclusion and none must ask to see Him, Baba said "Only my lovers' love can help the pain in my neck, it can ease only when my seclusion is undisturbed". We can see that even if we learn our lesson the hard way, hard for Him, His Patience and Love help us in the end to learn it well. Now the love of His lovers has indeed begun to help by keeping His seclusion undisturbed. And although this applies to His lovers everywhere, at the moment it applies most to His lovers in Poona. For them the Beloved's darshan is touchingly close, yet they have not let a breath of their longing stir the quiet of His seclusion! And this final period of His seclusion is the most important, as Baba disclosed before we left for Poona. He said that His universal work is mounting to peak intensity and for five months He will have to undergo much suffering, after which we should be prepared to witness "great changes".

The family letter is invariably read to Beloved Baba before it is posted. When He heard the completed draft of this letter, Baba expressed concern over His lovers being anxious to know whether He is now walking about as before. He therefore told me to add this message from Him to you all:

"My lovers need not worry, because I have started walking fast again; but my mental and spiritual suffering will end only when I break my silence."

For us Easter time has long been associated with Guruprasad time, but this year it was a month ahead by the calendar and we were at Meherazad. On Easter Sunday morning in Meherazad there was a surprise 'visit' from two outstanding artistes who entertained the Beloved with songs on the air. While Baba was breakfasting we turned on the radio as usual for some music He would enjoy. We tuned in to 'The Voice of America Breakfast Show', and there was Marion Anderson singing: He's Got The Whole World in His Hands! Her superb voice rolled out the words in the stillness of His presence as though she were there before Him, singing to Him alone. Next we switched over to Poona and there was Begum Akhtar in voice form; and it might well have been that she was singing to Baba in person as she had done in the past, singing with her heart in her voice and love's tears coursing down her cheeks.....

Easter is an eternal occasion in the lives of Baba-lovers as they witness in themselves and in others the daily miracle of resurrection to His Love. For us Easter is God submitting Himself to be earthbound that we may rise from the tomb of our selfhood to life in His Godhood. The rejoicing of Easter is symbolic of our rebirth in Him. And if tradition-wise the Easter chicks may be said to symbolize the joy of 'coming to life', Baba-wise they would surely symbolize the hearts hatched in His Love. Well, the Avatar's Chicken Farm is already showing signs of flourishing, and from what Baba indicates the time is near ripening for a population-explosion of "Baba-chicks" all over the world!

One resurrected heart* wrote three Easters ago:

" It is little more than a year since we (my wife and I) became followers of the Living Avatar. I remember reading Baba's words 'Love me more and more', wondering what that meant. But now I realize that it is very easy to love Him more and more, for Baba does more and more fill our lives.

" We learned about Meher Baba at Easter time. Easter has always been for me a time of inner upliftment and awakening to my own for the most part dormant exultation in God. Though I have never followed the rituals of Christianity, at Easter the meaning of Christ becomes ever more clear. This Easter my horizon and my sunrise is Meher Baba who fulfils every sense of the meaning of the resurrection and the light."

I kept telling myself my mind was made up - there would be no report on Baba's Birthday celebrations observed this year in East or West - it had been a big enough job last year and I didn't have the courage to tackle this year's giant with my pen. I determined to skip over the subject and touch no Birthday items, only to find it would have to be a high leap if the New York item was to be passed over, since it had unexpectedly turned into a world item! On 25th February in New York there was once again a big program arranged at the Barbizon Plaza Theatre by the 'Society for Avatar Meher Baba' celebrating the Beloved's 73rd Birthday. And this entire program of two hours' duration was taped live on the spot, and broadcast next day via shortwave over RNYW (Radio New York Worldwide) to more than a hundred countries throughout the world. Radio New York Worldwide received U.S. government's permission to beam directly to India for the occasion, and the 'Sunday Hindusthan Standard' of Calcutta notified its public of this Baba-broadcast under marked headlines: RADIO NEW YORK HONOURS MEHER BABA. All Baba Centres and lovers who could be informed at rush notice sat glued to their radios hours ahead of scheduled time, including the mandali at Meherazad. And even if others were unable to make contact, the special beam directed from hearts gathered at Barbizon Plaza Theatre reached Meherazad! Despite atmospheric disturbances and overlapping stations we caught clear snatches of the Birthday program: part of a speech, a song, a comment. "Beloved Baba" were the first words that burst through the barrier of babble from bordering stations; the last words we heard were "Happy Birthday Baba!". To Station RNYW goes the unique honour of broadcasting worldwide the Avatar's name. To the Society for Avatar Meher Baba, to its chairman Dr. Harry Kenmore who is entrusted by Baba to carry out two public celebrations each year in New York, to each and all His workers and lovers whose individual contributions make this possible, goes the reward of Beloved Baba's pleasure. Here is the text of Baba's cable to Harry Kenmore:

"I am very happy with New York celebrations of my Birthday. I send my Love to all who selflessly contribute to my Birthday celebrations and Silence anniversaries, thus making it possible for you to fulfill my wish for these events to be publicly celebrated each year in New York."

* Lynn Ott, U.S.A.

Close at hand is another Silence Anniversary, For the 'Society for Avatar Meher Baba' it means another public program in New York as wished by Baba; for the lovers it means another opportunity to give their full response in order to make it a worthy public event.

Some time back we read somewhere a quote from someone who said that if God wishes to make another world the material is ready - the first one too was made out of chaos! Well, with all the unbelievable chaos and misery of our world the material is obviously not yet ready for God to make 'another world' in the mould of His Compassion - but it must be nearly ready, for God-Baba tells us "Have patience; the time is drawing near, very near". And if in the world's throes we read signs of God's nearing manifestation, those who 'read the stars' also appear to be given some indication of it. A Baba-lover in Agra came across some significant items in an Astrological Magazine and sent us the text for our interest. The magazine's January 1964 issue predicted: "The weapons manufactured by the ace scientists of the white races will be made ineffective by the attempts of three chief heads by meditation among the obstinate people. This will be done to save the world from destruction, by a terrific sound made by a Superman... The Superman will wander in Mute Silence." In another column it said: "Aldo Lavagnini, a Mexican astrologer, predicted some time back the appearance of a great World Teacher, a Divine Incarnation, during a third world war or shortly after it." And in the Astrological Magazine's December ('64) issue appeared the following: "As Saturn is now in Aquarius, we may expect the arrival of Universal Man or Viswa-Guru. He will ultimately bring Peace to this earth... The suffering humanity is praying heart and soul for his early arrival".

If star gazers could look under their noses, and earth wanderers recognize Who is in their midst, they would know that humanity's prayer was heard and answered before it was uttered. The pity is that humanity has not heard the answer to its prayer!

Even as the Avatar hides His Reality behind the veil of our ignorance, He hides His Silence behind the clamour of our words. Never has the world seemed more word-crazy than it is now, our minds never so deafened by discordant jangle of words coined in man's base metal. How then can we hope to hear the sublime ring of HIS words when He drops them in our midst - words that we let roll away to the corners of our minds or collect in pages of books. And because we have not really heard the words Beloved Baba has given us we ask Him for more, and yet again for more, while He gives us a gentle reminder "If my Silence cannot speak, of what avail words?"

From what He tells us, we will hear His Silence only when He breaks it. The Master Fiddler is here to repair and tune the heart-strings of mankind before He can play the Avataric score, and the world shall dance to the Tune of His making when He gives THE WORD. Hazrat Babajan, who awakened Baba to His Godhood, said of Him: "My beloved Meher! My Son! Some day the whole world will call out 'Meher, Meher', all the trees will cry out 'Meher', all the birds will sing 'Meher'."

And Beloved Baba, what does He say will happen when He breaks His Silence? Baba says:

"THAT WHICH HAS NEVER HAPPENED WILL HAPPEN WHEN I BREAK MY SILENCE."

Baba's instructions to His lovers for the 42nd anniversary of His silence, will be sent out by Adi to all in the East in a Circular issued on 10th June. I give it here as wished by Baba for His Western family's information and attention:

On the 10th of July 1967, the 42nd Anniversary of His Silence, Avatar Meher Baba wishes all who love and obey Him and all who would want to do so, to observe complete Silence for 24 hours beginning from midnight of the 9th July to midnight of the 10th July, in accordance with local time.

Those who, for practical reasons, find that it is not possible to observe silence for the 24 hours on Monday the 10th of July 1967 should instead observe complete fast for twelve hours on that day, from 8.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. During this fast nothing must be consumed -- not even water. Those who are fasting for the 12 hours on July 10th, should also observe partial fast on the morning of the 10th by only taking one cup of tea or coffee (with or without milk) between arising and 8.00 a.m.

Baba sends His Love Blessing to each one of His lovers for the Silence Day.

The Circular has a postscript Note from Adi given according to Baba's wish. Beloved Baba directs me to reproduce it here in full, for you all dear ones to know and bear in mind :

"Note: As Avatar Meher Baba wants to remain absolutely undisturbed, He directs me to inform all His followers, lovers and workers that He will not attend to any correspondence other than emergency telegrams and cables, and very important letters concerning Baba-work directly, and none should write any more letters to me here or to members of the mandali resident with Him regarding their personal affairs or the affairs of others.

"In case of emergency a reply-paid telegram or cable (fully prepaid for reply) may be sent addressed to: MEHERBABA, AHMEDNAGAR.

Postscript Note to the Circular CONTD...

"Baba also wishes all His lovers to note that He will not give darshan to them and will not see any visitors till after 1967. After 1967 Baba will Himself announce when He will give darshan to His lovers. Therefore Baba wants none of His lovers to come to Him of their own accord for His darshan before His announcement is circulated.

"I request the group-heads of all Avatar Meher Baba Centres to inform all concerned about this matter.

"Avatar Meher Baba and Mandali will leave Guruprasad, Poona, for Meherazad, Ahmednagar, on July 1st, 1967."

Ever lovingly,

MANDLI

Meherazad, 8th February 1967.

Dearest Family,

JAI BABA to you from us all at Meherazad on this crisp winter's morning in the month of Our Lord, the 73rd February since the still awaited 'Second Coming' came to pass. When the Avatar has brought all religions together "like beads on one string", then surely every religion will recognize the Second Coming as being in fact the Recurrent Returning of the same Compassionate One!

AVATAR MEHER BABA'S MESSAGE

Given for the Occasion of His 73rd Birthday

on 25th February 1967

"BIRTHS AND DEATHS ARE ILLUSORY PHENOMENA.

ONE REALLY DIES WHEN ONE IS BORN TO LIVE AS GOD,

THE ETERNAL WHO IS BEYOND BOTH BIRTH AND DEATH."

A circular carrying the above message has been sent out by Adi to all in the East, and they have also been informed that Baba lovingly permits all His lovers to celebrate His 73rd Birthday. Adi adds "Those who wish to celebrate Baba's Birthday should proceed with the preparations and celebrate it in a manner befitting to the Avatar".

In many places here the Birthday plans have started rolling since the 15th of December, and we feel the vibrations and hear the happy rumbling as they progress in their march of 73 days towards the Greatest Day on Earth. As Eruch described it in his letter to Harry Kenmore: "Every day is being celebrated with great joy and enthusiasm as a part of the birthday festivity which will end on B-Day on 25th February 1967. All this activity to celebrate the Birthday of the Birthless One! Well, this is necessary too to remind us all of our births and deaths, and to give vent to our exuberance in the knowledge of having the Ancient One once again among us". Apart from daily programs channelling His Message to the people at large, a number of His Centres are carrying out continuous BABA-Name repetition throughout the 73 days up to the hour of 5.00 a.m. on 25th February. Moreover, Baba's birth-time of 5.00 a.m. is obviously Baba-time on any day of the year for His lovers in India, as we were delighted to observe on invitation cards sent out by some of them on marriage occasions in the family. These very attractive Wedding cards not only had (as usual) Baba's picture printed on them, in colour and in gold, but the time fixed for the weddings was 5 o'clock in the morning! I wonder if by setting this precedent they have set the clock for Posterity to time all happy occasions by this auspicious hour!

At Beloved Baba's express wish, the following announcement was given in the Eastern circular and is given here for His Western family. Baba wants you to pay close attention to it:

Please note very carefully :-

Avatar Meher Baba will be in Poona from 1st April to the end of June 1967.

As usual, Baba will stay at 'Guruprasad', 24 Bund Road, Poona-1.

Baba wishes all His lovers to be informed that He wants to remain completely undisturbed till the end of 1967. He will not give darshan to His lovers and will not see visitors till after 1967.

After 1967 Baba will Himself announce when He will give darshan to His lovers. Therefore Baba wants His lovers not to come to Him of their own accord before His announcement is circulated.

During His stay at Guruprasad in Poona for the three months (April thru June 1967) Baba will see only those whom He has called, or will specifically call, for His work.

I once said to a woman who was feeling miserable at leaving Baba and not knowing when she would see Him again: "Baba is with you, wherever you go". Her retort was "What do you know about it - you are with Him all the time". There was nothing I could say to that! And any comment from me in reference to the above declaration of Baba's wish might not ring true either. It is of course between Baba and His lovers -- HE knows what they can take, He knows what they can give, and He asks of them no less.

As I sit typing this in the 'office' on the verandah and peer over my glasses into the garden beyond, I see the tailor-bird vigorously taking a bath on water-sprinkled Lily leaves; the robin pecking with immodest speed at crumbs put out for the birds; and the dove carrying a twig to his mate in the rafter where she sits serenely on her incredible nest of half a dozen twigs sprawling over the beam. Above the song of birds and familiar sounds of household activities, I hear Eruch's voice coming from the Hall. He is reading out to Baba some important correspondence in English (as Bhau does in Hindi and Aloha in Persian) during the short time the Beloved allows for it while He is with the Mandli every morning. This consists mainly of cables and telegrams; and then (if time and Baba permit) some selected letters relating to His work. While Baba listens to letters reporting the work He does thru His workers, He expresses pleasure and praise for the part His workers play in the doing of His work! On their part, it is clear that in every move and behind every 'coincidence' they see Baba's beautiful hand, moving faster than they can keep up with. This is how Don Stevens and Allen Cohen, speaking for the vital force of America's youth, put it in their letters to us:

Don says: "One of the most exciting aspects of Baba's movement towards the day of His manifestation has been the manner in which He has been leading young people to us (Sufism Reoriented). Then, to see the bond of inner relationship which springs up between them and Baba, to see its strength, and the extraordinary results it produces, is perhaps the greatest succession of miracles I have been allowed to witness. I stand in awe of what I see. At the heart of what each of them seems to need desperately is a sense of meaning. Then they need a sense of support. Both they get from Baba. I've kept my fingers crossed, wondering how this could go on encompassing new individuals, and sustaining those who had already found this new way. And yet, month after month, it has gone on."

Allen says: "Interest and familiarity with Baba's Name has been rising at a rapid rate. ... Unquestionably, Baba's tempo in the U.S. is speeding up spectacularly -- word of the Beloved has quickened the hearts of many who have been yearning for they knew not what. He seems to be reaping a harvest of ripe

souls with the ancient tools of love and inspiration. And even the infinitesimal part of His management of the 'Love Farm' which I see, leaves me in wonderment and awe of His seemingly incredible Mastery of its technology, administration and most minute detail! JAI BABA!!"

If it is surprising to find this great 'speeding up' in the U.S.A. where Baba's following has always been bigger than the rest of the West put together, it is surely astonishing to see the rise of Baba-interest in countries like Germany and Austria where He was scarcely known! This has come about thru the longing of Hilde Halpern to bring the word of Baba to the people of her native land. "I bless your effort to spread my Love and Wisdom in your mother tongue", the Beloved told her in 1960 when she was in America and had just published her book 'Liebe Und Weisheit' (Love and Wisdom) giving Baba's messages and discourses in German. For some years now she and her family have been in Munich and Vienna, and her desire to spread Baba's word is being fulfilled beyond her expectations - she is finding more openings and possibilities than can be handled, more seeking and response than can be imagined. In an early letter Hilde had written: "The people here are very eager, and truly thirsty for Baba, but they do not yet know and they cannot yet discriminate. They have had so little help that they turn overjoyed to every 'guru', 'saint', 'teacher', to anybody with a message, in the hope that at last there might be somebody who could help them!" Baba surely sent Hilde to help them, and at first practically sent them to her door thru an avenue of unexpected contacts and remarkable coincidences, to look for Him. Against domestic and other odds that would have overwhelmed a lesser lover, with very limited time on the one hand and unlimited material on the other, she and her daughter Maria went steadily ahead with Baba's grace. Soon Hilde was giving talks at educational and cultural organizations where she was invited to speak on Baba; showing coloured movies of Baba with touching response from the audience; giving Baba-material in German magazines; having large size photos of Baba displayed alongside her book in a bookshop; tape recording her talk for some occasion when not able to attend in person; and above all developing individual interest among the most promising ones who are now in turn helping to spread His message. At present Hilde is invited to give a Baba-evening for 'The Seekers', a group that has weekly lectures on esoteric subjects, mostly related to Christ. Having the choice of a Friday evening, it is natural that she should think of 24th February so as to make a "big Birthday celebration" of the Baba-evening where the people will meet Baba through His lovers. "But", writes Hilde, "If only I could give you a picture of how very many people in Vienna are eager to meet Baba personally, and not just through us!" It was one of the letters read to Baba.

Even if no letter is fitted into the morning's reading-out period, every cable and telegram received is read out to Him. This makes it a massive overtime proceeding during the week of the Beloved's Birthday, when the green light is on and the rush of telegraphic traffic to and from Meherazad exceeds all limits of time! The Avatar's previous birthdays too, open the way for our love to greet Him. Baba lovers for whom Christmas time is Baba-Jesus time, sent their love in cables and in cards, individually and in groups, to "The One who started Christmas" (as Filis Frederick puts it). Beloved Baba wishes this letter to carry His Love to each one. All cables were heard by Him, all cards seen by Him. The spirit that urged His lovers to send Him their love-greeting at Christmas was expressed by the Fields family of Wisconsin (U.S.) in a simple line. On their beautiful Christmas card from 'Bob Barbara and Barry', was the inscription:

TO MEHER BABA WHO FOR US IS THE CHRIST.

This letter is going out sooner than expected, so that Baba's Birthday message reaches all of you in good time. The next letter will be in June.

Another thing not expected was my having to speak of Ramjoo Abdulla so soon after my mention of him in the last letter. Then it was in reference to his first coming to Baba, now it is to tell you of his final coming to Baba. On this 11th of January (1967), at the age of 67, Ramju passed away from heart failure. Beloved Baba had this message telegraphed to the family: MY VERY DEAR RAMJOC HAS COME TO ME TO REST ETERNALLY IN ME. Baba also sent Adi immediately to Satara to convey His Love and message personally to Ramju's family members who are devoted to Baba. They related to Adi how during the final days Ramju continually repeated Baba's Name, with a string of beads to help him do so without a lapse. In the last moments when he was too feeble to hold the beads, his fingers were still moving by themselves in rhythm with the movement of his lips!

Besides a number of chronic ailments, for years dear Ramju suffered incessantly from severe asthma which made breathing a painful labour for him at all times, and finally affected his heart. None of this he allowed to get in the way of his labouring in his beloved Master's service to the end. Two days before he died, he called his close ones to him and spoke of Baba in the light of his knowledge: "..... space is the image of Reality and time is the reflection of that image.... it is impossible for both light and shadow to co-exist Meher Baba is the personification of that Infinite Light." As Ramju's last moments were wholly absorbed in remembrance and love for Baba, so were the years of his life since following "the personification of that Infinite Light".

Being of the very early disciples, having an unusual flair for narration and an uncanny memory for details, Ramju was a walking treasury of Baba-anecdotes. He was also among the very few who received letters from Baba in His own handwriting, signed MERWAN. From some of these letters, written to "Dear Ramju" from "Merwan" in 1925 and 1926, I quote some lines that I know Ramju would want to share with others, not so much in his memory as in homage to Baba's Love for His own -- lines that are a timeless discourse to all His lovers :

"I am always with you internally."

"I love you as my own self."

"Have no anxiety about any matter."

"Be brave it will all pass away!"

"I have taken it to myself to make you see Truth in future."

"All's well, you have me! Hang maya and all its

illusionary playings."

I wish us all a Happy 1967 in the words of our Fred and Ella Winterfeldt. Surely Fredella have taken the words right from every Baba-lover's heart!

"All Praise, all Glory, all Thanks to Beloved Baba.
May our every breath and thought, our every action,
our whole being with all our love, be His in 1967
and in eternity. HAPPY NEW BABA-YEAR!"

ever lovingly,

MANDLI

NOTE : In view of probable disruption in Telegraphic service all over the country from the 21st of this month, it is advisable for those sending Birthday cables to the Beloved, to do so in advance.

Also please remember that the cable address is simply two words: MEHERBABA AHMEDNAGAR (India). Although this has been made clear in several previous letters, some lovers still send their cables addressed at length, sometimes stretching it to a dozen words!

Meherazad, 14th December 1966

Dearest Family,

It was in December of 1956 that the first 'family letter' came out, born of Baba's Love for His Western family. That was ten years and seventy letters ago. As I dust the files of these letters and thumb through their mass of pages I wonder how many words they contain. I recall Francis Goldney, when he was at Meherazad*, tirelessly typing away long letters and articles all day, at the end of which he would beamingly tell us the exact number of words he had typed! Having neither his astounding energy nor patience, I couldn't ever hope to tackle the mountain of words made by the family letters over the years. But I do look in wonder at this wordy "mountain" and know it would be a rubble-heap were it not held together by the might of Baba's Love, were it not covered with the tender grass of His mercy and bearing the life-giving springs of His words. As Baba has told us, only "words that proceed from the Source of Truth have real meaning."

Direct from the Source come the following words. The message was specially dictated by Beloved Baba for His lovers to receive through this Family-letter:

Desires and longings are the root cause of all suffering.

The only Real Desire is to see God, and the only Real Longing is to become one with God.

This Real Desire and Longing frees one from the bondage of birth and death. Other desires and longings bind one with ignorance.

To desire the Real Desire and to long for the Real Longing you need my Grace; and you cannot have that until you surrender all other desires and longings to me.

Your love for me will help you to surrender these desires and longings; and my Love for you will help you to desire the Real Desire and long for the Real Longing which are by my Grace.

- MEHER BABA -

We take in the words and we think we understand what they mean. But words of Real Meaning are not meant to be understood, they are meant to be lived; and only with the breath of His Love can we live them. Isn't that why our merciful Beloved has told us: "My depth is unfathomable. Don't try to understand me. Just love me." So, loving Him is our first step, next step, and every step. And love must walk hand in hand with obedience, for their separation adds to His pain. Naturally His most difficult wish for His lovers to obey is the wish that none should seek to visit Him, and this is where some of His Eastern lovers fail miserably. Baba made it so clear that He wishes to remain undisturbed till the end of November 1967 - undisturbed by visitors; yet they came, and still more came, pleading to see Him. When the disturbance reached its limit, Baba ordered three big boards with His wish painted on them in big clear letters in three languages (Hindi, Marathi and English) to be put up where they would be distinctly visible. The words on them are:

* Lt.Col. F.P.Goldney (retd), Baba-lover in Faroe Islands, who stayed at Meherazad for a number of days in 1957.

AVATAR MEHER BABA HAS STOPPED SEEING
AND GIVING DARSHAN TO ANYONE

- By Order -

The boards have been placed on the old caravan of the New Life, and Baba has told us to take them with us to Poona for His summer summer stay at Guruprasad from April through June 1967. In the meantime three more of the same boards have been put up along the Meherazad road where it forks to the Mandli's quarters. There they stand, the three silent sentinels, and we have sometimes seen some visitor standing before them with hands reverently joined, bowing literally to His Wish!

As Creation revolves round the pivot that is God-Man, our days revolve round the Pain that is in His neck. We are kept constantly occupied with the daily chores and various Baba-given duties that outspan our limited circle of time. But our actions are as satellites round our deep awareness of His silent pain which increases and decreases in volume but is never silent. Companion to our awareness of His pain is the awareness of our helplessness to help Him who is simply here to help us. The only thing that can help is our love. And above all Mehera, His best-loved, can help best. The ones who feel most helpless are the Baba-lover doctors who are privileged to serve Him : Dr. Ram Ginde (eminent neuro-surgeon, of Bombay)* who has put all his skill and heart into the treating of Baba's cervical condition; and Dr. Goher who is one of us at Meherazad, and is personal physician to Baba. Here's what Dr. Ram Ginde says in his letter to Goher: "I got news about Beloved Baba's neck pain from brother Adi who was with us a day before I left for Delhi, and your letter confirms the same. He also said that you are much worried. I am also in the same predicament. Whatever I know from the knowledge of His cervical condition, I have tried to do in all sincerity. But I must admit, as I have admitted before, my utter failure in regard to relieving Beloved Baba's pain. I plead quite helpless in treating Him who is as powerful as, nay more powerful than, an ocean and as helpless as a kitten at one and the same time. I can only ask His forgiveness." Baba smiled with love when He heard the letter, and immediately told Eruch to write and tell Ram not to be worried, but to remember that he is very dear to Baba, that the root cause of Baba's pain is not physical but universal, and that it will leave Him only in His time.

Baba says: "NOW IS THE TIME FOR ALL TO UNDERSTAND
THAT I AM GOD IN HUMAN FORM."

The cloak of Human-ness that God puts on for our human sakes is the highest revelation of His God-ness. Time and time again God manifests His glory to man in the supreme image of the God-Man. In the silence of suffering assumed by the Infinite in finite Form, God tells His creation: "I love you". So that we may love Him as He loves us, He gives us His supremest Blessing in disguise, walking as Man among men, taking on our human-ness which hides His glory from the eyes of the many and reveals it in the hearts of the few. One of my unforgettable moments of sharing in such revelation was at the East-West gathering. A charming and accomplished woman had accompanied her husband across thousands of miles to see Baba for the first time. Nevertheless she had come not prepared to accept Him as the Avatar. After she met Baba, I heard her say with dazed wonder shining through her tears: "Never did I dream I would look into a man's eyes and know without a doubt that I looked at God!"

* Director of neurology dept. in Sir J.J. group of Hospitals, Bombay.
The President of India has just made him Honorary Surgeon Captain in the Indian Navy, as a tribute to his work on naval casualties in last year's Indo-Pak conflict.

Although she had His darshan through His beloved eyes, she was given it in her heart - as He has given it to many who have yet to see His human Form. And with the ascending of His Love's Sun, more and more new lovers are caught in Its rays. "The most touching thing about some of our new young men is to see them light up with Baba's Love", writes Ivy Duce from California. And one of these "new young men" in his first letter to Baba tells Him:

"It's only been about one month now that I have loved you. Before, my life was a shambles; now, there is new life. I am content with the reality of Your Love. My desire is to do only what you want me to do. My hope is to become only what you want me to become."

As simple as that. Too painfully simple for Intellect, the giant, to swallow. As a Perfect Master has said: "Thousands of pundits and crores of intellectuals may argue and analyse, but God's business God alone knows."

And God's business is working like nobody's business in the land of Baba's parents, IRAN, as we learn thru letters received from Baba's Centres in Teheran, Shiraz, Yezd. From these letters in Persian, Aloba (of the mandali at Meherazad) translates passages for us into English. 'Aloba' is the nickname bestowed on Ali Akbar Shapur Zaman at the start of the New Life, and he is the one who is carrying on Baba-correspondence with Iran. Put together, these passages we share from letters of Baba's Iranian lovers make an intoxicating bouquet filled with the wonder of His Love - the only kind of bouquet to offer the One who is Love. It is made of profound personal experiences, of men and women (both Zoroastrian and Mohammedan) risen overnight from unbelief to belief, of manifestations of the unique ways in which Baba has awakened them in Love and 'ashakened' them in Work. The materially influential among the newly awakened are using their resources to help spread His message in Iran. One of the results of this is that Baba-books, Baba-magazines, Baba-folders (and even the family-letter) are coming out for the first time in Persian, printed and distributed by the thousands! To us it all appears so sudden. What had but a short time ago seemed a gentle breeze blowing from His Ocean, is undoubtedly gathering the strength of a storm! And His workers in Iran watch His doing with no less amazement - as we see from this passage translated into English by Aloba from a letter of Mr. Kalantari, secretary of Baba's Centre in Teheran:

" in short dear Shapurzaman, I don't know whether Hazrat Meher Baba does His work in other parts of the world in the same speed and magnitude as He does here in Iran?! It seems that Baba has put His foot on the accelerator of His works here, and if it goes on in the same speed and fastness, after a year several thousands of people will leave their homes and start on their feet crossing deserts and mountains and will appear in India for the ZIARAT (pilgrimage) of HAZRAT MEHER BABA. What can one do, this is the will and desire of the LORD of the world!"

Every moment of God's being on earth as Man is a giving of Himself, an oceanic outpouring of Love and blessing, a Service to the countless selves in bubble-bondage. How immeasurably blessed then are all things and beings that serve the God-Man, in some way or another, knowingly and unknowingly - those drawn by His grace up-river to the Source in undeviating purpose, and those swept by the winds of compassion into the current of His Avataric life. Often has Baba recalled with love some service rendered to Him as from man to man - an occurrence that has recurred infinite times. To single out an instance, take the Sikh farmer in north India. Seeing some wayfarers seated under the shade of a tree on the outskirts of his village, the farmer silently watched from some distance and then walked away to his hut. After a time he returned with a jar full of butter-milk and a stack of

freshly baked maize-bread, and lovingly placed them before the man and his companions under the tree. The men of course were Baba (travelling incognito) and His disciples, taking a much needed respite amid their long weary search for a Mast who had so far eluded all their efforts to find him. That simple refreshing meal offered spontaneously in love was relished as a banquet by the One who is hungry for nothing but love.

At times the breath of Baba's reminiscing lifts the curtain on men and moments associated with His boyhood years. Among the dearly remembered, stands an old lady who made a habit of giving Him sweets despite her husband's objections. This Parsi couple owned and ran a small shop of aerated waters (soft drinks) not far from St.Vincent's, the school attended by Merwan* (as Baba was called); and every time that Merwan visited the shop, usually taking some friends along, the good woman doled out sweets by the handful. Whenever the husband was there he would prevent this by excitedly ordering the boys out of the place - while from behind the expanse of his back she would gesticulate in frantic pantomime to let Merwan know they could come round by the back door! Baba recalls the boyish delight of those backdoor treats of soft-drinks and sweets given by the woman with the soft heart where Merwan had a special corner.

From the Beloved's teenage remembering we've caught many a humorous moment sparkling in the glow of His smile. One is the incident of the portly gentleman with a passion for drink, who did not want his acquaintances to know he imbibed liquor as it was against the tenets of his religion. He would make his visits to the public house with elaborate care, sneaking in furtively by the back entrance that led from a quiet alleyway. After an interval of time, filled to the brim with liquor and the courage that comes from the bottle, he was ready to challenge the world and would boldly stride out from the front doors into the bustling street for all to see! The place was not far from the shop of Baba's father, and this indomitable character was seen repeating his performance of cowardice and courage every day!

In the cast of characters made immortal by Baba's remembrance, perhaps the most fascinating is the hunchback of Lonavla - a Muslim and a superb raconteur who regaled Merwan with tales of old. Baba's uncle had a teashop in Lonavla**, and this grand old teller of tales was its regular visitor. Inevitably he was also its biggest attraction. The customers would urge and press him for a story, and would ply him with tea and cigars throughout the recital. Baba tells us that he and the others would sit round the hunchback far into the night, listening enthralled to his tales of adventure and fantasy; tales that were as fabulously rich in substance as they were in length - customarily a single story covered a week of evenings!

Merwan's fondness for fiction included detective stories. I was delighted to learn from one of Baba's earliest disciples, Ramju Abdulla (author of "Sohs and Throbs"), that one of the first things that drew his heart to Baba was the bond of their having shared a common enthusiasm for that incredible detective Sexton Blake! As a boy, side by side with works of great poets and masters of literature in English and Persian, Merwan was an ardent reader of Sexton Blake magazines and of books by Edgar Wallace. Even now, sharing as He does in our human-ness - and unspeakably dignifying it - He is not beyond the reach of fiction writers' yarns, and at times listens to them. A single book can take quite a number of days to finish, for He allows only a short time at a stretch for its reading out to Him (by one of us, for Baba has stopped both writing and reading since many years). Rex Stout, Agatha Christie and Carter Dickson (with their inimitable detectives), P.G.Woodhouse (with his celebrated humour) and J.R.R.Tolkien (with his 'hobbits' and dwarves and their symbolic journey) are among the favoured ones whose works have offered some

* short for Meherwan.

** between Poona and Bombay.

relaxation to Him in His infinite tiredness. Baba has said "Creation is really a mighty joke, but the laugh is at my own expense - and now the jest is proving a burden on my chest". And so they too have served Him, all the authors whose stories have served to entertain the Author of Creation's Story and helped ease to some extent the strain of His universal burden. Could we but say as much!

What's in a name? Everything, when it is HIS Name! Kabir says: "Ram's (Avatar's) Name is yours for the looting; loot all you can while you can before Time and Body pass away."

In Time's dreary desert, Avatar-time is Spring-time when each moment of God-loving and God-remembering may conceive a lifetime's yield of God-nearing in our journey to Him. And yet how often we let our moments lie like blossoms in the dust, trampled under the feet of our busy-ness, scattered by the winds of carelessness, unheeded by eyes turned to selfness. And in His compassion, that unimaginable unlimited compassion, Baba our beloved Avatar reminds us "Remember Me".

Every day there is some cry of distress from some lover or another, coming in a cable or telegram from some part of the world or the other, calling out to Baba for His divine help. And the telegrams and cables going out in reply invariably carry His message to this effect:

THE REMEDY FOR ALL ILLS IS TO REMEMBER ME
CONSTANTLY AND WHOLEHEARTEDLY

- MEHERBABA -

In telling us this He tells us He is with us; that when we are with Him our worrying melts, and we can be with Him only in whole-hearted remembrance.

But even while groping through the dark moments of our dreaming in Illusion, we may miss that first moment of full remembrance. And here the Baba-reminders are His little lovers who see Him with heart-lamps unclouded with worries. Like the five year old boy crossing from U.S.A. to Germany by plane reminding his air-frightened mother "Baba is holding the plane in His hands". Like the little girl in Australia running first to Baba's picture to tell Him there was a bush fire raging close to the house. Like the six year old in Bombay whose father had a bad accident, and, coming up to the scene with her shocked mother, crying out "Mummy don't be worried, don't be nervous, remember Baba, keep saying BABA". Like - well, like many others. Oh when will we grow up to be as a child in vision, that we may never lose sight of His nearness to us! When will we remember Him in His way? Beloved Baba says:

"YOU WILL COME TO REMEMBER ME WHOLEHEARTEDLY
AS YOU REMEMBER YOURSELF LESS AND LESS."

Ever lovingly,

MANDLI

Attention : THE AWAKENER is the only Baba-magazine in the West, launched over thirteen years ago by Phyllis Frederick. Never a sturdy craft financially, it has sailed bravely through the years carrying the Beloved's Message. All these years Warren Healy, the man at the oars, has worked singlehanded at his little press in the basement of his house, bringing out "The Awakener", bringing out Baba's messages in a hundred different colours of His Love.

Now dear Warren has to take a rest, since the very severe heart-attack he recently suffered. His heart warns him to rest, his doctors tell him to rest, and above all his Most Wondrous One (as he calls Baba) orders him to rest. So "The Awakener" finds itself in low waters and needs all Baba-loving hands to push it through following issues which will be printed by a commercial printer. Its editor will welcome all the help you can contribute towards this. Please write direct to the Editor: Filis Frederick, 424-A 36th St., Manhattan Beach, California 90266, (U.S.A.)

Meherazad

10th September 1966

Dearest Family,

"I pray to God so hard, but He never answers my prayers. I cannot understand why that should be? I thought God did not let anyone down!" This earnest appeal was put to Baba by the princess of an Indian state, who had stayed on in Ahmednagar for days in the hope of Baba granting her a moment's darshan - He did. And thus, as she might have realized, was her highest prayer answered! However, in replying to her, Baba said: "God not only does not let anyone down, God is constantly forgiving those who let Him down"! And how literally this may apply to us all who know and love God in Human form, who of our frailty let Him down time and again by our inability to give Him the unfaltering obedience He asks of us. The less our obedience, the more His burden. He carries the load of our lack; and even as He forgives us He helps us to love Him more....

Even a small break in the garden fence, used by children going in and out at all times, can grow into a wide gap. And if the children are many, and they bring more and more of their friends along, the master of the house will sooner or later put his foot down and have the fence repaired and reinforced. And so it has been with the Master of the Universe working at a universal job He alone can do, and wishing to remain undisturbed behind the fence of His Seclusion. It is of course the Beloved's own compassion that creates the break in the fence; but it is at the cost of His work as He tells us, and at the cost of His health as we can see - except when He calls someone for some reason. Of late we find that the customary seesaw of His physical health stays longer on the 'down' swing, no doubt with the force of His cervical pain. But while He may let the doctors do their best, He reveals that the cause of it is the growing weight of His work, the bearing of the world's pain. Since the 16th of last month Baba has put a complete stop to visitors. He makes it emphatically clear that He wants to remain undisturbed till end of 1967. He tells me to repeat here His oft-repeated wish - that unless Baba on His own sends for someone NONE SHOULD VISIT HIM OR ASK TO VISIT HIM BEFORE END OF 1967.

"Your Pleasure is my Treasure". These words came in the lines of a telegram to Baba, from the fullness of a heart that is filled with Baba. They came from Rick Chapman, an American who received his A.B. from Harvard College (U.S.A.) this June and was awarded a year's Fulbright teaching scholarship to India. One of the fine young group newly awakened to Baba, Rick is undoubtedly a Baba-lover of ancient vintage, having that quality of loving which is seasoned thru many a lifetime of searching. Now in India since three months, Rick patiently awaited His call. As he wrote, "Baba's orders to me have been not to come to Him until He Himself calls. I will of course obey His Perfect Will." Baba called, getting him to Meherazad thru the last opening, on the final day before visiting was completely stopped. For Rick the visit was a home-coming in the deepest sense, for us a family reunion in the truest sense. As for his experience of the few time-less minutes he spent with Baba, we caught a glimpse of it thru his letter to one of the mandali: "Still reeling, I am completely unable to express my happiness at meeting my true Beloved. That God disposed of His own proposal and allowed me to stay close to Him for several of His smiles and a thorough soaking in His Love - this is nothing that can properly be spoken of by one who can see Baba only as He really isn't. And if a glimpse of Him through eyes that cannot see can give such joy - who then could He be but God Himself!" To another he wrote: "Only with Baba's direct support could I walk into and out of the most important event of my life. The secret of it is that there is no sense of walking out of my meeting with Him, but rather He walks with me. How could one bear to meet God, and leave Him?" Rick's personal letter to Baba was like a mirror held in the Beloved's hand -

it reflected so much of His beauty! Writing of his work in Ahmedabad, where the Fulbright project has placed him, he says: "In the months to come, my major outward role will be as teacher of English at H.K.Arts College (Ahmedabad). My teaching method is peculiar - instead of the usual short stories and poems, I am free to have my students read pamphlets of Your discourses: "The Seven Realities", "Universal Message", "Meher Baba on Love", and so on. Their essays, through which they practice writing English, will concern these discourses. Only You could have arranged such a scheme, which makes my work so enjoyable to me and so profitable to the students."

The more we see Baba withdrawing from outward activity, the more Baba-activity is evident wherever we turn. The more the veil of seclusion hides Him from the eyes of His lovers, the more He is revealed in the hearts of those unaware of Him. From all sides 'new' ones wander into the kingdom of Baba's Love, lay down their load of doubts and desires at His feet and take hold of His daaman in firm conviction and surrender. Across the U.S.A. — from Ivy Duce on the west coast to Fred-Ella Winterfeldt on the east — those conducting Baba-groups write how busy they are kept with this sudden inflow of people who have 'discovered' Baba, men and women who in turn lead others from the fog of shadow-chasing frustrations into the clarity and sanity of the God-Man's Love. One such discoverer writes from Boston: "Oh how Baba has been working in the past few months in this part of the country — the numbers of people He has been drawing to Himself in the most extraordinary ways! Baba continues to dazzle us with one coincidence after another whereby people are brought to hear of Him His chain reaction of Love is really reaching 'critical mass'! The explosions of joy keep popping up as someone — it seems almost everyday — hears about Baba and knows that the search has ended." As we think of these many who have not even met Baba as yet but who are so utterly devoted and dedicated to Him in love and service, we shake our heads and exclaim: It is inconceivable! Baba smiles and says, "It is because I am God."

As the time of His manifestation draws closer and Baba tells His lovers to spread His message of Love, the door one knocks on in His Name opens in response, sometimes before the hand can be raised to knock. We learn that we have simply to learn to become the submissive channel for His wish, and whatever be the form or material we supply of our capacity He will do His work thru it and will seek out His own. We have been keenly aware of this while following the public activities of the band of newly blossomed Baba-lovers who have launched an anti-LSD project in the U.S.A. since the last few months — Baba's 'Boston Force' as we refer to them. With their academic qualifications and their previous intensive experience with psychedelic drugs, these young men and women are the perfect means to the anti-LSD end. In size they are a small body, for so large a number in the LSD field — as is the sheepdog, who is directed by his master to turn the flock away from a path he knows will lead to danger. Already their efforts have reaped spectacular results, and Baba's message* and Name have penetrated to masses thru various openings: Lectures; interviews; radio shows; talks at Harvard University, at LSD Conferences, to large audiences and to small groups; brochures mailed individually to thousands; letter to college newspapers throughout the U.S.A.; letters and articles published by magazines and newspapers printed in America and round the world, such as Time, Newsweek, The Saturday Evening Post, Globe, Colorado Daily, New Society, and The Christian Science Monitor. Baba's statements on LSD appeared with dynamic prominence in last month's Agu. 7 issue of the Boston Sunday GLOBE Magazine (distributed with the Sunday paper to over 600,000 people in the Boston area), in an article entitled

* See sixty-eighth family letter, dated February 1966.

"GOD and LSD" by Allan Cohen* one of the Baba-boys propelling the project. Allan writes to Adi: "If we weren't aware that Baba does everything, we would have been incredulous! We can only once again marvel at the way Baba works, and makes possible the improbable to spread His divine Message". In another letter he says "It is joyfully obvious that Baba is behind us. A prime example is my enclosure ... an editorial by The Christian Science Monitor based on our letter to the colleges. This newspaper is printed all over the world and is widely respected as one of the best papers in the world." The editorial by The Christian Science Monitor, woven round quotes from Baba's pronouncements on LSD, ends with the editor's remark: "In all the babble of controversy over LSD, this seems to us to constitute an eminently sane appraisal."

Constructively harnessed, the power of the press can serve to enlighten humanity and educate the multitude. What higher service could it render to mankind, what greater education impart, than awareness of the God-Man's presence on earth, of the rhyme and reason of existence, of The Word to come from the infinity of His silence! The "Sunday Guardian" of Trinidad, West Indies, used its voice and popularity to let its readers, the people of Trinidad and Tobago, know 'the story of Meher Baba' in a splendid article specially written for the paper by Louis Agostini (formerly of Trinidad, now living in U.S.A.). Louis and his wife Vivian (a distinguished sculptress devoted to Baba) saw beloved Baba for the first time in 1962 at the East-West gathering in Poona. Ever since his search ended in Baba, Louis longed to share the wonder and glory of his Find with his family and people back home, and laboured towards this aim with the patience and care one gives to a dearly cherished purpose. At one time closely associated with Paul Brunton, Louis Agostini found added significance in the Sunday Guardian's acceptance of his article on Baba. As he expressed it in his letter to Adi: "It is very strange to reflect that the very paper which a few years ago refused to print Brunton's article on karma which was considered controversial, should open its columns to a story of greater mind-shattering dimension."

As time goes on we find more and more Indian newspapers opening their columns to Avatar Meher Baba's message to mankind - carrying it in different languages to the people of different tongues. Take for instance the Marathi weekly magazine of Nagpur, "Chavhata", born twentyone years ago and serving as a solid political organ. This paper now regularly devotes prime place in its pages to beloved Baba - giving (in Marathi) His messages and discourses, and reports of occasions such as His Birthday and Silence anniversary. At first this sudden appearance of a spiritual note clearly heard above the political voice of the paper, brought from some of its readers caustic criticism in letters to the editor, Mr.B.N.Savji. One letter concluded flatly that "Chavhata" was no longer worth-while reading. The editor replied that on the contrary the purely material fare the paper had served to its readers all these years had not been 'worth-while', whereas now that it offered material worthy of the highest regard and attention Chavhata was truly worthwhile reading! Mr. Savji printed in his paper the letter from the reader along with his reply - and that aroused a round of applause from readers agreeing with the editor. This is hardly surprising in a city whose most distinguished newspapers like the "Hitwada" and the "Nagpur Times" have been among the earliest to give the public an awareness of the Avatar's presence in our Age. And with the growing of years these widely read papers are seen to be assigning more space in their pages, with growing frequency and prominence, to Baba-news. For this their reporters are present at every Baba-occasion in Nagpur, while their Sunday pages often carry Beloved Baba's message in articles by His lovers.

* Allan Y. Cohen, Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology, a Teaching Fellow in Social Relations at Harvard University (U.S.A.) and Director of Research for Potentials Inc., a psychological consulting firm; he was closely associated with the early psychedelic research of Richard Alpert and Timothy Leary.

"Kaiser-E-Hind" I cannot cite simply as an 'instance' - it appears no less than one of the miracles Baba says He never performs. A widely respected Gujarati news-weekly established eighty-four years ago in the reign of Queen Victoria, Kaiser-E-Hind remains a household byword to the Zoroastrian community (Parsis and Iranis), circulating to over 380 cities and towns in India and abroad. But whereas once it was instrumental in circulating articles about Baba that were controversial and denunciatory, it is now instrumental in carrying Beloved Baba's message of Love and Truth to the Zoroastrians. Whereas once its pages were eagerly scanned for views against Baba, they are now as eagerly scanned for news about Baba. I do not say by all, or for the same reason; for there are not only the many yet unawakened non-believers, there are still some orthodox disbelievers who now and then raise their voice in protest - a voice lost in the rising gale of His glory. But the proportion of believers that is growing so largely among the Parsis and Iranis, can be fully appreciated only by the early Zoroastrian followers of Baba. To witness the children and grandchildren of some of the old fanatic disbelievers (who used to persecute and harass the family and the early followers of Baba) bowing down to Baba in devotion, to hear their voice the loudest in crying out His JAI, to see them in the forefront as Baba-lovers and Baba-workers, is to witness the miracle of a dead log of wood sprouting tender leaves and fragrant blossoms. And as we see more and more Parsis and Iranis joining the rank of Baba's followers, we think of what Baba once said concerning the Zoroastrians: "They will come; finally they will all come to Me, in full belief and faith. Not a single one will be left out." And so without doubt there will follow many a Zoroastrian newspaper spreading Baba's Message in time to come. We congratulate Kaiser-E-Hind for having the foresight and good fortune to be the foremost to do so! In its issue of 24th April of this year, a full page covered the subject of Baba's Silence - with Baba's photo in the heart of it, and in large outstanding print the heading: MEHER BABA - "THE WORD".

On the 10th of July this year, hundreds of thousands of tongues were silent for twenty-four hours. They belonged to hundreds of thousands of men women and children all over the world who love Baba and were observing their Beloved's forty-first silence anniversary by observing complete silence as wished by Him. The youngest in age to observe the 24-hour silence was five year old Mehernaz, Baba's great-niece living in Poona; the oldest was ninety-six year old Ruth White (Baba's 'Soldier' as He calls her since her visit to Him in Poona in 1962) who lives with Elizabeth and Kitty at His beautiful Center in Myrtle Beach, U.S.A. During the Silence Anniversary week, the Center at Myrtle Beach was as filled with Baba's lovers as it is at all times filled with Baba's Love. As Elizabeth put it, it was 101% full! Every nook and corner of the Center's cabins were crammed with the happy pilgrims who had journeyed from different parts of the U.S.A. to spend Silence Day at the place where three glorious times Baba had given His sahavas to His Western family - the place born of His Love, the place which He has said will one day serve as a Universal Center.

In India it is not uncommon for Baba-people to publicly celebrate every significant occasion stemming from the life and love of Avatar Meher Baba, often for days on end. They are held publicly in various parts of the country, at various times of the year, and for various lengths of time. In fact, at the rate the round of these Baba-celebrations is expanding, before very long it might meet in a complete circle of all-year-round celebrations being held at some place or another, on some occasion or another! And the 10th of July - a date of momentous significance in the life and destiny of our Earth and all who are blessed to be on it at this Avataric time - is the occasion for His lovers to let the people of Earth hear of His Silence. They have been doing so. All over the East public celebrations have been ushering in the forty-second year of His Silence.

In the West, the public celebration held in New York by "Avatar Meher Baba's New York Devotees" to commemorate the occasion of Beloved Baba's forty-first anniversary of Silence, was the first of its kind. Held on 16th July at the Barbizon-Plaza Theatre under the chairmanship of Dr. Harry Kenmore, it was a grand event, a magnificent Baba-evening shared by hundreds. The impressive two-hour programme included a Baba-movie, talks about Baba and His Silence, and special songs with audience participation. The reports we received from those who were present glowed with the joy and wonder of that unforgettable evening. Beloved Baba was indeed present with them, as He said He would be in the message he cabled to Harry for the occasion. In summing up their experience of the evening, one of them wrote: "As the talks and singing progressed, wave upon wave of Baba's Love swept over us all and by the end of the program we all felt that our need of a 'recharge' had been fulfilled in a wonderful way!"

Baba tells us He has come to release the flood of Truth; that it will be released when He breaks His Silence. We can imagine His Silence as the Dam that is holding in this full and absolute flood, this stupendous conservation of Truth force, that must not be released before the time of His giving is right, which will be when the season of our receiving is ripe. And as the moment draws near and the growing decades of time that the Dam of His Silence has endured press on it with increasing urgency, we see the strain telling upon His physical health. We recall His telling us at different times and in different words how difficult it is NOT to reveal Himself; and we realize to what perfection He wears the guise of imperfection, that we might one day be perfect in Him.

Some of the close disciples, men and women, who were with the Beloved at the time His Silence began, look back over the distance of forty-one years and tell us of what their memories can still perceive with undimmed clarity. They tell us how, shortly before the end of June 1925, Baba told them of His decision to observe a long period of silence. He said it would commence on 1st July, but later He moved the date to 10th July, where it was to stay thru the many years and phases of their life lived with Baba. But they were not to know that at the time, for Baba declared He would observe Silence for ONE YEAR. This decision of Baba, as the various sudden and unexpected decisions they had known Him make, the disciples accepted unquestioningly, unwonderingly. Theirs was not to question why ... This was their Lord's wish and that was enough for them. Their concern was to meticulously carry out His orders and the many daily duties entrusted by Him to each, for no lapse of discipline or obedience would be brooked by Baba, who was unceasingly the Master as He was unreservedly the Friend. Their personal reactions however, were interesting and differing. When Baba told the men that He would break His Silence at the end of one year, after which He would "come out into the open" (manifest in the world) and bring an end to all that was illusory, some interpreted it to literally mean that after the period of one year there would be no more need for any worldly possessions of any kind. Rustom (who periodically visited his home and parents at Ahmednagar as wished by Baba) went so far as to plead with his family and friends to get rid of their earthly goods, and himself gave away all his personal belongings that were at home - including his expensive suits (which, incidentally, he was to find himself in crucial need of when Baba sent him to England for His work in 1927).

The reaction of the women disciples was as womanly as it was heartwarmingly understandable. They just could not bring themselves to believe that Baba would keep complete and absolute silence for the duration of one whole year; that for twelve long months He would not utter a single word, when they knew speech to flow from Him with the continuity and sparkle of a clear mountain stream! All thru the day they would hear His voice in the mercurial splendour of a hundred moods - conversing, commanding, singing,

laughing, discoursing, reprimanding, joking, story-telling, teasing, reminiscing.... It was incredible to imagine that Baba would clang shut the gates of His oral eloquence and keep them locked for twelve months. And so they said among themselves: "At the most, He will keep silence for one month". The last they heard of His beautiful voice was on the eve of His Silence when He said to them: "Hear well my voice; you will not hear it for a long time". That was four hundred and ninety-four months ago.

Recently the Beloved has been telling us not so much of the close-at-hand breaking of His Silence, but of the monumental change that will come about on earth when He does so. One morning while we were sitting at breakfast with Baba, and a humming bird was hovering before a window-pane in ecstasy of its own reflection, we got to talking of His Silence. Illustrating for us the completeness of the transformation that will take place in the world after He breaks His Silence, Baba cupped His left hand loosely over His right as though He were holding a big ball, and then with a deft movement brought His right hand over His left in an absolute turn-over of the imaginary ball's position. "Upside down", one of us interpreted. With a half-smile Baba gestured "Right side up"!

JAI BABA!

Ever lovingly,

MANDLI

Guruprasad, Poona

10th June, 1966

Dearest Family,

It is over nine weeks now since Guruprasad awoke from its long winter sleep to the dawn of Baba's presence; and in a few weeks' time when Baba leaves Poona, it will curl up to sleep again until His return next year. Our stay here this summer has been a quiet one, in utter contrast to that of last year when Guruprasad was constantly humming with swarms of happy darshaners from far and near, and the massive May gathering of Baba's eastern lovers. But if the great influx of last year spoke resonantly of the love of His many lovers, their very absence this year is more eloquent - for it is in obedience to the Beloved's wish that none should visit Him except those whom He specifically calls for His work. It is said that love is silent but not dumb - and surely, obedience is the tongue with which it speaks! The other morning, while listening to some verses composed by Francis, Baba was in the mood to dictate a message in verse. Rapidly His fingers spelt out:

HE WHO SEEKS MY PLEASURE

FINDS THE DIVINE TREASURE.

Among the very few whom beloved Baba was pleased to call for a visit was Maharani Shantadevi of Baroda, hostess to the Highest of the High during His stay in Poona. She maintains Guruprasad the year round, solely for Baba's three months' visit each summer. Every time when Baba tells her how happy He is at Guruprasad, He is saying how happy He is with her love for Him - and that is all dear Shantadevi asks for. Visits granted to a few of His other lovers, men and women, were as short as they were rare, lasting perhaps no more than a few seconds as measured by the clock. It was therefore quite surprising when one afternoon Baba called a meeting of His workers from the Avatar Meher Baba Poona Centre. Seated before Him, they discussed the progress and problems of their efforts to spread the Beloved's message to more and more people in and around Poona. More surprising for us was to see Baba looking so lively and radiant during the longish session - listening to them, encouraging them, admonishing them, counselling them. At a time like this it is as though the infinite tiredness we witness in His dear God-eyes is put aside and our hearts are warmed with the 'fire' of former days when His physical health served as a sturdier companion in bearing the strain of His universal burden. Missing from this meeting was one of His finest workers, Bapusahib Shinde, who died last December after a period of acute illness and suffering. Big and dependable, Bapusahib was a pillar of the Avatar Meher Baba Poona Centre, and a brother to all in need. He owned two Footwear stores, one of which served as the very first Baba-Centre in Poona many years ago, where weekly meetings were regularly held. There was a tremendous attendance at his funeral, and all footwear shops in Poona closed down for a day in his honour. The message that Baba sent to all His Centres, was: "Bapusahib Shinde has come to Me to rest in Me eternally. One of my dearest lovers and workers Bapusahib served Me wholeheartedly and shared in my suffering." But I'm sure Bapusahib could have wished for no dearer tribute to his love and service for his beloved Master than Baba's words to the mandali: "I have lost Bapusahib Shinde; but he has found Me."

More than anything else, the absence of the Bombay Baba-group that flocked to Poona every summer for a long stay (filling all available hotel space within walking distance of Guruprasad so as "to be nearer to Baba even if we are not permitted to visit Him") reminds us how strict His seclusion is this year. And there is the viewpoint of the hotel-wallas too! One of them was heard to remark "Yearly we have two good seasons in Poona. One is Meher Baba season when we cater to the many followers of Meher Baba; the other is the racing season after June. This year we shall be missing our first season". Perhaps the Beloved has in store another Baba-season as glorious as the one of November 1962, for all the hearts that wait on tiptoe for His call, sometime, somewhere, after 1967.

This year the Birthday-season for His lovers everywhere was a rich and rewarding one indeed! If every place where beloved Baba's Birthday was celebrated - every city, town, village - were pinpointed with a light, the map of India would be as a starry sky. "Meher Pukar", the Hindi Baba-magazine, devoted three pages to listing the names of places all over India where the 72nd Birthday was observed in a special way - and even then we found that the list was far from complete! From reports and letters received, we had some idea of the immenseness of the Birthday programs held by His lovers this year. My problem is my inability to present it in a comprehensive sketch. Unlike the artist who can depict his subject with a few casual strokes of his brush I find myself struggling with masses of fascinating detail, and despair at the thought of attempting to put it all on the canvas of a letter! If indeed these celebrations could be illustrated through the medium of a paint brush, the basic pattern would be similar to the previous Birthday programs, but appearing in much bolder relief and covering much more ground. And, running across it would be streaks of brilliant colour to mark the blossoming of a fresh idea, an unexpected achievement, a new opening for the longing of His lovers to carry the pollen of His Love to other hearts.

Take for instance the elocution competition held at the Model High School in Dahamu Road (a holiday resort in the district of Thana, near Bombay). Each pupil was granted three minutes' time to give a talk on Baba, and the prizes given were lockets and coloured pictures of Baba. The fact that this most unusual proposition received the consent and co-operation of the school authorities, and the keen interest shown by these students of different religions in learning about Baba, speaks much for the love of the Baba-family who launched the project - Mr. K.A. Zaiwala, his wife and children. Another inspiration of theirs made it possible for cinema-goers to receive the Beloved's Birthday message. Every evening, for a week, slides giving Baba's Message in English and in Gujarati were flashed on the screen of Chandra Talkies in Dahamu Road. An elocution competition for school children was also held at the Baba-Centre in Alamuru (Andhra State), arranged by His lovers during the Children's Meet. Attended by over 500 children, the competition was divided between the senior and junior classes, and embraced three subjects: Recitation of the Parvardigar Prayer; Talk on Baba; Songs on Baba. Many children from schools in and around Alamuru, coached in the subjects by their teachers, entered this unique competition and proudly carried off the prizes of books by and about Baba! All who participated went home with a photo of the Beloved. *

To cite another instance, picture the furore caused at Jhansi (in northern India) when Pukar, the 'giant' in appearance and spirit, went into action and was completely bowled over by the results. Only recently settled at Jhansi, he was nevertheless determined to have a big Birthday function there, and rounding up the few Baba-lovers set out on his campaign a month ahead of time. Going from street to street, often from house to house, into the market places and the maze of by-lanes and back alleys, he boomed out the message "God is here on earth. The Avatar is amongst us. Cleanse your hearts. Be ready to receive Him. Scrub your homes, white-wash the walls, decorate your door-sills. The Avatar's Birthday is on 25th February - be ready, be ready." As it turned out it was Pukar & Co. who were not ready for Baba's answer to their plea! On the Day, at the big grounds where the Birthday function was planned, they expected some hundreds to attend; hoped perhaps for a few hundred more. They were totally unprepared for the avalanche of men and women who came in their thousands, along with their children, to hear Avatar Meher Baba's message. It well-nigh caused a stampede amidst that mass

* The school curriculum for 180 schools as planned by the Patherdi Baba-lovers (mentioned in my last letter) was carried off with a success as tremendous as the project itself!

of humanity, and dismay in the hearts of Baba's men. The arrangements were pitifully inadequate to control and direct such a colossal crowd, the lone mike failed at the crucial moment, and the thunder of Pukar's voice was lost in the storm about him. Then the inspiration came. Calling on Baba for help, Pukar jumped on to a chair on the dais, and rotating on it with arms held aloft he invited silence and order in the Name of the Avatar. The response to this mute gesture was incredible. In no time all were seated, the mike was working, the program began and went vigorously on into the early hours of the dawn! It was yet another revelation of Baba's presence whenever He is remembered wholeheartedly.

But not everywhere and by everyone can such a sweeping approach be made and carried off with success. However, there are as many ways to transmit His message to others as there are His lovers who have the will to do so. The spiritual soil and clime of every country are not equally favourable, and the fields that are snow-bound take longer to thaw to the sun of His Love. It warmed our hearts therefore, to perceive the first bright ray of conscious awakening in the continent of Africa. A Baba-lover in Uganda, T. S. Chowdhary, tells us that Baba's 72nd Birthday celebrated at his home (in Gulu, Uganda) was attended by 440 people - Europeans, Africans, and Asians of various religions (Sikh, Muslim, Hindu). He writes "The aim of this celebration was that the name of Beloved Baba be made known to the people of this town." The swing of his aim appears to have carried beyond the immediate target, since an article on the Birthday was published in the 'Uganda Argus', a leading newspaper of that country. We gather that the program lasted for nearly two hours, included songs sung in praise of Beloved Baba, and the Parvardigar Prayer. Charts with sayings of Baba were put up, books on and by Baba were displayed. Mr. Chowdhary reports that just as they were about to recite the Prayer of Repentance "there was a sudden shower of grace", which caused some panic among the congregation seated in the Compound under the open sky. While reading this we were carried back into the delightful and nostalgic memory of the torrential shower of grace that poured from the skies during the East-West gathering in 1962, in the presence of the Beloved, immediately after the recitation of the Parvardigar Prayer by Dr. Harry Kenmore.

On the 25th, flashes of the Birthday programs were broadcast by All India Radio from a number of stations - Delhi, Nagpur, Baroda, Jabalpur, Bhopal, Raipur and others. The longest broadcast was that of the Dehra-Dun programme, relayed from Lucknow station for half an hour! In many parts of India the celebrations were carried thru for 72 days, some planning it so that the 25th of February marked the 72nd day, some starting from the 25th to continue till 7th April. The variegated facets of these public Baba-programs had scope enough for different temperaments - the gay, the solemn, the artistic, the spontaneous. Catching up in popularity with Kavvali and Bhajans is the 'mushaira' - a meeting of poets who compose and recite verses in Urdu, woven round the theme line proposed for the occasion. A predominant motif of Birthday programs in the West is the showing of Baba-films - a most vibrant and moving form of being in His presence and 'sahavas'. Story-telling, ballad-singing, play-enacting, dance-dramas, all based on the life and work of Avatar Meher Baba, form an enchanting and integral part of the Birthday observance, specially in the state of Andhra. Another characteristic feature of that state is the magnificent Baba-processions conducted thru the streets, with a large (often life-size) picture of the Beloved enthroned on an elaborately adorned vehicle. The vehicle might be an ornate temple chariot, a country bullock-cart, a motor lorry, a horse buggy, a cycle rickshaw, just a white horse, or an elephant. Or, it might be a tractor, as was used by His lovers of Malikipuram to carry His message from village to village on the 25th, covering fourteen villages before nightfall. So massive were the daily celebrations held by His lovers in Masulipatnam, that it was not so much like having a 72 days' program for His 72nd Birthday as celebrating His Birthday seventy-two times! Clothing and feeding the needy in Baba's Name, a gesture symbolic of the Compassionate Father's love for the poor, is observed every year by most Baba-Centres.

Feeding the poor had a deeper significance this year in view of India's acute food shortage. One smallish place (in Andhra), intending to feed 500 poor people for which Baba-lovers contributed their share of rice, ended up by feeding three times as many! The report from this Meher Centre, Bheemunipatnam, says "... more lovers sent more rice, so that it added another 100 Kgs. (over 200 lbs.). Hence in all 1,500 people, including children, were fed by the Beloved."

The intellectual need of the knowledge-hungry was met thru the medium of Baba books and booklets printed and distributed by His lovers in the West and in the East. A.C.S. Chari of Calcutta has been remarkably active in this field. The Birthday booklet (in English) printed and published by him this year, entitled "The Uttering of The One Word", gives a dynamic dissertation on Baba's Silence by the Hon.Mr. Justice Mukharji, seniormost Judge of Calcutta's High Court. Justice Mukharji's understanding of his subject, as well as his logical and lucid style of presentation, has made his article as appealing as it is outstanding. Brother Chari has done full justice to it by sending out numerous copies of the booklet to Baba-groups all over India and abroad, and the clamour for more has already pushed a reprint under way. As Chari informs us, a fair portion of the first edition went out in individual copies to the nation's leaders and to dignitaries and newspapers all over the country.

If every other place was so diligently occupied in giving out His message of Love, Meherazad was kept no less busy in receiving for Him the manifold messages of Love that came in cables, telegrams and birthday cards from His lovers all over the world. These bedecked the Beloved's breakfast table on 25th morning, along with flowers from the garden, a big cake in the shape of a clock with its sugary hands pointing to the hour of 5, and the one lighted candle. For the Best Day of the year we were dressed in our best; the house was dressed up in flower garlands hung across every doorway, and gay 'chalk' patterns drawn before every entrance. But apart from all the many Birthday gladnesses observed en famille, the really festive air that Meherazad wore was due entirely to the inspiration and labour of the Meherazad staff - the driver, the garden-boys, kitchen-boys, Kaka's boy, and mail-boys (who carry our mail back & forth from Ahmednagar). Pooling ideas, contributions and every spare moment of their time, they were seen to be making endless rows of paper decorations and flowers to cover the place with. With the use of the car battery they rigged up electricity to light up Baba's picture in the Hall and to work the loudspeaker equipment brought over from Pimpalgaon village along with a gramophone. And so it was that on the morning of 25th, right after we had called out AVATAR MEHER BABA KI JAI in unison at the stroke of 5, Baba's Arti was heard all over Meherazad - and just about all over the village for that matter! After the Arti, ghazal records were played over the loud-speaker, so that while Baba was having breakfast He was regaled with songs from His favourite singer, the queen of ghazals, Begum Akhtar. The pride of the Staff's achievement was the Main Hall, whose entire ceiling was covered with a gorgeous canopy of 'jasmine flowers', lights, and other artistic ornamentation. As Baba went over to the Hall to be with the mandali, the pink of His coat seemed to reflect the glow of His smile, and the many-coloured buntings fluttering overhead seemed to whisper: Happy Birthday Beloved Baba, Happy Birthday to You.

For several days Meherazad had the look of a country girl set ready for a party at Buckingham Palace. And yet, just before the 25th when a couple from Hyderabad paid an unexpected visit, they were much surprised and puzzled to find it all so 'quiet and simple'! They told the mandali "We came because we thought that if the Birthday programs going on everywhere are so grand, how much more so it must be at the 'source' where Beloved Baba is residing!" Eruch replied: "Although Baba is residing at Meherazad He is actually with all His lovers, presiding at His programs wherever they are held; that is why Baba sent them the message 'I shall be present among you all who gather in my Love'. Therefore you should hurry back to your home town, so as not to miss being in His presence"!

The next great occasion for Baba's family, eastern and western, is exactly a month away. Leaving Poona on 1st July, we shall be observing the 10th of July at Meherazad as usual. The Beloved's instructions to His lovers for the observance of the 41st anniversary of His Silence will be sent out by Adi in a circular to Easterners. And, it is reproduced here for you each of His dear Westerners. (Please note that no one is permitted to communicate here in regard to it - Baba's wishes are clear, and it is for those who love Him to carry them out).

ATTENTION

"On the 10th of July 1966, the 41st anniversary of His Silence, Avatar Meher Baba wishes all who love and obey Him and all who would want to do so, to observe complete silence for 24 hours beginning from midnight of the 9th of July to midnight of the 10th of July in accordance with local time.

BABA WANTS ALL HIS LOVERS TO KNOW THAT THE FORTY-FIRST
ANNIVERSARY OF HIS SILENCE IS A VERY IMPORTANT EVENT
AND AS SUCH ALL HIS LOVERS SHOULD OBSERVE COMPLETE
SILENCE FOR TWENTYFOUR HOURS ON THIS OCCASION.

Avatar Meher Baba has given the following message for the
41st anniversary of His Silence:

God's first Word was 'Who am I'.
God's last Word is 'I am God'.
And the Word that I the God-Man
will utter soon will be the
sound of my infinite Silence.

Avatar Meher Baba sends His Love and Blessing to each of
His lovers."

Ever lovingly,

MANDLA

A T T E N T I O N

Avatar Meher Baba wishes all His lovers to be informed that He wishes to remain undisturbed till end of 1967. During His stay in Poona (from April through June) Baba will not see anyone, except those whom He has called or will specifically call for His work.

Please circulate this message among all His lovers in your locality.

ADI K. IRANI

the number seventy-two has become the most important figure in the world of Baba-lovers, and many of the birthday programmes revolve round it. A number of Baba-Centres in India are observing a 72 day "Akhand Nam Jap" (Non-stop repetition of Baba's Name), beginning from 5 o'clock in the morning of December 16, to be carried on till 5 in the morning of February 25th. This repetition of His beloved Name, night and day without a break, is carried out in shifts, at a place fixed for the purpose. As there seem not enough hours or days to accommodate all who participate, there are often as many as twenty Baba-lovers doing the Nam-Jap at a time! In Andhra Pradesh and elsewhere, a 72 day programme of Baba-gatherings held daily, in some places twice a day, is also in full swing. They are home gatherings and public gatherings, and each report received is crowned with the words: "How strongly is beloved Baba's presence felt by all who come!" And then there are the colourful Baba-processions that wind thru lane and street of town or city to the blare of music joyously proclaiming the Advent of the Avatar, who reveals His message to mankind in the silence of His Love.

On the 25th of February, the morning curriculum for about 20,000 children in about 180 schools in Pathardi and its sub-district villages (in the district of Ahmednagar) is expected to be a unique one, as chalked out by Baba-lover V.R.Bade, lawyer and resident of Pathardi, in an official request sent out to all the school heads. The curriculum to be followed is: Beginning with the reciting of The Master's Prayer, it will be followed by the reading out of Baba's birthday message and His message for children - Marathi translations of which will be allotted. The school teachers will then speak on the life and mission of Avatar Meher Baba, concluding with the reciting of the Prayer of Repentance and the entire assemblage calling out Baba's JAI. From the children's point of view no doubt the highlight of the programme will come at the last, when each will receive a packet of sweets as Baba's prasad (supplied by the Pathardi Baba-Centre) - and surely Baba's presence will be felt most at that time, for in the little ones' joy will be reflected His Love for them!

Meherazad

16th February 1966

Dearest Family,

On hearing of Baba for the first time, a man from Venezuela wrote: "Welcome to Earth, O Meher Baba!". These simple words are the sweet refrain of many hearts, as another 25th of February comes forward to stand in testimony of God's love for us. For His 72nd Birthday, 25th February 1966, beloved Baba has given the following message:

BE COMPOSED IN THE REALITY OF MY LOVE

FOR ALL CONFUSION AND DESPAIR IS YOUR OWN SHADOW

WHICH WILL VANISH WHEN I SPEAK THE WORD.

This year the Beloved's Birthday is being celebrated by His lovers on a scale that is not only grander, but immensely wider. This is but natural, for as one wrote: "It is our experience that as His manifestation draws near His Love finds expression in ever wider circumference, and day by day more and more people are drawn to the Light that is MEHER BABA." How well we realize this - for whereas some time ago we could comfortably cope with the letters, reports and publications received from Baba-Centres, now with the circle constantly expanding we can barely manage to go thru them, let alone attend to them as would befit His lovers' love!

With the opening of the new year welcoming His 72nd birthday, the number seventy-two has become the most important figure in the world of Baba-lovers, and many of the birthday programmes revolve round it. A number of Baba-Centres in India are observing a 72 day "Akhandam Nam Jap" (Non-stop repetition of Baba's Name), beginning from 5 o'clock in the morning of December 16, to be carried on till 5 in the morning of February 25th. This repetition of His beloved Name, night and day without a break, is carried out in shifts, at a place fixed for the purpose. As there seem not enough hours or days to accommodate all who participate, there are often as many as twenty Baba-lovers doing the Nam-Jap at a time! In Andhra Pradesh and elsewhere, a 72 day programme of Baba-gatherings held daily, in some places twice a day, is also in full swing. They are home gatherings and public gatherings, and each report received is crowned with the words: "How strongly is beloved Baba's presence felt by all who come!" And then there are the colourful Baba-processions that wind thru lane and street of town or city to the blare of music joyously proclaiming the Advent of the Avatar, who reveals His message to mankind in the silence of His Love.

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And so the lovers plan and prepare for the great day in united endeavour, bringing in the harvest of their faith and love for all to share, their field of expression varying to suit the creative climate of their surrounding. And as each toils towards this goal, it is perhaps with the conviction expressed by a young doctor in Iran, one of the indomitable Baba-workers, who writes: "It is my rock-firm belief that Baba does His own work as He has said. I believe that not I, nor you, nor anyone else is doing Baba's work. We are His tools, and He honours us by giving us the opportunity to serve Him."

Beloved Baba tells us that the pain in His neck is 25% better; and the pain in His hip-joint is not bothering Him, so that although He walks very little He does it with more ease. What nicer present than this can we hope to have for the birthday of the Birthless One! And what gift can we hope to give Him, other than a round-the-year one of obeying Him and loving Him more and more?

This 25th of February is a day of special significance in the calendar of nations too - the date set by the Tashkent Declaration for removal of all traces of the recent Indo-Pak fighting. May this fact bless the spirit of Tashkent to survive and strengthen. "Measure your mind's height by the shade it casts". India's late prime minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, that gentle self-effacing man who won the confidence and hearts of the people he served, proved his measure by the world-wide acclaim and respect he gained within 18 months of his leadership. Before two years had passed, leaders and dignitaries from all parts of the world were once again gathered on Indian soil to pay their homage and tribute to a great departed leader. "The sudden passing away of our Lal Bahadur Shastri took the breath out of the nation", as Eruch put it in his letter to Dr. Ram Ginde. Just before the prime minister left for Tashkent, our dear Dr. C.D. Deshmukh (of Nagpur) met him, told him of the Avatarhood of Meher Baba, and presented him with a copy of 'The Everything and The Nothing' along with 'The Master's Prayer'. Lal Bahadur Shastri expressed his assurance that he would read them, and allowed himself to be photographed with Dr. Deshmukh - in the picture we see Shastriji holding the Baba-literature in his hand. Baba said that Lal Bahadur was a fine man and a very good soul, and was blessed to have heard His Name and talked about Him with Deshmukh before leaving his physical body. The mandali were reminded how Baba had repeatedly expressed His concern over Lal Bahadur's health and heart condition ever since he left for Tashkent. On the morning when the mandali conveyed the news of the prime minister's death, Baba remarked:

Longfellow said: Come he slow or come he fast
It's but death who comes at last.

and the poet Amir said: Man is born for his last day.

whereas Meher Baba says: None dies, and none knows to die.

The rare one who knows to die is never born again.

The dam put up for "no visits" during Baba's continuing seclusion, is expected to hold till November 1967 as was declared by Him. But once in a while, through a chink of His compassion, trickles some Baba-lover or the other who is granted a few minutes of His company - depending more on the occasion and circumstance than on His health and mood for it. Of these rare visitors to Meherazad, Robert Dreyfuss is outstanding in our memory because of the 'why' and 'how' of his journey to Baba. This 21 year old American came to India to attend the December Sahavas which was to be held for Baba's Western lovers, and not until he reached Poona did he learn that the Sahavas was cancelled! Robert left his home town of Boston (U.S.A.) in September 1965, availing himself of the students' economical plane service to England. From there, with a knapsack on his back, he walked and hitch-hiked his way to India - thru France, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Greece, Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and making the final

lap from Kuwait to Bombay by boat. This pilgrimage of three months ended on 16th November when he reached Meherazad. The first thing that came to my mind when I heard that he had come for the December Sahavas, was the story of the Tortoise and the Hare - while the hundreds who had planned to come by jet plane were halted at the starting point, this lucky 'tortoise', unaware that the race was called off, had plodded home to his goal! It was truly his "home-coming", he said, to The One he had found after deep heart-searching and book-worming thru masses of philosophical and theosophical writings. He did have the sahavas he came for, spending two days at Meherazad and endearing himself to the Meherazadians as one of the family. On both days he saw Baba, was embraced happily by Him, and received amply of His time and Love. The Beloved told him to return to the U.S.A., to his family and to the job he had left to come to India, which was that of looking after violent mental patients in a hospital in Boston. Baba gave Robert a message and a mission: "Go back to the U.S.A., spread my Love among others, particularly among the young and persuade them to desist from taking Drugs, for they are harmful - physically, mentally and spiritually.

In an age when individual liberty is prized above all achievements, the fast increasing number of drug-addicts forms an appalling chain of self-sought bondage! Even as these Drugs hold out an invitation to a fleeting sense of ecstasy, freedom or escape, they enslave the individual in greater binding. LSD, a highly potent 'mind-changing' drug differing from the opium derivatives and being used in the research of mental science, is said to "expand consciousness and alter one's personality for the better". In America it has become tragically popular among the young, used indiscriminately by any and many.

Robert is of a group of men and women (a number of them devoted to Baba) who have, with discrimination and spiritual aspirations, experimented with LSD. It seemed to them that their experiences tallied with the descriptions in "God Speaks" of the Subtle Planes. We gathered from his narration that the drug's effect is a temporary experience of piercing the veil of illusion and "a glimpse of Reality" - thus extending a dazzling promise of eventually leading one to the heights of Godhood. Baba was amused when He heard this, and said "If God can be found thru the medium of any drug, God is not worthy of being God!" Baba was very pleased that Robert had stopped taking LSD, and told him to tell the others to do the same.

A former professor at Harvard University (U.S.A.) who has been scientifically exploring the higher possibilities of LSD and other psychedelic drugs, on hearing Baba's message of "No Drugs" sent thru Robert, wrote to Baba asking for His guidance. As Baba was moved to help this sincere seeker in clearing his confusion, the reply indicated by Him was sent in a letter from Adi, excerpts of which I give here for the benefit of all whom it will help:

"No drug, whatever its great promise, can help one to attain the spiritual Goal. There is no short cut to the Goal except through the grace of the Perfect Master; and drugs, LSD more than others, give only a semblance of 'spiritual experience', a glimpse of a false Reality.

"The experience you elaborate in your letter and book are as far removed from Reality as is a mirage from water. No matter how much you pursue the mirage you will never reach water and the search for God through drugs must end in disillusionment. Meher Baba who knows the Way, who is the Way, cannot approve the continued pursuance of a method that not only must prove fruitless but leads away from the Path that leads to Reality.

"It is human, and therefore necessarily wrongsighted, to view the result of the drug by its immediate relative effects - our inability to calculate its end result is beyond our human knowledge, and only the true Guide can point the way.

"To a few sincere seekers such as yourself, LSD may have served as a means to arouse that spiritual longing which has brought you into contact with Meher Baba, but once that purpose is served further ingestion would not only be harmful but have no point or purpose. Now your longing for Reality cannot be sustained by further use of drugs but only by your own love for the Perfect Master which is a reflection of His Love for you.

"You may feel LSD has made a 'better' man of you socially and personally. But one will be a better man through Love than one can ever be through drugs or any other artificial aid. And the best man is he who has surrendered himself to the Perfect Master irrespective of his personal or social standing.

"Meher Baba has pointed out that the experience derived through the drugs are experiences by one in the Gross World of the shadows of the subtle planes and are not continuous. The experiences of the Subtle Sphere by one on the subtle planes are continuous, but even these experiences are of Illusion for Reality is beyond them. And so, though LSD may lead one to feel a better man personally, the feeling of having had a glimpse of Reality may not only lull one into a false security but also will in the end derange one's mind. Although LSD is not an addiction forming drug one can become attached to the experiences arising from its use and one gets tempted to use it in increasing doses, again and again, in the hope of deeper and deeper experiences. But eventually this causes madness or death.

"Only the One who knows and experiences Reality, who is Reality, has the ability and authority to point out the false from the Real. Hence Meher Baba tells us who care to heed Him that the only Real Experience is to continuously see God within oneself as the Infinite Effulgent Ocean of Truth and then to become one with this Infinite Ocean and continuously experience Infinite Knowledge, Power, and Bliss."

How well Robert has carried Baba's message to the others, and how clearly it has been received by them, can be glimpsed from the response of a dear one in her letter to beloved Baba:

"'Once there is a beloved, we breathe him'. You, the breath of so many, fill our lives and hasten us to the closeness to God for which we have yearned forever.

"Since you sent Bob Dreyfuss to connect us and to stop us from the drug delusion, you have become the most important reality in our lives. Your books fill our shelves, your pictures the walls, and your reality our dreams. We are doing our best to love and understand, believe and submit... Obviously it is easier for some than others and you of course understand this best.

"We received the message that we should write to you and the opportunity is a blessing although it is difficult to figure out what to say to one who knows all. So I shall hope that between the breaths of the words you can feel the love coming from this side of the world..... I simply thank you for the awakening you have brought to all of us, bless you for your love, and transmit to you the deepest of my love which I realize is insignificant in its development but at this point is about all I have got to offer."

I'm tempted to mention another recent visit to Meherazad, because of the profound perception revealed in the words of a child. The visitor was seven year old Jayanti, son of a prosperous cloth merchant in Ahmednagar. The boy had not yet seen Baba but regularly attended the Centre and kept pestering Adi and the others to take him to Baba. And so one morning one of the Baba-workers coming to Meherazad brought him along. While Jayanti was with the mandali before being taken to the Beloved, Eruch asked him "Why do you want to see Baba?" "So that

real faith may be born in me" the child replied. When asked "What do you hope to gain after having Faith?", he answered "I will find God." "And when you have found God, what will you do?" "I will love Him and serve Him" was the reply. We saw him hugging to his breast a bag of sweets that he had brought for Baba, and which he would not part from until he had personally placed them at Baba's feet. When he was taken to Baba he did not have to remove his shoes, in reverence to the Master - he had removed them before starting from Ahmednagar! Beloved Baba embraced him and caressed his cheeks, and told him how fortunate he was. With his large soft eyes on Baba, Jayanti nodded emphatically in agreement. When one of us asked him who it was that was seated before him, he answered simply "God". We said, "Well, now that you have seen Him, ask of Him what you will. What do you want of Him?" The boy gazed soulfully at God and answered "Love". Baba was pleased and delighted at this reply, and smilingly gestured "Granted".

How many are there, when their turn comes, who prove wise or fortunate enough to ask of Him just that? But even this wanting of the highest boon is by the grace of the Beloved, and is (as Sant Mira says in her song) "a promise of many lives ago". Perhaps we will see the boon blossom in Jayanti's life, that he may "love and serve God" in this Avataric age. We have seen the blossoming of other buds blessed by His grace; a fair example being Naosherwan Nalawala of Dehra Dun (north India), a handsome youngster of about 19 years who is the editor of THE GLOW. "The Glow" is a registered quarterly newspaper devoted to enlightening the people of the God-Man's presence on earth and carrying the beloved name of Meher Baba to their ears and hearts. Born into a family that is whole-heartedly Baba's, Naosherwan was barely four when he sat on Baba's lap, played with Him, and solemnly entertained Him as a "drummer" by vigorously drumming with his chubby little hands on the dining table. Now he drums away on the typewriter, and the music is the glowing effort he puts in THE GLOW born of His Love.

From the beginning of April beloved Baba along with the Meherazad family will be at Guruprasad, Poona, for three months. We are at the tail end of our short winter, and the thundering footsteps of summer can already be felt coming nearer. Soon the migratory birds will be flying back north to cooler climes, as we shall be preparing for our migration to Poona and its kinder summer. In the month of March the hustle of 'spring-cleaning' goes hand in hand with the bustle of packing, leaving less time for attending to the mail. Moreover, as the pattern of work keeps enlarging daily, it is difficult to fit it onto the limited material of time at our disposal, with barely scraps left over to cover personal needs! Please note that the rein on correspondence is being drawn in tighter. From April thru June, emergency cables may be addressed: MEHERBABA, GURUPRASAD, POONA (India).

The next letter will be going out to you in the month of May. This one I close with Baba's Love to you each dear one, and the Birthday Song for children composed by Francis:

Glad are we in you, dear Baba,
Glad are we in your Birthday --
That you in your loving Kindness
Came on earth with us to stay.

Round the Earth your love is flowing
As a river wide and deep,
Making full and rich the harvest
That each, at Time's end, will reap.

Th'light of New Day now is dawning
As a heavenly flower rare,
In its heart we are discerning
Your Face, Baba, dear and fair.

Hear my song, Beloved Baba,
That I sing on your Birthday --
It's my pleading that you, Baba,
In my heart forever stay.

Ever lovingly,

MANDLI

Meherazad

22nd November 1965

(date of posting)

Dearest Family,

This is begun on a Sunday morning, the music of the typewriter keys mingling with the choir of bird-song. Actually Sunday at Meherazad is little different from any other day of the week, except that all the clocks are wound, one can catch up with more work left over from the week, and the Sunday paper will have its page of comics & crossword that some of us enjoy. Time runs so fast it appears to stand still. It seems but 'yesterday' that the last letter was posted to you with Baba's announcement of the December Sahavas cancellation. And yet much has happened in between, and much has not happened.

What has not happened is improvement in beloved Baba's pain. But then we think, could we really expect it when we know it is from the burden of His universal work. As one of the mandali remarked "It would seem that the universe has literally become a 'pain in the neck' for Him!" Some months ago, when Baba would sit up for long hours during the day without a break, we would plead with Him to rest His body more by lying down in bed to ease the neck condition as advised by our Dr. Ginde. Well, we asked for it. Now it makes us unhappy to see Him have to lie down for a number of hours, as sitting up for more than short stretches at a time aggravates the pain. Our prayer to God-Baba to help Baba-God in His self ordained suffering, could not be better expressed than in the words of a Baba-lover from Australia, a doctor. He wrote to Baba: "If an ordinary person like myself could express a wish affecting you, it would be that the time may not be far distant when you can partake more of the 'bliss' and less of the 'suffering' of Avatarhood."

Another thing that has not happened is rain. Since my last report of the rainfall, all we have had is occasional clouds - herds of clouds galloping across the sky with the wind in full chase. What had seemed a glorious beginning, turned out to be the sum total of the monsoon! The fields are turning out a scanty return for all the grains and work the farmers put into them in hopes of a bumper crop. Moreover, we've had one of the hottest Octobers we can remember, with the scorching sun rays sucking up what little moisture the earth might have retained from the early showers. Often of an evening, our old mehetrani (sweeper woman) would sing, in a voice having far more volume than tone, her rain-song: "Allah mia, give us rain; the cattle are hungry, the fields are dry; give rain O Protector of All." I can't help wondering how many of those whose livelihood is eked from the soil, have the patience, faith and courage to say "Thy Will be done"! To top it all, it seemed to us this year that the mosquitoes, ants, flies and midges were having a 'population explosion' too!

The tragedy of war has been brought closer home to us thru the violent outbreak over Kashmir. It has also proved the strength that lies in unity - and that such unity, alas, is achieved not in days of peace but in times of danger. Like family members who bicker amongst themselves and complain over the endless daily hardships but stand together when their home is attacked, the multi-racial multi-lingual and multi-religious inhabitants of India rose as one family to fight for their principles and land.

In this paradoxical age of "too much" and "never enough", the loudest cry is for peace, the greatest movement towards wars: war against countries, peaceful and otherwise; war against poverty & affluence, against hunger & obesity, disease & drug addiction, illiteracy & the abuse of science; crime & injustice; the ever-rising cost of living and dying; against death and the tidal wave of population; and above all war against War. How ironical it is that we must for ever fight to have peace. I'm reminded of the joke I read to beloved Baba the other day of the man from Texas who arrived at a small town and loudly announced over a drink at the bar: "I aim to have peace and quiet, even if I have to shoot everybody in town in order to get it!"

To view the world through the daily papers is like window-gazing into a store crammed with chaos, where greed and fear, hate and passions, are free for the taking; where there is never a shortage of floods, famines, earthquakes, wars and disasters of every kind; where Love & Truth are dusty commodities not easy of access, for few customers care to give the price for them. But there is hope and salvation too, for God has incarnated again to save us from ourselves. One can imagine these intermittent disturbances all over the world as being clouds of dust that rise up and choke us when God's broom is applied to the layers of darkness & ignorance of spirit, which must be swept off before we can realize His promise of "Peace on earth and goodwill among men". We dare not think of the final universal sweep-up that must come before He is revealed to all humanity!!! And in His divine compassion He must suffer with us and for us, knowing what a painful process this is for His children who cannot learn the easy way, who frantically strive for all manner of 'independence' without dependence on God. We read in a U.S.A. magazine, a prayer that says: "We have the conceit of strength; the arrogance of money; the vanity of knowledge; but none of these shall save us as they saved not the mighty empires of the past. Only a Man shall save us even as we have been saved before."

A great lover of Baba in Andhra, Koduri Krishna Rao, who erected "Mehersthan" (the Abode of Meher) on the banks of the river Godavari in Kovvur, has come to his true abode in Baba. Koduri Krishna Rao passed away on 11th November from a heart attack. A fine distinguished person, undemonstrative and gentle by nature, he was one of the fortunate few whose very life was Baba's message of Love & Truth. MEHERSTHAN is the living monument of his silent love for his beloved Master - and he had his reward "according to love", as we can see from the personal message sent by beloved Baba to Krishnarao's wife and family who are wholly devoted to Baba:

"Your husband Koduri Krishnarao's love for Me and his service in the cause of the Avatar have made him immortal. Krishnarao now lives eternally in Me and is blissfully happy. I want you to be brave and to keep happy in Krishnarao's happiness. My Love Blessing to you and your dear children.

And His message to His lovers in Andhra:

KODURI KRISHNARAO WAS ONE OF MY DEAREST LOVERS

AND HAS COME TO REST ETERNALLY IN ME

- MEHERBABA -

The direct letters to Baba from you, His devoted Westerners, have wound their way from all parts of the world to flow into the Ocean of His heart. Beloved Baba placed a hand on His heart while indicating this message from Him to you:

" I am deeply touched by your love for me and your complete resignation to my will. You have made me happy. I give my Love and blessing to you each, my own. "

Each letter is read out to Baba in full, and the enclosures (photographs or drawings) seen by Him. The letters were begun to be read out from 6th October, as wished by Him - a few every morning. They came from His lovers 'old' and 'new', from men women and children of different ages, nationalities, religions and vocations in life - they came from His own. The little ones often chose

crayons in shaping their offering to Baba - wild chicken-tracks or splashes of colour and the words laboriously scribbled: I LOVE BABA. Or drawings of their cat, dog, house, bird, of themselves, their mummy, daddy - all the things dear to them, to be shared with Him they love. Other children chose prose and poetry, their simple acceptance of Baba mirrored in every line, as is the moon in a clear pool of water. One five year old writes:

Dear Baba I love you very much. I wish I could see you.
You are the best.

Another girl writes:

We went to see you in 1956 - I remember that very well. I was about 3 then. My brother and I sat on each knee and you gave us some fruit. I remember that as though it was yesterday. I remember I used to say your name until I fell asleep. Mommy said it was just like praying.

And this is what her twin brother had to say:

Thank you for granting all my prayers and thank you for all the things you have sent me through out the years. My Mother told me that you are all around us. I still remember the time I saw you in New York City and you gave me some grapes and kissed me and my sister on our head. Dear Baba why are there not signs of you around us? Lot of children ask me who is that a picture of and I say that picture is of the Great Man who lives in India named Meher Baba and they don't believe me because they can't see you or feel you. Now I ask you!

Another youngster writes:

Last Saturday I played in my first cricket match this season. I was a bit nervous when batting at first but I said 'Baba' to myself as the bowler commenced his run, then as he was about to deliver the ball I reminded myself to 'watch the ball'. After the first half hour I was all muddled up and was saying "Baba, watch the ball" and "Baba, keep your eye on the ball". I tried to imagine You were sitting watching the game and so I must play brightly. I was eventually run out, I must have forgotten to say "Baba" before starting to run!

A 4½ year old boy says:

I am next to Baba and Baba is next to me and loves me.

From a 9 year old girl comes:

Last time Uncle Reg was here we built a birds tray outside our window... Five Noisy Miners, two Butcher Birds and two Magpies come to feed. We say BABA! to all the birds... I have written a poem for You:

Baba's face is a pearl
Baba's eyes are sapphires
Baba's lips are rubies' red
I kiss those lips before I go to bed.

Words are like lanterns, meaningless and cluttering up space - until they are lighted. The words that came wrapped in these hundreds of letters to the Beloved from His Western lovers were gloriously alight with the flame of His Love, bathing us around Him in the glow of Baba's beauty reflected from them! They were indeed not "letters" - they were a prayer, a song, a longing, a cry, a thankfulness, a pledge, a confession, a personal chat with God, an outpouring, a sahasas. Nearly every letter was simply an opening of the innermost door of the heart where He abides, and where perhaps the writer himself has dared not enter except to kneel before Him in love and gratitude. Like some stirring piece of music or song that

haunts you long after you've heard it, snatches of these letters keep coming back to us through the day. I feel that to reproduce some of them here would not be violating the sacred privacy of these communications to the Divine Beloved, but rather the singing together of His Love, His "Arti". My problem is how to limit it to just a few of them. When at first I planned to give passages from selected letters, I didn't realize I would wind up by selecting from almost every letter! - but then they were most of them so utterly beautiful. To try to quote from them all would be a task as crazy as trying to cram an ocean into a tea cup! So, with Baba's permission, I give here passages from a few, that carry the thoughts & feelings expressed in the other letters to Baba from His Western lovers.

FROM AMONG THE MEN, THIS IS WHAT WAS WRITTEN BY

A distinguished writer and journalist:

Beloved Baba, you have told us that we may write one letter to you. This is a privilege we accept with joy, and we know that you will have your own way of sending us an answer... None of us knows what your work on earth is, but we all understand that it is done for us at infinite cost in suffering on your part. So we send you our gratitude and love, which is only a reflection of your love for us, and we hope to see you in bodily form when you give the word.

A college boy:

Oh Baba, it is my prayer to live a life in your love as You would have me do and become a better individual for You. I cannot plead ignorance Baba, I know how I should live, for You have been explicit in your wishes. You must know how much I love you Baba, and that You are my life, so I know You will help me.

One who works in an Oil Company:

Oh Beloved Baba, the longing in our hearts - our love for you - can only be satisfied by your love for us. So fill us with your love Beloved Baba, fill us full. Let us be so full of your Divine Love that it will flow from us into the lives of others.

A composer:

I am very thankful that you love me. With or without the December Sahavas I love you more than all other things....

A boy in his teens:

Thank you for all the wonderful blessings You have given me. My heart seems to swell and tears of joy fall when I think of all the love You radiate. In words I cannot say what You already know I feel. You have said that it is Your Will for You to suffer dear Baba. Yet I wish the world would lighten Your heavy burden. Your suffering is a great monument to Your great love for us. Father you are kind, even as You suffer and work universally, to listen to all our words which are empty and small... You as the Master make our lives more meaningful in every way. How many times have Your Westerners said "What would life be without Baba!!" The answer is unthinkable and only in nightmares do we ever dream it!

An interior decorator:

We would be rudderless without Your constant love and presence. Thankyou for Your many blessings, Baba.

A surgeon:

My deepest love and devotion to You, Baba, and my heartfelt thanks to You for your love and for being the Rock on which I can make order out of chaos and purpose out of an otherwise purposeless world.

An industrial personnel consultant:

You are infinite Compassion, with You in mind and heart everything is possible; and nothing, except Your presence, is important. There is nothing to do except what You wish and what will please You. Whatever You decide is best. I would do anything for You, not just because I believe You are God, but because You are You, Love itself, infinite Suffering and infinite Compassion, for me, for us all, absolutely beautiful and true through and through. You have shown us love. You have shown us truth; You have given us so much, You have suffered for us Your children, constantly; been infinitely patient and loving in awakening us to what You would have us realize.

A young man in the publishing department:

....hungrily I awaited another glimpse of Your divine Form, the effulgent warmth of Your ageless smile and most of all Your gentle Touch... I know in my heart that you are the only reality, and my want is to obey and love You completely.

A retired electronics designer, who has taken up sculpturing Baba:

I am slowly proceeding with sculpture and sometimes in my imagination You are with me, Baba, in the image in front of me, and it is as though You play games with me, perhaps saying "See? Am I not being very helpful?" If I say "No Baba", You look incredibly astonished, and say (with a twinkle) "No? How can this be?"... Then sometimes Baba, by Your Love, and in spite of my ineptness, a little gleam, the smallest reflection of Your infinite beauty will appear like a miracle, and I am in tears before You. So that despair at my inadequacy is tempered by the knowledge that by Your grace anything is possible and that the result is according to Your will; and it is often banished by indescribable felicity in the endeavour to shape Your lovely hands and feet, Baba, and I think in Francis' simple words "How beautiful You are!"

A ballet dancer:

After much searching I finally heard of you through some dancer friends and Miss Craske. When we were allowed to come to Myrtle Beach in 1958 to be with you, how I wanted to love you; but when you were there I never had time to think about it... The day you left and waved to us from the plane, I knew you were leaving but would always remain a part of me. How I would have loved a burst of glory at my discovery, but it was so simple as though it was something I knew already and had just forgotten.

One formerly associated with the author of 'In Search of Secret India':

The awakening that You have already implanted in me is Your gift for which I am, though unworthy, utterly grateful. And because I accept You as Lord God, dear Baba, it is this unworthiness which helped me to drown my disappointment over the cancellation of the December Sahavas. For who am I, a newcomer already invited once in Your Beautiful Presence, to enjoy a repetition of such an experience only three years later? Woe to me that my ignorance is already Your present pain and burden! We are not really denied Your sahavas for You have now permitted us to enjoy it through the different medium of writing to You, and for that we thank You. May an ever-widening circle of lovers enjoy Your sahavas in whatever form You may choose to bestow in the future. And may Your Love and Your compassion inspire us towards the only experience worth while - to settle as dust at Your Beloved Feet.

A ballet dancer:

Your great love for us fills our home and I feel that those who come here cannot but feel it too. You are everything in my life, my dancing, my child, my husband, my friends.

A nurse:

All my nursing skill is useless to aid You, for only by living according to Your teachings can I help to ease Your agony. It is very easy to love You; it is loving one's neighbour as one's self that is difficult. I do not wish to tire You with a long letter but I must thank You for all the blessings You have seen fit to shower on me. I know I haven't deserved it, but I appreciate it so from all of me...

An aspiring actress:

Thank you, Baba, for my many blessings, and for the greatest blessing of all - that of touching me with Your Love, for having been in Your presence once, and for the promise that we shall see You again. I can imagine no more horrible existence than one without Your love and light to guide and sustain us in this midst of confusion. You are truly all - and I so desperately long to really live Your life of truth, love, purity and beauty... If I have learned nothing else, I know that You are the only constancy in this transitory world. I love You so Baba - You are my need, courage, strength, discipline, hope...

An elderly lady who met Baba many years ago in India:

Baba, you are indeed my whole existence, my life... The hardships of ill-health I have shared with you in very truth, but your grace sustains and I am able to do things that many can scarce believe is done, and I can only say it is because I am ever in your holy presence day and night... I have a circle of poor folk for whom I can do some needful help, so I am quite happy doing this kind of loving of my Beloved, and see you in everyone whose need is filled with the friendship I offer them in your Beloved Name.

One who longs to understand:

Dear Meher Baba, it is sad for me that I must use this one precious chance to write a letter at a time when I do not know who you are. The only way that I have seen your light is in the eyes of other people (who love you). I have had a great desire all my life to know God and to see his beauty in the life around me. You have brought so much goodness and beauty into the lives of my friends that I have received something of your nature from them... It gives me a great deal of happiness to reach out this way to touch your hand even if I do not quite understand you.

A 'newcomer' into the radiance of His Love:

Oh Beloved Baba! you who know everything that is in my mind and heart, I sit here to write to you and I weep, and I don't know why I weep. Unless it is because I know I love you and I know how imperfect that love is. I wish it were so consuming a love I had that it would burn away all my desires, all my will, all my little self and leave only an empty shell to be completely filled with you.

Wife of an Airlines Vice-president:

Beloved Lord, it must be at least thirty-five years ago that I was first overwhelmed at the depths of Christ's love for man, and I am equally humbled now by that same love expressed through you. Here is the world tottering on the brink of self-destruction, and man's puny intellect can faintly imagine the suffer-

ing You are enduring to right it, yet in your infinite Compassion You have given your Western lovers the profound privilege of writing to You... Your last promise, that You will meet Your Western lovers somehow somewhere before breaking your Silence, is a steady glow in my heart; yet even if that promise cannot be kept it will make no difference to my love for You.

Wife of an art teacher:

If I could sing like Hafiz I would be able to praise You, but my voice comes out cracked and impure. I kneel at Your feet and offer what poor gifts of love and service I have, not knowing even how to write to You, though my heart aches with longing... It is spring, but the intoxicating call of the cuckoos does not ease my heart, for I shall not see You in December. We who have lived for this Meeting bow in Your Will and accept Your decision. I love You and want to serve You - nothing else matters.

One dealing in cosmetics:

Oh God in human form, beloved Christ! Let me be worthy of Your sufferings and pains. Let me be worthy of Your Love and Grace. Let me surrender to You: all lives that I have ever lived, all thoughts that I have ever thought, all acts that I have ever committed. Let my surrenderance to Your will be total and complete, regardless of any suffering it will inflict on me.

A dressmaker:

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for this opportunity to write to you and offer you once again my love and a rededication of myself and all that I am, to you my Divine Father... I thank you for giving us all this chance to express a greater degree of resignation to Your will, and may the combined love of all your lovers help to lighten your stupendous burden in some small measure.

A housewife, whose husband & children are likewise devoted to Baba:

No words or sounds that I know could touch Your magnificence - no love I have felt could be worthy of the dust under Your feet. If it takes the love of Saint Francis to please You, I haven't much of a chance. But that which I have is all Yours, my Beloved. Oh God, forgive me for being so little when You deserve so much, and let my small gift of love give You a fleeting moment of pleasure. I love you Baba with all my being.

Another young mother:

I remember our meeting in '56 - how incomprehensible that your frail form contains All. Yet I believe whatever you say and do, is so. And it makes me happy within that you let my heart know this transcendent Truth - to be friends with God! How great and wonderful and how appreciative I am dear Baba that you gave me this gift of awareness of Yourself in human form. So beautiful & joyous, I would like to express this beauty & joy in song, in dance, in word. I want to share the love, the greatness, the beauty of You with those I love...

A housewife, awakened to Baba through a 'newcomer':

What does one say dear Baba, how does one express with mere words the inner faith and love you have awakened in us, how do we share with our loved ones and those around us the knowledge that this inner faith has always been and will always be there... We have found our true selves at last, and tho we still find stumbling blocks it will be easier because You are with us.

An artist:

My Beloved Baba, there are no words... Your silence for me is ever speaking in my heart. It is the greatest love song I know. For me, as yesterday today and tomorrow, you are always the Baba I love in whom I found life.

And now to switch over to the Meherazad reporter having the last word. To those who find this letter to be too lengthy, all I can say is: remember it could easily have been 20 pages! And to myself I say that perhaps it is better so, as the next letter is not expected to go out before February 1966. JAI BABA!

ever lovingly,

MANDLI

Note: Those Western Baba-lovers who have not yet written their one direct letter to Baba, should do so in time for it to reach here latest by December end.

Meherazad

8th September 1965

Dearest Family,

On the 4th of September, beloved Baba sent the following cable for all His Western lovers, to Harry Kenmore, Elizabeth Patterson, Ivy Duce (U.S.A.), to Delia de Leon (England), to William Lepage and Denis Obrien (Australia), and to Adi Arjani (Pakistan):

INFORM ALL CONCERNED AT YOUR END I HAVE
CANCELLED DECEMBER SAHAVAS STOP I KNOW HOW
DISAPPOINTED MY LOVERS WILL BE BUT I ALSO
KNOW MY LOVERS WILL ACCEPT MY DECISION
WITH COMPLETE RESIGNATION TO MY WILL STOP
WHAT I HAVE DECIDED IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH
MY HEAVY BURDEN OF UNIVERSAL WORK AND
SUFFERING AND IS FOR THE GOOD OF ALL STOP
SOME TIME SOMEWHERE SOMEHOW I WILL MEET
MY OLD AND NEW WESTERN LOVERS BEFORE I
BREAK MY SILENCE MY LOVE AND BLESSING TO
ALL MY LOVERS STOP CABLE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

- MEHERBABA -

On the morning of 4th September, seated in His armchair in the Mandali's hall, Baba declared to those present His decision to cancel the Western Sahavas that He had planned to hold at Meherazad from 23rd to 29th December 1965. There was a look of infinite fatigue and sorrow in His eyes as He announced this. Baba said (in gestures interpreted by Eruch): "The world situation is very bad, and growing worse daily. The pressure of my universal work is affecting my health tremendously, and the pain in my neck is beyond limit. It is the universal Cross that I bear. I have decided to cancel the Western Sahavas which was to be held this December. I do not in the least like cancelling the Sahavas, but I have to. I know what I am doing." He added, "Some time, somewhere, somehow, I will meet my old and new Western lovers before I break my Silence."

Turning to Francis, Baba asked "Will this cancellation affect or lessen the love of my Western lovers?" With hardly any hesitation Francis replied "I don't think so Baba. It would be a queer kind of love if it did". Adi's reply when Baba asked him was "They will of course be tremendously disappointed, but it is certain that they will accept your Will without question or doubt." Baba looked pleased at this, and said "I want no disturbance till November 1967. There will therefore NOT be any darshan for Easterners either before that time."

At the conclusion of that momentous morning's meeting, Baba gave a little anecdote which seemed amazingly appropriate to the unexpressed thought of some of us on the matter of this Cancellation. Baba said: "There was a Perfect Master who used to continually postpone the giving of God-realization to a disciple of his, always promising that he would definitely give it on such and such a day. At last the disciple got upset and said 'You who know everything O Master, why cannot you know the definite date of giving me God-realization?' And the Master replied 'The Perfect Master knows everything; He also knows Nothing; and He appears as if He does not know anything!'"

And this brought to my mind the Beloved's words uttered in a previous Avataric form to a dear disciple:

Not comprehending Me in my true Self;
Imperishable, viewless, undeclared,
Hidden behind my magic veil of shows,
I am not seen by all; I am not known -
Unborn and changeless - to the idle world.
But I Arjuna! know all things which were,
And all which are, and all which are to be,
Albeit not one among them knoweth Me!

Baba kept the Sahavas machinery in motion everywhere until the announcement, and the Ahmednagar office was humming with the mounting momentum of work. The stage seemed all set for the first act of December's divine drama: The forms came - filled in with names of those who planned to attend from the U.S.A., Canada, Australia, England, France, Switzerland, Israel, Africa, Lebanon, Pakistan. The rains came - so that Ahmednagar, Meherazad and Meherabad have had enough rainfall to solve the acute water problem till next summer. And the official government sanction came, for occupation of the new hospital-unit building in Ahmednagar - Adi managed this most essential and difficult task with incredible perseverance and tact. But, as Baba's work includes both action and inaction, perhaps the most difficult part was destined for poor Sarosh who was laid up for weeks in a hospital in Bombay after a major operation, while champing at the bit to be back home and at work for the Sahavas. Soon after the cancellation was announced, we heard from Villoo that Sarosh is well enough to be able to return to Ahmednagar!

For us at Meherazad, beloved Baba's decision to cancel the Sahavas was not utterly unexpected. We felt the first breath of such a possibility when Baba had a cable sent to Dr. Harry Kenmore in August, telling him not to make any payment to Air India International Airways (as deposit for the Charter Flight agreement) without obtaining previous permission from Him. This was followed by a personal letter from Eruch, hinting that although it seemed improbable it was not impossible that Baba would yet cancel the Sahavas! Harry's reply to this was typical of him, and we had no doubt that it echoed the feelings of all His Western lovers. Harry said in his letter that there was an overflow of 48 Baba-lovers (in addition to the former charter flight capacity), bringing the total load to 190! He wrote: "The tension of expectancy and anticipation is mounting daily. Oh, how all concerned are aching to go to Baba in December! Confirmations are pouring in and we have 182 signed up with money on the line. The whole endeavor has gone relatively smoothly.... You know Eruch, some people get more fun out of preparing for a picnic than they do on picnic day. But in this case it will be no picnic for those who are told it's all off!!... But be assured without equivocation that Baba's wish and will in this matter, as in any matter in which He is concerned, will always be observed as He directs. On that you can bet your last pice! Nobody ain't gonna get nothin', not even nothin', unless the BOSS says so! For He am de General, de engineer, de major domo what runs this show jes' like all de other shows! What He decides is for our own best good. So let His will be done!!!" After the cancellation, Baba cabled Harry the following message:

I HAVE CANCELLED DECEMBER SAHAVAS I WANT YOU NOT TO FEEL
DISAPPOINTED OR DISTURBED FOR I KNOW WHAT I AM DOING
I ALSO KNOW HOW YOU AND ANNAROSA HAVE LABOURED AND
DONE YOUR UTMOST TO MAKE POSSIBLE FOR LARGE NUMBER OF
MY LOVERS TO SEE ME I AM VERY PLEASED AND PROUD OF YOU
REMAIN HAPPILY RESIGNED TO MY WILL AND PLEASURE

It is the "doing one's utmost" as directed by Baba that really counts. As I had cause to write to a Baba-lover recently concerning a project dedicated in Baba's Love: "The result of any work we do in Baba's Cause is not measured by any achievement on our part, but by all that we have put of ourselves into the doing of it. Having worked hard and done our best at whatever we set out to do in His Love, the result will be as He wills it and would want it. Whereas we aim to achieve the one result we have worked on, He uses every step of our endeavour for manifold results through the actions and reactions that follow and are churned up." In the pattern unfolded by this cancellation, or the 'making and unmaking' of a plan proposed by the Beloved, we experience a warm familiarity. It is yet another instance where literally "God proposes and God disposes", and we know that nothing that is directed by Him is ever lost or wasted. We who have witnessed over the years the wondrous and manifold ways of Baba's working through the littlest thing set in motion by Him, feel no doubt that all the combined energy given out by each who laboured towards the December Sahavas, all the concentration centred on Baba in the planning of it, has been used by Him for His work. Our hearts humbly accept His decision, even though our minds cannot comprehend. But hasn't Baba said: "Do not try to understand me, for my depth is unfathomable. Just love me."!

And the calibre of His Western lovers' love for Him was most heartwarmingly felt in the answers received to Baba's cables sent out on 4th September. Beloved Baba was touched and pleased with these responses, and directs me to write to you His dear Western family, that:

BABA WISHES EACH OF HIS WESTERN LOVERS,
OLD AND NEW, YOUNG AND OLD, MEN WOMEN AND
CHILDREN, TO WRITE ONE LETTER DIRECT TO HIM. *

Baba sends His Love and Blessing to you each.

ever lovingly,

MANDLI

* Please note however, that none should expect a reply!

Also, be sure to send your letter by Air.

COPY of CABLE sent on 4th September 1965, to:

HARRY KENMORE; ELIKIT PATTERSON; IVY DUCE; (U.S.A.)

DELIA DELEON (England)

WILLIAM LEPAGE; DENNIS OBRIEN; (Australia)

ADI ARJANI (Pakistan).

INFORM ALL CONCERNED AT YOUR END I HAVE CANCELLED DECEMBER
SAHAVAS STOP I KNOW HOW DISAPPOINTED MY LOVERS WILL BE BUT
I ALSO KNOW MY LOVERS WILL ACCEPT MY DECISION WITH COMPLETE
RESIGNATION TO MY WILL STOP WHAT I HAVE DECIDED IS IN ACCORD-
ANCE WITH MY HEAVY BURDEN OF UNIVERSAL WORK AND SUFFERING AND
IS FOR THE GOOD OF ALL STOP SOME TIME SOMEWHERE SOMEHOW I WILL
MEET MY OLD AND NEW WESTERN LOVERS BEFORE I BREAK MY SILENCE
MY LOVE AND BLESSING TO ALL MY LOVERS STOP CABLE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

= MEHERBABA =

Meherazad
4th September 1965.

Dearest Family,

JAI BABA to you from all at Meherazad.

We left Poona on the morning of 1st July, and after a non-stop drive reached here in excellent time. Even though the journey did not seem tiring for beloved Baba, the vibrations of the car (on stretches of road under repair) worsened the pain in His hip-joint considerably, and for days He was unable to put His weight on His feet. Now however, Baba tells us that the pain has lessened by 75%, and it rejoices our hearts to see Him move about the house at certain hours of the day, with the support of hand-crutches or just leaning on someone's arm. Nevertheless, His movements were confined to the house itself, until the 1st of August when He resumed going over to the Mandali's hall as before. This one month's isolation within the seclusion of Meherazad could be outwardly construed as 'rest' for the sake of His health, but which more likely was for reasons of His work known alone to Him. Concerning the pain in His neck too, which was so agonizingly persistent before we left Poona, Baba tells us that it is now 50% better. And so, as Kitty Davy puts it, Baba was really speaking in our language when He stated that by the end of July His pain would be eased. We pray that the improvement keeps up in the following months as well! The Beloved says that if His health is to keep fit for the giving of His sahavas* to His Western lovers this December, He must remain undisturbed. I am bound therefore to remind you again of His wish that communication should be restricted only to cables sent in emergency and in reply to a cable received from Him.

The approaching Western Sahavas is given first place in our thoughts and energy. Hardly had we unpacked on our return from Poona, when Baba called Adi Sr. with Sarosh and Villoo (Khan Saheb Sarosh K. Irani and his charming wife Villoo) to Meherazad to discuss plans for the arrangements to be made by them in Ahmednagar for the 200 to 250 lovers coming from the U.S.A., Canada, England, Europe, Australia, Israel, Africa and other overseas countries for Baba's sahavas. The bulk of this roughly calculated number will be made up by those coming from the U.S.A., most of whom are flying by a charter flight arrangement which was proposed by Dr. Harry Kenmore during his visit to Baba this May, and which is being speedily carried into effect by His approval and blessing. This charter flight from New York to Bombay and back offers a maximum of 142 seats at rates reduced to almost half the usual fare, and the fact that such an arrangement also enables as many as possible to travel together to India for the Sahavas has pleased Baba very much. It was heartwarming to hear from Harry of the immediate response to this charter flight plan, which in no time had the minimum quota of seats (132) booked and which by now appears to be stepping way over the maximum margin as well! Harry writes: "My dear Eruch, the wonderful response we've had to the arrangement should really do you all proud. There is a fever of intense anticipation and joy at this marvellous prospect of being with God for Christmas. This spontaneous avalanche of devotees yearning to be at home with their Beloved is a very heartening experience indeed, and I want to see them get there safely, cheaply, comfortably and quickly - if it be Baba's wish." As undoubtedly it would be! Many who could not have otherwise afforded the trip are now able to make it with the low charter rates, earning and saving all they can while yearning and craving to be with the Beloved again. Delia deLeon from England writes after her recent visit to New York: Particularly impressive was the fact that so many young people were being drawn closer to Baba - I was told of youngsters who were baby-sitting to earn the money for their fare."

Among the Western sahavasees coming in December will be a number of men and women who have not yet met Baba but are drawn very close to Him in the love He has awakened in their hearts thru His "old" lovers, and specially thru their work at the Baba-Booth in the New York World's Fair which has made it possible for a large number of people to hear about Baba who would not otherwise have had the chance. Our Kitty writes from Myrtle Beach: "Not a day goes by that some new and interesting person writes for further information which is usually the outcome of someone having casually come across the Universal Message in the Fair folder**.

* (divine company)

** now printed also in French, Spanish and German, made possible by Ruth Ringer for free distribution at the Fair.

So, apart from the actual Booth at the N.Y. Fair, the circumference of its influence has spread throughout the States." One devoted family, Barbara, Bob and Barry Fields of Wisconsin (U.S.A.) first heard of Baba thru Ruth Ringer at the N.Y. World's Fair. Eager that others in their State should have the good fortune to be awakened to His Love as they had, they have procured space for a Baba-booth at the Wisconsin State Fair which opens this month! And so the Beloved's message is passed on, from heart to heart

For the Western Sahavas in December 1965, Baba has decided on Ahmednagar - a town about 200 miles from Bombay, and 9 miles from Meherazad. The lovers will be housed and accommodated in Ahmednagar proper, and buses will be arranged for their travelling daily to Meherazad to be with beloved Baba from 9 in the morning to 12 noon. The actual sahavas will thus be held at Meherazad, for three hours daily, for seven days only - from the 23rd to the 29th of December. However, Baba would like all the Western sahavasees to leave Bombay together on the 21st and reach Ahmednagar by the same evening - Adi-Sarosh will make this travelling arrangement for the party by train (in first-class compartments) or by luxury buses. This will give them the whole of the 22nd to settle down in their allotted lodgings at Ahmednagar and have some respite after their long journey to be refreshed and ready for their first visit to the Beloved on 23rd morning. There can be no place more desirable to His lovers for having Baba's sahavas than Meherazad, which has been His abode since 1948. Set in a rural landscape it is an "oasis" in the midst of nowhere, conveying a unique atmosphere of peace; a place where Baba has been in Seclusion for long periods - a place blessed most with the physical presence of God.

The two outstanding problems to be faced in order to make the Sahavas project in Ahmednagar possible, are accommodation and water. Unless the rains come in generous abundance to this water-scarce town, the problem of water supply for the Sahavasees' stay will be more than an acute one. As for accommodation, there is not a single hotel in Ahmednagar that could be even remotely suitable for any Westerner to put up at; (one can go further and say there are no "hotels" for Easterners either!). During discussions of these and various other points with Adi-Sarosh-Villoo, they very understandably remarked that the question of rains was not in their hands! Baba smilingly replied "I will see to that; you see to the accommodation." Ideal for the purpose of accommodation would be, if available, a newly erected one-storeyed building affiliated to the government run Civil Hospital in Ahmednagar, partly to serve as living quarters for the nurses and partly as a future out-patients hospital unit. This big building alone would house about 200 Baba-lovers, and utmost efforts are being made to obtain it for the duration required. Sarosh-Adi have approached top government officials at Bombay and elsewhere in this matter, and are also working on alternative lodging suggestions in case this approach fails. But whichever it turns out to be, although the matter of bare housing is the main and foremost to be dealt with, there is an incredible amount of preparations to follow up in the providing of essential facilities: furnishing the place; procuring linen, servants, sundry provisions; arranging with some good caterers from Poona who can supply meals cooked Western fashion and at reasonable rates. But these of course are simply details which will be managed speedily and happily once the housing question is settled. However, as Villoo says, it means starting from scratch to "create" the equivalent of decent hotels that are simply non-existent in Ahmednagar! And this naturally adds up to the bill of expense that will be incurred. After careful calculation it is proposed, and approved by the Beloved, to fix a total amount of Rs.500/-* per person for the full ten days, from 21st thru 30th December - i.e. from the time you dear ones arrive at Bombay on 21st morning till you reach Bombay air port on 30th evening. This amount to be met by you (of Rs.50/- per day) will include all expenses of your boarding and lodging at Ahmednagar, transport from Bombay to Ahmednagar and back to Bombay, daily transport from Ahmednagar to Meherazad, and also food arrangement at Poona enroute Ahmednagar and Bombay on 21st and 30th. In short, Sarosh-Adi will take charge of the Sahavas party and

* NOTE: Approximate equivalent of Rs.500 : \$ 106.00; £ (Ster.) 38/- ;
£ (Aust.) 47/-

see to all arrangements from 21st morning till you reach Bombay on 30th evening - a total of 10 days. Please note that for His little lovers attending the December Sahavas, i.e. children of 12 years and under, the rate is fixed at half the amount mentioned above.

To meet the official requirements in the conducting of the project, the "Meher Baba Western Sahavas (December 1965) Reception Committee" has been formed. The Hon. Mr. T.S. Bharde, Speaker, Maharashtra Legislature, will serve as chairman; Khan Saheb Sarosh K. Irani as vice-chairman; Mrs. Villoo S. Irani as treasurer; Mr. Adi K. Irani as secretary; and Mr. K.G. Gune, Mr. K.R. Gajwani and Mr. S.R. Sigamporia as members.

Here are some important points for your further attention:-

- 1) This December Western Sahavas is for Baba-lovers only - i.e. for those who are prompted by love for Baba to come to India for His sahavas. It is not meant for the merely interested or curious, who may be accommodating the Sahavas week in their plan to visit India for sightseeing or for the purpose of meeting "saints and masters".
- 2) Several Baba-lovers have asked if they can bring their children with them. Children of about 2 years and over, who can walk about independently, are permitted.
- 3) All those coming are expected to stay for the full period of the Sahavas of seven days.
- 4) Only those who can afford to make the trip, without risking health or job, should do so.
- 5) Baba wants you not to bring gifts for Him or for any of His people.
- 6) Baba wants you dear ones to note carefully, that He wishes all financial dealings for and during your stay in India to be done strictly and legally through the medium of the bank.
- 7) December is one of our winter months, even though the winter in Ahmednagar is often too short or mild for our liking. Although the temperature drops to a marked degree after sunset, it can be quite warm during the midday hours. For your wardrobe I would therefore suggest light clothing but with sufficient woollen accessories (such as jacket, pull-over, stole etc.) which can be conveniently removed during the warm and sunny hours. And, as it can possibly be too sunny, a hat or sunshade is a necessary item.
- 8) Baba lays no restriction in the matter of food during your visit, whether it be non-vegetarian or otherwise.
- 9) You will be supplied (along with all the necessary linen) one blanket each. As this would not suffice when the nights are cold, you are requested to bring one blanket (or rug) with you for your use.
- 10) Ahmednagar does have electricity (although Meherabad has not). However, please include a flashlight (torch) in your luggage. Regarding any electrical equipment you may bring with you for use in Ahmednagar (such as shavers etc.) note that the voltage applicable is 220--230 Volts A.C.

Adi-Sarosh-Villoo need to know as early as possible the number of Baba-lovers who will be coming for the Western Sahavas in December. Those of you who have made your booking or are definitely planning to come, please fill in the form given at the end of this letter, and post it by Air to: Adi K. Irani, King's Road, Ahmednagar (M.S.), India.

ATTENTION U.S.A.: It is Baba's wish that those coming by the N.Y. Charter flight, should send their filled-in forms to Harry (Dr. Harry Kenmore, 121 West 72nd St., New York 23, N.Y.), and he will send them on to Adi in one lot.

The passing away of Charles B. Purdom, one of Baba's earliest followers in England, is a sad loss to the English Group, to His own family and to all of the Baba-family who had come to know him. He died on the 8th July, from a heart attack following an operation for a gall-bladder ailment that he suffered from for some time. When the news reached us through Mollie Eve, beloved Baba sent the following message by cable:

MY DEAR CHARLES IS WITH ME AND HE IS BLESSED IN MY ETERNAL LOVE.
MY LOVE TO ANTONIA AND TO YOU ALL WHO SHARED WITH CHARLES HIS
SERVICE IN MY CAUSE.

Dear Charles leaves behind him the finest memorial any man could have, in the form of his literary works for Baba, among them "The Perfect Master", "God to Man & Man to God", and "The God-Man" recently published. The amount of energy and love that he put into this last book can only be known to Baba, and perhaps to the few who knew him intimately. On the completion of the book Baba sent Charles Purdom a cable saying THE LOVE YOU HAVE PUT INTO WRITING GODMAN HAS MADE ME VERY HAPPY. And Delia deLeon writes: "Charles gave of himself unstintingly in his work for Baba; and in spite of ill health these last few years he was determined to get The God-Man written - and in doing it, he drew so much closer to Baba and clearer in his understanding. We miss him sorely and are sad for ourselves, but rejoice because he is with BABA."

The departing of a dear pet is a heartache known well to the family it belongs to. Such heartache was experienced by the Meherazad family when Peter (the cocker spaniel), our beloved companion of over twelve years, died at Meherazad on July 8 after an incurable illness. Peter breathed his last in beloved Baba's presence, in His bedroom. A few minutes before the end, he feebly wagged his tail in happiness as Baba caressed him. Peter lay "in state" in Baba's room, till the pit was made ready for his burial in line with the seven mango trees of the Madras Mast. Baba had His handkerchief placed on Peter's body with the repeated injunction that it be buried with him exactly as it was. Beloved Baba told us how immeasurably blessed Peter was, for it was the first instance in His present Advent that anyone had thus breathed his last in His physical presence! Baba said that Peter will now take birth in a male human form, in just over a year, and will come to Him as a baby boy to be held in His arms and be cuddled by Him. Knowing all this, yet he is greatly missed by us and by his much loved pal and 'brother' Mastan. Baba says that even He, who is God and knows how truly blessed Peter is, misses Peter's presence as 'Peter'. Every day when we are with Baba, we find ourselves talking of this loyal little Baba-lover and are flooded with reminiscences of his gentle loving companionship, his clever playful pranks, his incredibly 'human' understanding, and above all his devotion to Baba. In his fragrant memory a Champak tree has been planted on his grave, and Baba has ordered a headstone to be placed bearing the words: BABA'S PET, PETER. This epitaph of three words bespeaks Peter's great good fortune in his dog-life with Baba and in the human-lives to come. The most priceless tribute he received from his Master, was when Baba said: "Peter deserves the good fortune that he has received."

Unless there is urgent news or directions to be conveyed to you dear ones regarding the Sahavas, I expect to send out the next letter in October. And may that letter be destined to carry the good news of further improvement in beloved Baba's health, of abundant rains having come to Ahmednagar, and of suitable accommodation obtained for the Westerners' Week with God.

Ever lovingly,

MANI

IMPORTANT : PLEASE SEE THE FORM GIVEN ON NEXT PAGE.

If you are coming to India for the MEHER BABA WESTERN SAHAVAS (December 1965), please fill in this slip and post it by airmail to:

Adi K. Irani, King's Road, Ahmednagar (M.S.), India.

If coming by the New York Charter flight, please send this to:

Dr. Harry Kenmore, 121 West 72nd St., New York 23, N.Y.

NAME (in block letters)

ADDRESS, including Country (in block letters)

.....

Age Nationality

Mode of Travel

Vegetarian food by special arrangement : YES ? / NO ?

Guruprasad, Poona.

15th June, 1965

Dearest Family,

During Avataric ages all mankind and creation unconsciously derive the blessing of God's presence on earth as Avatar, but it remains the great good fortune of a few to receive it consciously. I recall beloved Baba's words: "I come for all, but I am for a few". Of the "few" who received the blessing of the Avatar's darshan at Poona in the first week of May, 1965, were thousands of His lovers from the East - from all over India, from Pakistan, Aden, Iran; as well as a young couple from Australia* and "three wise men" from the U.S.A.** who had Baba's special permission to attend this gathering of Easterners. They all came, these pilgrims journeying solely in love, from far and near, by land, sea and air, for a sight of their Beloved. They will surely remember May time as a time of gladness and madness in God's Love and glory - a time of that divine give-and-take which is the culmination of lifetimes of searching, the privilege of humans and the envy of angels, a gift of God's compassion and grace. Although our "giving" must comprise of the mountainous burden of sanskaras wrapped in a grain of human-measure love, it is an emptying which readies us for the "taking" of His Love that He releases on such occasions.

On 30th April, the night before May-Day when Baba was to give His darshan at the Avatar Meher Baba Poona Centre, Poona had torrential rainfall accompanied by lightning and thunder that rent the night with its din. It was as though the skies were giving a roaring ovation before the curtain of May was lifted to a glaucous dawn, which found Baba-lovers in their thousands flocking to the Centre grounds to await Baba's arrival. As the Centre's Hall could not accommodate more than some hundreds, every bit of the adjoining space was covered with 'pandals' wherein by 7 o'clock the darshaners stood packed in a solid crowd that tailed out over a furlong down the lane and along the main road. It was made up of men and women, young and old, of diverse castes, religions and languages, who cried out with one voice and heart: AVATAR MEHER BABA KI JAI! when the Beloved's car drove up at 8 o'clock. Baba was at the Centre for nearly four hours, so wondrously radiant and smiling; and although it was beyond possibility for more than a section of this massive Baba-crowd to approach Him for darshan, most of them were granted a glorious glimpse of Him from the balcony where they were accommodated in relays. The welcome address, read out by Ramakrishnan, the tireless worker and secretary of the Avatar Meher Baba Poona Centre, was heartwarmingly simple. I give part of it here:

"Beloved of all hearts,

Avatar Meher Baba,

What place is there in which to welcome the One Who is infinite existence, and what can serve as a seat for Him Who contains within Himself all Existence?

"However, in the light of your silent revelation we understand that it is through infinite compassion for mankind, that, responding to the call of human hearts you have clothed yourself in human form as our beloved Baba, so that we can offer God Himself a place and a seat amongst us.

"We welcome you, beloved Baba, not only to this place but also in our hearts, to be enthroned there eternally as our divine Beloved."

* Peter and Helen Rowan.

** Dr. Ben Hayman; Dr. Harry Kenmore; Joseph Harb.

In reply, Baba gave the following message, thru Eruch :

"I am happy that in welcoming me to the Hall which in your love you have built for my work, you are welcoming me to a place in your lives and to a seat in each of your hearts. For it is to live in your hearts and to share in your lives that I have come among you."

A daily feast for the eye and heart were the five days of darshan programme held beneath the huge pandal built in the grounds of Guruprasad. Measuring about 300 by 75 feet, it held more than three thousand chairs. Over its gay canvas top was laid a tin roofing to over the front half as precaution against the rains - an added labour and expense that proved not only unnecessary, but a challenge to the wielders of movie-cameras who did not have sufficient lighting equipment. It had been fascinating for us to watch the labourers erecting the pandal with the primitive facilities at their disposal, from putting up the heavy poles and fixing the endless bamboo framework, to draping billowing yards of materials dazzling with colour. The spot that would hold all the attention and love of the lovers gathered under it, was the softly draped arm-chair placed on the dais (upto its front edge) where Baba would sit every morning from 9 to 11, while each one came by for His darshan. As none was meant to come onto the dais, except our Maharani Shantadevi who was seated at His feet throughout the darshan hours, the surrounding space on the dais was banked with a most artistic arrangement of ferns and flowering shrubs; the two men who laboured in love to make this unique 'garden' had long waited for such an opportunity to serve Him.

By 6.30 in the morning of 2nd May, the first of the five days of darshan at Guruprasad, there was already quite a crowd of men and women and children standing outside the gates, chanting Baba-songs and crying out His JAI, growing in number every minute as more buses and taxis disgorged their occupants who had a date that morning with God. Before long the pavements were swarming with humanity, brimming over on to the road itself. When the gates were opened at 7.30, it was like the bursting of a dam - to see that tide of lovers pouring into Guruprasad was an unforgettable sight! In the movement of that first rapturous rush, some of the women who had been standing in the forefront, went down like nine-pins, and the wonder of it is that none of them was really hurt. When Baba heard of this, He ordered the gates to be left open, so that the darshaners could walk in as they came. And so we saw them hurrying in each darshan morning, a constant stream of lovers young and old, rich and poor, from ministers of state to the toiler in the field, their vocations and mode of dress as varied in range and expression as the notes of a musical composition.

There were those who walked with the support of a stick or helping hand, others who came at a brisk run or strode vigorously with cameras slung from their shoulders; and the children who hopped along in glee or walked solemnly with flower garlands held out ready for offering to Baba. Now we would see a boy on crutches walking with surprising speed, now a crippled young woman being wheeled in a chair; next in view would come a scattering of sadhus in ochre robes, men with venerable beards and turbans, women in saris of fascinating colours with youngsters of all ages trailing along. Many of the women carried babes in their arms, a number of them barely a month old! We were filled with wonder at the love and faith of these mothers who came from long distances with their little ones, braving nights and days of travel in the unbelievably crowded Indian trains. One young mother from the district of Hamirpur brought along her first-born, a 15 days old girl, because (she told us) she wanted to give her child the greatest thing there was on earth - Baba's darshan. Nearly 1500 lovers came from the state of Andhra; many of them by train in reserved tourist-carriages, some by bus. From Hamirpur, eight chartered buses brought part of the 700 coming from that district to Poona. Every village and town that these Baba-buses wound through, every city they crossed, every place they halted at, rang with the music of Baba's Name, echoed with the chorus of His JAI that cascaded from each passing bus. Bumping cheerfully along the hot dusty roads, the crammed occupants went on singing the May-Darshan song, a dynamic piece composed by one of them for this great occasion; it was also printed on leaflets which they distributed to the people in many towns on the way.

The longest journeying for this May-Darshan proved to be that of the lovers from Iran - eleven days from their starting-point (Shiraz & Teheran), travelling via train, crossing three frontiers and surmounting incredible obstacles on the way. Among this group of eight from Iran, were a young doctor and his lovely wife, a wiry looking man whose love for Baba flowed silently from his eyes, a strong peasant-featured woman who knelt at His feet and sobbed her heart out in love, a bonny youngster of about 4, and a tiny old woman whose withered face flowed with the sun of His Love every time she looked at Him or spoke of Him. And thus I could write on, touching individually on the many who were destined to be in His Presence at this lovers' gathering. For us who find ourselves in the ocean of His daily companionship, to witness the individual adoration of a multitude is to perceive some measure of the unfathomable depths of His Love.

Seated in His chair on the dais, wearing His white robe and a garland of flowers, Baba looked radiant throughout the long hours of darshan-time each day, His God-smile shining on the sea of lovers before Him. The gathering was obviously larger than the seating accommodation provided, for filling the seemingly endless rows of chairs it overflowed into the passageways outside the pandal, and (on the first day) trailed off to the gate in a long line of men who stood under the blazing sun patiently awaiting their turn. Beloved Baba's message for all, read out over the mike before the darshan started, was :

"All these years I used to embrace you, my lovers,
and bow down to your love for me. Now I cannot embrace
you, so I allow you to bow down to my Love for you."

Every one of them was given the opportunity to bow down to His Love that surpasses all understanding - His Love that gave no thought to what it cost His physical body which was racked with pain, and immensely fatigued after each darshan session. Because the lovers were many and the days were few, Baba gave of Himself for longer hours each morning and also for over an hour every afternoon. Even this seemed not enough, and on the third day Baba had Eruch announce over the mike that henceforth there would be no messages or announcements given, and no reciting of the Master's Prayer (which had so far been the first item every morning) - there would be no time for it! "There is but one threshold of the Beloved, and there are thousands of heads to bow down on it in obeisance" - this line from an Urdu ghazal by an ancient mystic might have been penned for this May-Darshan! All through the darshan-hours, men and women in alternate queues were seen endlessly passing by across the bamboo passageway, inching their way to the feet of the Beloved, thereon to lay their heads in love and obeisance. One by one they approached Him, and with upturned faces animated with the glow of His presence, stood before Him for a moment that embraced eternity. As each placed his or her head on His feet, along with the garlands and babies they had brought with them, some bathing His feet with tears and kisses, He acknowledged their love with folded hands held to His breast or touched to His forehead. It was a profound gesture that brought to life the symbol: Mastery in Servitude. Smiling His Love on some, bowing His head to others, now asking after someone's health or work, now caressing the face of a child held aloft to Him, He was Father, Friend and Beloved to all. Those seated in the backmost rows were unable to see Him clearly in His chair. Baba did not forget them. So that they could have a clearer glimpse of Him, He would now and then stand up with the support of the mandali, and remain standing for some moments with arm raised in greeting and blessing. Every time this happened, a wave of joyous exclamations swelled and swept across the packed pandal. The first time that Baba thus stood up, the congregation stood up as one man, till it was explained that this was for the benefit of the ones in the rear and so Baba wished them all to remain seated. Lord of His lovers and Slave of their love, Baba was equally available to all. Here before the Highest of the High there were no distinctions of 'high' or 'low', of caste or colour, religion or social status. All differences being drowned in the ocean of His Love, the sole status of one and all was that they were lovers of God.

On the morning of 6th May, after the Arti was sung, Baba left the stage (as the dais was referred to) amidst a tumult of love-cheers from the standing multitude. It was the last darshan program - or so we thought! Pretty soon it was plain that there were yet some hundreds hungering for their share, including teenagers who had been in the middle of their school or college exams during the six days - thus daily we found the verandah of Guruprasad jammed with darshan-seekers. Baba allowed three more days of grace, during which He gave darshan to groups of lovers crowded into the mandali's hall, mornings & afternoons. He gave a special afternoon to the "workers" and "volunteers" - those of the Poona Centre who had shouldered the unenviable task of seeing to the innumerable details involved in this gigantic Darshan arrangement, and others from different places who served as guides and helpers during the gatherings.

And so one and all received of His Love which had drawn them to Him from far and near. Beloved Baba's message to them, read out on the first day in the Guruprasad pandal, said:

"I am happy to see you all; I am touched
that many of you have come from distant parts
at no small sacrifice to be in my presence
for a few hours.

"Devotees spend their lifetime savings and even
risk life itself in pilgrimages to bow down before
God in forms sanctified by tradition. And their
rewards are according to tradition.

"But you have journeyed to bow down before God
who has taken human form because of love. And
your reward will be according to love."

And now our thoughts turn inevitably to the next memorable event that the year 1965 will give birth to: the Sahavas meant exclusively for Baba's Western lovers. Apart from saying that it will take place end of December (most likely beginning from the 23rd), and almost certainly in Ahmednagar, Baba has not yet specified the plans or details concerning it. The next letter coming to you by end of August will carry the general outline of the Sahavas plan, filled in with whatever instructions and directions He wishes conveyed to you dear ones in regard to it. We leave with beloved Baba for Meherazad on 1st July. As Baba wishes to remain absolutely undisturbed, He directs that letters (from the East or the West), whether addressed to Him or to those residing with Him, must not be read to Him. Accordingly, we will be unable to attend to any correspondence received for Baba's attention. However, in case of emergency, you may send a cable addressed directly to: MEHERBABA, AHMEDNAGAR. And, I'm sure you do not need my reminder that the cables must be accompanied by reply-prepaid forms.

We will have unpacked and settled down in the old Meherazad routine just in time to meet another 10th of July, the 40th anniversary of His Silence. Baba's wishes for all His lovers everywhere who will observe the Day, are being sent out in a Circular issued from the Ahmednagar Office by Adi. I reproduce it here for the attention of you each of His Western family:

On the 10th of July 1965, the 40th anniversary of His Silence, Avatar Meher Baba wishes all who love and obey Him and all who would want to do so, to observe complete Silence for 24 hours beginning from midnight of the 9th of July to midnight of the 10th of July, in accordance with the local time.

Those who, for practical reasons, find that it is not possible to observe silence for the 24 hours on Saturday the 10th of July 1965 should instead observe complete fast for twelve hours on that day, from 8.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. During this fast nothing must be consumed - not even water. Those who are fasting for the 12 hours on July 10th, should also observe partial fast in the morning from 6.00 a.m. to 8.00 a.m. by taking only one cup of tea or coffee, before beginning their complete fast at 8.00 a.m.

Baba sends His Love Blessing to each one of His lovers for the Silence Day.

To wrap up this letter carrying beloved Baba's Love to you, there can be no material more substantial or beautiful than His message given to His lovers on May 3rd, 1965 :

"This time of your being with me, I do not intend giving you a lot of words to exercise your minds. I want your minds to sleep so that your hearts may awaken to my love.

"You have had enough of words, I have had enough of words. 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 been always longing to hear."

Ever lovingly,

MANI

Guruprasad, Poona.
14th - 21st April 1965

Dearest Family,

Greetings to you from the heart of Guruprasad, which throbs once again with the presence of beloved Baba.

We left Meherazad on the morning of 30th March, reaching Poona long before noon. Baba's car did not stop at any of the usual Baba-halts at Ahmednagar and on the way, but groups of His lovers could be seen standing by the wayside, bowing silently as the car sped by or waving god-speed to God, or crying out: Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai! (Hail! Avatar Meher Baba). Among the very few privileged to receive Baba on arrival at Guruprasad, was our Siamese cat of the nine names, who ran to Him with loud welcoming meows; and later when Baba came over from the mandali's hall in His little wheeled chair, the cat was seated on His lap, looking demurely up at us from its place of honour.

"Will it - won't it - will it - won't it" seemed synonymous with the heartbeats of Baba's eastern lovers as the month of March drew nearer and magnified their hopes & fears of whether or not they would see their Beloved this May. Baba has given the final nod, making the darshan a certainty, even though the length of its time has been shortened from 15 days to 6 days. On March 7, a circular was issued from the Ahmednagar office by Adi, from which I quote:

"Avatar Meher Baba directs me to let all His lovers (Easterners) know that He will give Darshan in Poona for only 6 days, from 1st May to 6th May 1965, despite His very weak health.

"Baba says that His universal work has increased manyfold and His universal suffering has also increased proportionately, and this is now telling greatly upon His physical health. But Baba also says, 'This body will not drop till one year after I break my silence. What could be more glorious than my suffering for all humanity!'

"Besides the continuous pain in His hip-joint and His inability to walk freely, He has had since the last many months pain in the cervical spine, i.e. in the nape of the neck and extending down to the shoulders. Of late the pain has become intense.

"The point of view of the doctors who have been attending Baba recently, is that He should NOT give Darshan at all in May. Notwithstanding their opinion, Baba wants to give His darshan to His lovers. And so the doctors have urged Baba to at least restrict the days and hours of darshan, and not to allow His lovers to approach Him too closely in order to avoid any jerky movement to His neck caused inadvertently."

Of the six days of darshan, the first day will be at the A.M.B. Poona Centre Hall, from 8 to 11 in the morning. The following five days will be in the grounds of Guruprasad, at the site where the East-West gathering was held in November 1962, under a similar (but more rain-proof!) 'pandal' erected to hold the large East-gathering. The dais for beloved Baba too will be in the same place as then, but smaller in size as the lovers will not be receiving His embrace or garlanding Him. It will in fact be a "darshan" in the literal sense, for Baba has permitted His lovers to bow down on His feet. As a rule this has been forbidden, at Baba's express wish; and over the years at different gatherings, big and small, we have known the mandali go hoarse from repeatedly calling out "Please do NOT bow down - do NOT touch His feet", though not often succeeding in stemming the flow of this spontaneous expression of homage on the part of the Indian lovers. For this May darshan Baba does not only condone it, He fully permits it. As stated in the circular: "During the Darshan hours, none should seek to have Baba's embrace or to touch Him except His Feet. Those who bring garlands should be content to place them at His feet. This time Baba will permit all

to bow down on His feet during the opportunity given to His lovers on any of the 6 days." The last direction in the circular reads: "Baba wishes His lovers, when they approach Him, to receive in silence the Love which He will give them through His Silence."

At the time of writing this, the Beloved's cervical pain continues. Like His compassion, His suffering is beyond all understanding. Dr. Ram Ginde* of Bombay, a man of fine spiritual qualities and one of the top-most neuro-surgeons of India who is utterly devoted to Baba, has for some time been treating Him for this painful cervical condition, with all the skill and love he possesses. When, on one of his recurrent visits to Meherazad, Dr. Ginde expressed his distress and surprise at the stubbornness of the pain, beloved Baba patted him lovingly on the arm and said "Don't worry. It is all by My will. I alone know the cause of my pain, and it will go away after July. All the same I want you to go on doing your best to lessen it", (adding after a while) "and I will do my best to increase it"! And of course the mandali could not help saying "We hope you win, Doctor!" If Baba allows him to "win" even to the extent of affording some percentage of relief, it will be because of Dr. Ginde's love and whole-hearted service, for the doctor realizes as we do that this pain is an outward reflection of His unseen burden. Baba has told the mandali more than once, "It is but the (yoke of) universal suffering round my neck" - and indeed, the surgical collar that He wears seems to us painfully symbolical of this fact. I am reading that tremendous book, "The Nazarene" by Sholem Asche, and was struck by the aptness of a passage in it that refers to the suffering of the Messiah: "He takes all sorrows on himself of his own will. It is within his choice to refuse to bear them, for all the power is in his hand. But he will not use it; he will bow his neck to the yoke, even as the Prophet has written of him". Thus spoke the disciple of Jesus Christ among themselves, even before His crucifixion on the cross. And we are reminded of Baba's own words to Dr. Harry Kenmore at Guruprasad last summer: "I carry the universal burden, and I suffer physically, mentally and spiritually. My physical suffering is seen by those around me. My mental suffering is intense, infinite. As for my spiritual suffering, it is ad infinitum. When I break my silence, it will be the end of suffering."

About the December sahasas for His Western lovers, Baba wants me to say that it will take place. The details concerning dates, and the place where the sahasas will be held (whether in Bombay or Ahmednagar) will be sent to you later from Meherazad. Beloved Baba also wants me to add that He was touched by the love that came from you all in the Birthday cables, and He sends His Love & Blessing to you each. The Birthday greetings from His little ones twinkled brightest in the heavens of Baba's Love. A colour-splashed drawing by five year old Terry Hassan of California, seemed to capture His entire creation ranged round a central universal heart. Her mother's letter explained: "I asked Terry to draw a picture of all the things she thought Baba was. She did, and said 'Baba is more than the sun, stars, flowers, rainbow, but I can't draw them all.' Then she looked at me and said 'Baba is a HEART really'! She knows so much at 5 years, more than I do." It is not of course that we have so much to learn, but so much to unlearn before we can know Him with the clear vision of a child's love!

To the Meherazad family, Baba's Birthday was a day of simple rejoicing; but it could not be called a "quiet" day, for the echoes of the intense activities at Baba-Centres everywhere kept it vibrantly humming. As Eruch said in his letter to Maharani Shantadevi "The month of February has been a very busy month as usual, but this year the rush of cables, telegrams, phone-calls and letters received and answered, was too great and kept us breathlessly occupied. The Baba-birthday celebrations have been on a very, very grand scale at most of the Avatar Meher Baba Centres, while beloved Baba remained aloof from any celebration in the seclusion of Meherazad, bearing upon Himself the suffering of humanity." To give even an outline of all the different activities at all the different places that were launched in the Beloved's Cause, is not possible in the space of a letter. And, my problem in trying to report

* pronounced Ginday (the 'g' as in good).

just this or that activity is similar to that of the Indian housewife whose kitchen shelf is stacked too high with cooking utensils - if she tries to take down a particular lid or vessel, the whole pile may topple on her! However, I can begin safely with the one nearest to us, by telling you of Begum Akhtar's unexpected visit with Baba at Meherazad on the Birthday morn. Part of the magnificent celebrations arranged by the Ahmednagar Centre, was a singing program by this great singer on 25th night. And on that morning she came to Meherazad and sang some special ghazals to Baba - it was her personal offering of love to Him which He called His "best birthday present"! Tired as she was after the long train journey, and the strenuous weeks of constant singing engagements at various places, Begum sang as superbly as ever. When Baba told her that her voice was matchless, she said "It is all your grace Baba, there is nothing else." Baba showed concern for her tired health and told her to take good rest that afternoon. Her tear-filled reply was "My rest is only at Your feet!"

Giving food and clothing and service to the needy in His compassionate Name has by now become an established feature of nearly all the Baba-Birthday programs. This year it was an occasion for the Masulipatam Centre (in Andhra Pradesh) to inaugurate the "Avatar Meher Baba Free Dispensary", its expenses and services being contributed by His lovers there. Sending His Love & Blessing for the opening of the dispensary, beloved Baba said "Feed Me and clothe Me and tend Me in the poor". The month-end report of the dispensary's running showed that over fifteen hundred men, women & children, were able to receive its medical service; and although this is but a mite compared to India's agonizingly needy masses, it is mighty in being an expression of Baba's Love, a channel of His blessing to the sick. The doctor in charge is a Baba-lover who gives his free time in serving at the dispensary, both mornings and evenings; and even the recent death of his wife did not keep him absent from his voluntary post. As the doctor explained, his staying away could not have pleased his wife, for it would have been a disservice to the Avatar's cause!

A great and novel idea was conceived and carried out by His Vijayawada lovers: an Exhibition depicting Baba's life and work, arranged in a big hall in the centre of the city, open to the public. Sarosh & Villoo, conveyors of Baba's Love during their recent visit to Andhra State, spoke of it ecstatically. They said it was not just the accomplishment of the idea that they were impressed with, but the beautifully effected arrangement and artistic workmanship. Harmoniously grouped were series of pictures, photograph albums and portraits of beloved Baba showing different phases of His life and activities, as well as Baba-books and literature and enlarged replicas of the Charts appearing in "God Speaks". One section of the hall held perfect models of Meherabad Hill, the Tomb, Dhuni, and Meherasthan. Displayed among the many articles personally associated with Baba, were His used 'sadra' (white robe), coat, sandals, alphabet-board, cushion, the cricket bat & ball and the marbles He had played with. Large paintings showing Baba washing the leper, feeding the poor, and seated among His lovers, were cut out and arranged tableau-fashion, giving a startlingly realistic effect. Sarosh-Villoo said that everywhere they went in Vijayawada they were confronted with pictures of beloved Baba, appearing on huge posters printed in commemoration of His Birthday and put up at all the public places and thoroughfares. At the end of the detailed account of their unforgettable Andhra tour, Sarosh smilingly remarked that it would not be surprising if in time Andhra Pradesh came to be known as "Meher Pradesh"!

It is gratifying to see how those who steer the country's progress are being awakened more and more to beloved Baba and to the crying need for His message of Love and Truth. This year too, a number of leaders and distinguished people took part in celebrating Baba's Birthday on 25th February. Notes gathered from Eruch's file, give some idea of this:

In Delhi: Shri Subramaniam (Union Minister for Food & Agriculture), inaugurated the function; Shri Kamath, M.P., was the speaker; and Shri Humayun Kabir (Minister for Petroleum & Chemicals) presided. There were other speakers for the occasion, including Members of Parliament. The program was broadcast from AIR Delhi the same night.

In Bombay: The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Shri T. Bharade, presided at the grand function held in Sundarabai Hall from 6.00 to 9.00 p.m.

In Bangalore: Shri Vaikunta Baliga, the Speaker of Mysore Legislative Assembly presided.

In Hyderabad: Barrister Das was specially invited from Calcutta to preside over the eminent gathering in which Shri M.R. Appa Rao, Minister for Excise, Prohibition and Social Welfare, played a very prominent part. The Chief Ministers of the states of Andhra and Mysore were to have presided over the functions in Hyderabad and Bangalore, but they had to attend an urgent conference at Delhi on the National Language.

Baba's Eastern lovers, wherever they were gathered in His Love on His Birthday, received from Him the following message:

ALL TALK ABOUT THE PATH AND THE GOAL
IS AS A LANTERN CARRIED BY A BLIND MAN.
A BLIND MAN NEEDS A STAFF IN HIS HAND;
THE SEEKER NEEDS HIS HAND IN GOD-MAN'S.

- MEHERBABA -

"I say unto you that he who believes in Me shall have everlasting life." This message from the Ancient One, who alone has the authority to give it to mankind throughout the ages, is resurrected again in the ancient land of Jerusalem. Rising from the dust-covered centuries of the past into the spring-fresh present, it has blossomed in a book in Hebrew entitled MEHER BABA SAYS. The first of its kind, this great little book is published in Jerusalem by Carrie Ben Shammai, one who has been blessed to carry the flame of Baba's Love into the heart of Israel. It contains a number of Baba's discourses, compiled and translated into Hebrew by her husband Mr. M.H. Ben Shammai, an eminent scholar who has translated a number of literary works. The cable from beloved Baba to dear Carrie, said: The book "Meher Baba Says" has made me very happy. I send my Love Blessing to you and to your husband and to all my lovers in Israel.

The approaching footsteps of May are heard & felt in the many movements around us, as preparations for the May Darshan are being speeded up. The compound of Guruprasad is a hive of workmen putting up poles & canvas for the darshan pandal (awning), working on the erection of the dais, planning the arrangement for thousands of chairs, for loud-speakers and other details. All available accommodation within practical distance of Guruprasad, appears to have been reserved by Baba-lovers from out-stations far in advance - hotels, inns, school premises and 'karyalayas' (halls rented out for weddings and auspicious functions) which will serve as dormitories for hundreds of darshaners. By the end of March, Baba-lovers approaching hotel managers for room reservations, were told regretfully that they were fully booked up by "Meher Baba's party"! Two thousand of them, from various parts of India and from Pakistan, Iran & Aden, have been able to ensure for themselves some arrangement or the other for the stay in Poona; while efforts continue frantically to meet further requests pouring in. The lovers from Andhra & Hamirpur coming in groups of hundreds, are working out their problem of mass-conveyance by reserving train-bogies and chartering buses. And perhaps by the time this letter reaches you, they will all have converged, from all points in the East, at the feet of The One who is the centre of their lives, whose Love is the sole reality of their existence. May they receive in full, the Love which the Beloved will give them through His silence.

Ever lovingly,

MANDLI

Meherazad
29th January 1965.

Dearest Family,

Greetings from your Meherazad family for a glorious 1965 in Baba's Love - may we be blessed to sing His glory that our voice may reach the hearts of all yet unawakened to our Father in heaven and on earth. May our prayer to the Highest of the High be as that of the ancient mystic, whose words we hear sometimes over the radio while seated at breakfast with Him:

Take my life and let it be
Consecrated Lord to Thee.
Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of Thy Love.
Take my moments and my days
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.
Take my feet and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee.
Take my voice and let it sing
Always only for my King.
Take my lips and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee.
Take my silver and my gold
Not a mite would I withhold.
Take my intellect and use
All its powers as Thou shalt choose.
Take my will for it is Thine,
It shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart it is Thine own,
It shall be Thy royal throne.
Take my love, my Lord, and pour
At Thy feet its endless store.
Take my self and it shall be
Ever, only, all for Thee.

These lines shine with a living significance, when reflected through the activities of His lovers in many parts of the East and in the West in their endeavour to carry His Love to as many as possible. With the rising momentum of work being accomplished everywhere in beloved Baba's cause, it is difficult for one to keep track of all that is being done; whereas for me to try to capture it in the form of a letter is an impossible task! Like the fingers of the morning sun picking out the folds in the surface of a mountain, I can but touch fleetingly on some of the activities.

One of the most recent and outstanding in our memory is the MEHER PURI MELA at Hamirpur town, in the north of India, where a unique idea has been launched in the Beloved's name. A number of Hamirpur lovers of Baba have purchased plots totalling a large area of land, on which to build their homes as and when possible. In the centre they have laid a foundation for the putting up of a life-size marble statue in the likeness of beloved Baba, and the land immediately surrounding it will be made into a small park. 'Puri' means a sanctified settlement for a community. The 'Meher Puri' embraces people of different communities, regardless of caste or creed, the bond uniting them being Baba's Love. The occasion was inaugurated amidst a huge gathering of Baba-lovers from all over Hamirpur district and different parts of India. Those who went from Bombay, Poona and other places, returned filled with rapture and wonder at Baba's presence and love felt by them during their five days' stay "in another world" as they put it. Our Jimmy Mistry, whose wife was among the Hamirpur pilgrims, wrote of the Bombay group on its return: "They are still in the Meher-Puri Mela daze, and there is no end to their amazement at the overwhelming love for Baba that they experienced there!" And indeed, Baba Himself had said to those of His lovers from Poona and elsewhere who visited Meherazad, "If you want to see me and witness my Love, go to Hamirpur - I will be there."

The Mela (Fair) included a variety of musical, poetical and dance programs, arranged to attract the public too in large numbers - and if from among the multitude that did attend a handful are awakened to Baba's Love, His work is done. A constant source of wonder to the visiting Baba-lovers was the easy and efficient way the tremendous management of the five days' Meher Puri Mela was carried out despite fantastic financial handicap - but if the Hamirpur lovers are far from rich in pocket, they are millionaires in faith! When the stalwart Baba-workers who were in charge of the management were asked "How do you do it?", they replied, "We don't. It is The Silent One sitting quietly in Meherazad who does it all." When Bhau first wrote to Pukar to say that Baba would want them to plan the Mela on a solid basis and not leave matters 'in the air', the reply came to the effect: How can anything we plan or attempt be solid - our plans must perforce be 'castles in the air', and it is but the weight of Baba's Love that brings them down to earth for us in fulfilment.

All over Andhra Pradesh (a large state in south India) the banner of His Name is ever kept unfurled and held aloft by the unflickering zeal & faith of His many lovers there, and more Baba-Centres have blossomed in the state of Andhra than anywhere else. Among the big projects in progress and in plan, is the one to be held at Kovvur on beloved Baba's 71st birthday, at MEHERSTHAN. Koduri Krishna Rao & his family, who were blessed to build this "Abode of Meher" have now put up an adjoining building to serve as "guest house" for those constantly pouring in from different places to visit Mehersthan. To inaugurate the Guest-House in His Name, Baba has once again appointed Sarosh & Viloo - it will be their first visit to Andhra, and their first experience of the unbounded love of Baba's Andhra-family. Koduri Krishna Rao is hoping later on to establish there a Free Dispensary for the needy and a school for poor children, in Baba's love & service - for has He not said "By loving and serving the least of mine, you are loving and serving Me."

Beloved Baba's message to all His lovers, for His 71st Birthday, the 25th of February 1965, is:

BE TRUE TO THE TRUST I REPOSE IN YOU
AND REMEMBER ME WHOLEHEARTEDLY.
MY LOVE AND BLESSING TO YOU.

Every day is Baba's Birthday, in many parts of Andhra Pradesh, particularly in Hyderabad & Secunderabad; and also in the city and suburbs of Bombay. Since the 17th of December, the lovers there have begun a seventy-one days program in honour of His 71st birthday - gathering each day at the home of a different Baba-lover, in a different part of the city or town, singing His bhajans and Arti, showing Baba-films, holding public meetings. A delightful part of one such program was a drama in Telugu played entirely by children. This was in Kakinada, the play entitled "Meher Prema" (Baba's Love), and the players were mostly the grandchildren of the secretary of the Avatar Meher Baba Centre in Kakinada. The play represents people of different religions, and these are the words of a song that appears in the last scene:

Sing, O sing Meher's name!
Ring, heart-bells, His boundless fame.
He is God and He is man,
At His nod the world began.
He is Truth and all Beauty.
He is True Infinity.

Further reports on the activities of different Baba-Centres you will gather from DIVYA VANI, that invaluable Baba-magazine in English. This bi-

monthly magazine is the fruit of the untiring efforts of Swami Satyaprakash Udaseen, its Editor.* By subscribing to it you will not only be helping him to carry on this labour of love, you will be helping yourselves to a feast of Baba-news.

Bombay was the scene of tremendous religious pomp and fervour during the 38th International Eucharistic Congress held there last year, beginning from 28th November and later attended by Pope Paul VI. As the mass of humanity from all over India and abroad poured into this already overcrowded metropolis and flocked in hundreds of thousands to attend the Congress in the Name of Christ, it seemed fair ground for the Baba-lovers of Bombay to scatter the seeds of beloved Baba's message amongst this multitude. As one put it "We should not want posterity to point the finger of blame at us for not telling them that the Second Advent they await has come to pass and that Christ is in our midst in person." Sorabjee Siganporia of the Avatar Meher Baba Bombay Centre, wrote "I thought to myself that the means to spread Beloved Baba's message is now at hand, and it is up to us to find ways of doing it successfully." And successfully it was done, with many hands at the plough working day & night, surmounting incredible obstacles on the way. 16,000 brochures (on the pattern of the World's Fair Baba-folders) were printed at Jimmy's printing press in record time, and despite various official restrictions these were distributed individually by hand to thousands of Catholics, including cardinals, bishops and foreign delegates. One coincidence that struck us as most interesting was the time of the Pope's landing in India on the evening of 2nd December - it was the month, the day, the hour, and almost the minute, of the Beloved's car accident eight years ago!

At the same time, headed by the Dalai Lama, a large congregation of Buddhists met at Sarnath (near the pilgrim city of Benares in north India), a place we stayed at with Baba during the New Life. I quote from Eruch's letter to a Baba-lover in Bombay, dated 2nd Dec. '64:

"Bombay must be very full with the influx of lacs of visitors from all parts of the world for the 38th International Eucharistic Congress, and Sarnath too is overcrowded with Buddhists from all over congregating there to attend the seventh conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists. But these huge crowds, when compared with the gathering of Baba-lovers at Hamirpur, appear to me as huge mounds of chaff that collect after the Harvester has reaped His crop and separated the grain for His barn! It must be very amusing for beloved Baba to witness the delightful game of 'hide and seek' that is played in India today in the holy name of the Ancient One. On the one hand the Eucharistic Congress in Bombay proclaims the presence of the Christ in spirit, and on the other hand the World Buddhist Conference in Sarnath revives the memorable advent of Lord Buddha and His first sermon 2552 years ago! It is not surprising that such significant events should take place whilst the same Ancient One in His present advent on Earth remains at Meherazad hidden from the masses. He seems to take delight in watching His children play hide and seek in His holy Name while He remains silent and aloof, so near at hand and yet far from being found. This, Baba stresses, is His divine game - 'Leela'!

"Beloved Baba says that it is of great significance to find so many Catholics from all over the world headed by the Pope, and so many Buddhists from all over the world headed by the Dalai Lama, to have congregated at the same time in two different places in India during His present Advent.

"They have gathered together from different parts of the world to commemorate the past advents of the same one Avatar who was the Buddha and the Christ. But little do they realize that the same Avatar is now in their

* "Meher Vihar", 3-6-417 Post Office Street, Himayatnagar, Hyderabad-29 (Andhra Pradesh), India.

midst in flesh and blood! They will return to their countries carrying with them a feeling of satisfaction for having made the trip to India to participate in the great events of the day. But alas the seekers and the One sought for will continue to play the game of 'hide and seek'. Blessed will be the day when some of the seekers in this game are blessed by the grace of beloved Baba to recognize Him as the Avatar of the age. That day will truly be the day of the Holy Eucharist and the pilgrims' pilgrimage to this land hallowed by the Avatar will then be truly sanctified."

"Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for such is the kingdom of Heaven." To witness the little ones of Baba's family express their spontaneous adoration for Him is an experience to cherish forever. Our hearts bow in humility and wonder to see their intrinsic acceptance of His Godhood, their trust in Him, their remembrance of Him at play or school, their complete assurance of His Love. It will never be possible for me to put down all the touching episodes of the children's love for Baba that we hear frequently from parents and friends, but I must share with you our latest experience of a child's love, of 7 year old Shireen who is beloved Baba's niece. She is the daughter of Baba's youngest brother, Adi Jr., who has settled down in England since many years, and who came for a visit to India last month with his wife and two children, all devoted to Baba. To watch Shireen's 'romance' with Baba, at every visit to Meherazad, has been an unending joy to us all. When Baba told her that He loved her, she went over and said in His ear: 'I love you even more!' Whatever gift she would receive from dear Mehera or us, whether sweets or toys, she'd run to offer it first to Him; and to please her Baba would partake of the sweets and play with the toys. She had a long list of questions in her mind to ask of Baba, saying "Only God can explain these things to me". And Baba, the Compassionate Father, did explain them to her. There is not room here to put down all of Shireen's questions and Baba's answers, so I give a few:

"Baba, I know we are born again and again, but you are God so how is that you get born?"

"Once in a while God takes birth because of His Love for His creation. I am born in human form so that you may see me as you are, and if you are fortunate to know me and love me then some day you will see me as I really am."

"You are in all of us, then are we all in you Baba?"

"Baba nodded, "Yes, that is so."

"We are your children, then why can't we stay with you?"

"If you love me, then I am with you wherever you are staying."

"If I didn't love you Baba - oh I'm not saying I don't, because I do love you! - but just supposing I didn't, then it wouldn't be my fault would it Baba? It would be because you didn't want me to love you?"

"Yes, it is all my Will. My Will governs the creation. You love me because I want you to love me."

"You are beautiful and so merciful, then why did you create snakes and scorpions?"

Baba smiled and pointed to Eruch for an answer. Eruch said "God has created such things so that in our fear we call out to Him and remember Him." This answer obviously did not satisfy her, and she countered: "But God is all-powerful, so He can make us remember Him direct, instead of through nasty things as snakes & scorpions!" Then, with Eruch interpreting His gestures, Baba explained to her:

"You, Shireen, are so pretty and sweet, yet when you sit on the potty you bring out what is dirty and stinking. Why do you do it? Because it is necessary - and moreover it keeps you well & pretty. And so are all things in God's creation necessary. Both good and bad are mine." This answer was immediately acceptable to the child, as was testified by her deep sigh of satisfaction and the happy look on her face.

Among the few luxuries that have a part in life at Meherazad is our transistor radio; and the programs that we never miss are the frequent talks given by Sardar Amarsingh Saigal (M.P.), relayed from different stations of India. The topics vary, based on the national need of the day - emphasising honesty, integrity, brotherhood and love, and woven throughout with beloved Baba's sayings. Seated by the dim light of the kerosene lamp, we gather round our little transistor and listen to our Saigalji's clear vibrant voice, feeling thrilled every time we hear him say: "And, Meher Baba says....." We usually count the number of times the Beloved's name recurs; and once, in a 15 minute talk over the Air, we heard it ten times! Amarsingh Saigal has also been giving talks on Baba at various Baba-Centres. Recently he had occasion to have Baba's darshan at Meherazad, and then gave a talk at Ahmednagar to a packed audience of over five thousand. The glowing reports of this program received from Adi & Sarosh who were in charge of the arrangements, made Baba happy.

Hearing of the sahasas for the Western Baba-lovers expected to be held in December this year, some have expressed the hope that it be held in Ahmednagar instead of at Bombay. And, if the light hint Baba has let drop once in a while can be taken as a clue, it seems quite possible that Ahmednagar may be decided upon for the Western gathering in December. But there is much water yet to flow by in the rushing stream of time, and His final decision and the necessary details will be conveyed to you dear ones later on. Some time after Baba's Birthday, Adi will send out a circular to all in the East concerning the May darshan for Easterners. And this I think is the right place for me to clear up a point many Baba-lovers seem uncertain about, and that is if a greeting can be sent to the Beloved for His Birthday. Yes, it is alright to do so, by a cable or telegram.

The love from you that flowed in at Christmas time, in cables and greeting cards, has reached its Source. Beloved Baba sends His Love to you each.

No Christmas carol is sweeter than the one that is sung by an awakened heart - and here is one from a "new" lover of Baba in the U.S.A. who heard of Him recently at the Baba-booth in the New York World's Fair. He wrote to dear Fred & Ella Winterfeldt: "On this, my first 'Christmas with Baba' I am so happy I could shout for joy. For so many Christmas-times I sought Him but could not find Him. The abstract concept of God was not enough. I wanted Him in human form; and now, in Meher Baba, I have found Him. He is now so real, so warm and human, so close to me. He is now so real to me that I almost expect Him to pop around the corner at any moment, so grand, so loving, with that twinkle in His eye - and that warm embrace. How I envy you who have experienced this in the flesh! And yet I am grateful that I have found Him in spirit. Oh my friends, His Love in me is so great that it flows forth to you who helped me to find Him."

And from the heart of an "old" lover of Baba in New Zealand, who was among the East-West Gathering in Poona, came the following greeting in his Christmas card to the Beloved: "Glory to God in the Highest! May the light of the living Christ shine in the heart of all mankind. May the love of God which passeth all understanding ease the suffering of the Highest of the High. Beloved Baba, Ocean of Love, love to you and all with you this time of Christ, from drops in distant New Zealand."

You will find that this letter is longer than usual, but so is the time that has elapsed since the last letter - and the next one is bound to be equally or more delayed. We expect to leave for Guruprasad, Poona, on the 1st of April, to return to Meherazad at the end of June. I pray my next letter carries cheering news concerning beloved Baba's health and the fulfilment of His lovers' longing for His darshan.

Ever lovingly,

MANDLI

NOTE: Adi Arjani of Karachi (Pakistan) has issued, for Baba's 71st Birthday occasion, a handsomely bound Diary for 1965. Carrying Baba's picture with His message given for it, it has a saying of Baba on each page and a number of articles. Combining utility with the beauty of the Beloved's words, it is a Baba-Diary all would want to possess.

Another Birthday publication none of you would want to miss is the booklet entitled "Meher Baba, The Compassionate Father", brought out by Dr. Hoshang Bharucha of Navsari. It is a compilation of various anecdotes by Baba-lovers, drawn from their experiences, and gives us a precious glimpse of Baba's compassion as reflected in the lives of men and women who have come within the orbit of His encompassing Love.

The addresses are, respectively:

- 1) Mr. Adi K. Arjani, "Windmere", Ghizri Road, Karachi (Pakistan).
- 2) Dr. Hoshang Bharucha, Cosmic Meher Centre, Kutar St.,
Navsari (India)

Meherazad
24th October 1964.

Dearest Family,

As a rule I like to reserve the best of anything for the last, including meals when the spinach is gobbled first and the favourite dish left to be savoured at the end. But when it comes to giving you good news, I have neither the right nor the patience to hold it back till the end of the letter. So here I go:

Beloved Baba has announced that (health permitting) He will give darshan to His lovers in 1965 : to His Eastern lovers in the month of May at Poona, and to His Western lovers in the month of December at Bombay.

From 1st to 15th May 1965, while Baba is in Poona, He will be available for darshan to His Eastern lovers only, for not more than two hours every day. On May 1st Baba will give darshan at the Avatar Meher Baba POONA Centre, and thereafter (till 15th May) at Guruprasad. His lovers in the East (India, Pakistan & Iran) who wish to and can afford to avail themselves of this opportunity, may see Him in Poona during the fifteen days of May permitted by Him, within the time limit of two hours as will be fixed by Him.

To His lovers in the West, beloved Baba will be available for seven days during the end of December 1965, in BOMBAY. This sahavas of seven days in Bombay at the end of December, 1965, will be reserved only for His Western lovers from overseas (U.S.A., U.K., Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Israel, Africa, etc.) - i.e. those who wish to and can afford to come.

One of the apparent factors for Baba selecting Bombay for the congregation of His Western lovers is the lack of suitable accommodation for their stay in Poona, now that Napier Hotel is taken over by the military authorities, Poona Hotel sold to some private concern for residential purpose, and another hotel rumoured to follow the same fate. Also, very few of His dear ones from the West would be able to withstand the heat of Poona or Bombay in May. However, important as these factors are, to us they seem incidental to Baba's own reasons for wishing to hold the 1965 Western sahavas in Bombay.

Baba wishes all those who will come, the Easterners coming to Poona in May as well as the Westerners coming to Bombay in December, 1965, to know and to keep in mind that none should seek or expect from Him any spiritual discourse or private interview. Come only with the thought of being in His presence when He allows, being happy in seeking His pleasure, binding yourself to His wishes so that He is free to give from the silence of His compassion what He wants you to receive.

Going through the notes in Bal Natu's diary of the 1960 darshan in Poona, one sees how Baba has always been stressing this. Here is an instance Bal records in his diary: When someone from a group of His lovers seated before Him asked Baba's clarification on a spiritual point that puzzled him, Baba said:

"When love draws you to me, don't ask for anything. When you are in my presence, be a silent recipient. Ask and you lose. Love has no questions and hence expects no answers. Love itself is the answer to all questions. The more you love me, the less you question. Love is eager to respond

NOTE Although all that is stated above clearly indicates beloved Baba's wish to give His darshan to His lovers in 1965, please remember that it is subject to the condition of His health. Final confirmation of it will reach you through a circular next year.

to the slightest wish of the Beloved, and there is no scope for why and wherefore while obeying the Master. When in my sahavas (company) be attentive and receptive to what I may say, but do not question. Pampering of the intellect brings forth innumerable questions. All these questions can be answered but that is not spiritually indispensable. Mere intellectual explanations will not take you out of the muddle of your mind but will puzzle you all the more. Try to grasp what I have already said. To demand anything from the Beloved is an insult to love. Love only gives and goes on giving till the will of the Beloved alone manifests through the lover."

Among Bal's notes I came across this delightful passage: Some from among the gathering expressed their thought that they have been seeing Baba all the time in a pink coat at darshan time, and that they desired to see Him wear some other colours. Baba smiled and said, "If I started changing the colour of my clothes to suit the taste of all my lovers, can you imagine what a variety of colours would be introduced for my wear?! I am the slave of your love, but not of your whims."

Just as beauty finds the need to express itself in the form of art and other outlets, it is inevitable that love should seek expression in some tangible gesture. It is therefore natural that when the lovers come for beloved Baba's darshan they bring garlands, sweets, fruits and other offerings. What Baba had to say on this, was:

"Why do you bring these baskets of fruit and tins of sweets? Better that you come with empty hands, but not of course with empty hearts! As you sit in my presence, there is a possibility that your thoughts are diverted towards your offerings - you are here but your mind may be running after the garlands and baskets. So I give the signal 'Garland Baba, and let us be free of it'. Besides, I do not taste the many things you so lovingly bring as your offering. You know of my simple diet. So I have to distribute these sweets & fruits to the mandali and others." With a twinkle in His eyes, Baba added, "And when they have done full justice to the things, I get the stomach-ache!" But then He also says "I am the Ocean of Love, so whatever you do with love pleases me". At the last such darshan (1963) we noticed that although Baba accepted the garlands with love, He usually touched the offerings in blessing and returned them to the giver as His prasad.

Thinking of the many dear ones in the U.S.A. who long to see the Beloved, and how comparatively few of them can afford to make the repeated journeys to India, we offered the suggestion that this time Baba should once again give His sahavas to His Western lovers at His Center in Myrtle Beach, U.S.A., as He had done three times before. But, Baba tells us that at present this is out of the question. Looking deeper under the practical layer of our suggestion, we find our prompting was largely mingled with our hope to visit once again that inexpressibly beautiful place which Baba has chosen for His spiritual Center in the U.S.A., and which indeed He has said will one day become His Universal Center! The "Meher Spiritual Center" at Myrtle Beach is the sweet fruit of Elizabeth Patterson's love for Baba. The seed was sown by Baba, and it grew under His direct guidance. The Beloved denies performing miracles, but the Meher Spiritual Center is undeniably a miracle of His Love. I wonder how many of those who visit the place and bask in the beauty of His Presence that is ever present there, know of its unique history; or realize the boundless perseverance & hard work, faith & love, struggle & expense that have been poured into the making of it.

Baba sent dearest Elizabeth & Norina (Princess Matchabelli) to the United States from India in 1941, to locate a site for His spiritual center somewhere in the United States - one which would comply with the five conditions that He laid down. Two of the five conditions were that "it should be on virgin soil" and that "it should be given from the heart". After a considerable search for the ideal site, the property now known as Meher Spiritual Centre,* comprising of over 500 acres and two fresh water lakes adjacent to the Ocean, came into Elizabeth's possession through her dear father, Mr. Simeon Chapin. A perfect setting for the establishment of the Center as wished by

* seven miles north of the resort town of Myrtle Beach, South Carolina (U.S.A.)

Baba, it met all the conditions He had set down. This property, a virgin forest, was undeveloped and uncultivated by man, with only a narrow road or trail running through it which was used by travellers on horse-back (including George Washington and Lafayette while enroute from Charleston to New York). The breath-taking transformation we beheld on our visit to the completed Center with Baba in 1952, can never be adequately expressed in words, much less so in a letter! Kitty Davy, our dear companion of many years with Baba in India, who is entrusted by Him to help look after the Center in Myrtle Beach, has compiled a wealth of notes (largely from Elizabeth's letters to Baba and to her father) on the history of the place - thus preserving the many details that might otherwise be lost to posterity. I hope Elizabeth will some day find the time to edit the notes and put the account in book form, to preserve the precious history of a place precious to the heart of the Avatar of the age.

To us October is a foretaste of the long summer to come, but more so it is a pleasant reminder of the all too short winter that it heralds. At dawn, in the first rays of the drowsy sun, we would see the cobwebs glisten across the bougainvillea & jasmine bowers, perfect discs of gossamer that spring up overnight. We watched October's harvest moon rising in its glory, soon after the sun made its exit behind a gaudy curtain of flaming clouds. At night we would stand entranced before the huge white flowers with wax-like petals, resembling a lotus & chrysanthemum combined, known as Christ's Cradle because the heart of the flower is shaped like a cradle with a 'star' over it. The flowers grow on a vine with leaves that are similar to the cactus and blossom only for a night, opening to their fullest at midnight when they dazzle the sight with their awesome beauty. The suspense of our erratic monsoon is over, but the sum total of the rain's blessings is offset by the trail of misery it left in many places where there was either too much of rain or too little. Devastating floods and acute drought often made headlines in the papers. Translated into human suffering, in a land where hundreds of millions live in abject poverty for whom to lose one's little is to lose one's all, it is staggering. India is like the old woman in the nursery rhyme, "she has so many children she doesn't know what to do"! Never before has the national food crisis been so heart-rending as it has this year, and with all the drastic measures taken by the government and the most generous shipment of grains from the United States of America & other countries, we have barely turned the corner.

We think of Arangaon as Baba's village, for it was in Arangaon that "Meherabad" (Baba's first permanent settlement with His disciples) was established. Many of the villagers were children at the time, growing up under the spiritual & material care of beloved Baba, their love for Him growing along with them. The village has been in the grip of drought for the third year running, and we heard sad reports of the desperate shortage of water and of the farmers being compelled to get rid of their indispensable cattle & sheep for lack of fodder. It was natural therefore that when their endurance & hopes were exhausted, the villagers should turn to their Compassionate Father, Meher Baba. One Sunday in September a group of them came over to Meherabad, laying bare their plight before Him and begging for His mercy of rain. Baba gave them His blessing and told them not to worry.

The following Sunday they were back again, many more of them, young & old, men, women & children. They came walking, in bullock carts, by bus, on bicycles. They came with garlands in their hands, and with gratitude in their hearts, for the rains had come to Arangaon! In that week it had rained till the fields were submerged in water and the river was resurrected again. Every downpour was as a whip-lash to the demon of famine, each shower a balm to the chapped & shrivelled features of the earth. The sound of waters rushing through the barren river-bed was sweeter than music to them. The long dried-up springs that feed the wells started coming to life again, and water began flowing from the taps of Meherabad. It was truly a thanksgiving day for the villagers, as they gathered before their Beloved in Meherabad. While the older men looked picturesque in their red and orange turbans, and the younger ones wore the modern

white caps, the women's saris lent the most colour to this rural gathering of Baba-lovers. For them it was a rare opportunity of His darshan, for me a rare opportunity to use the movie camera. Baba accepted their garlands and gave them each His prasad of sweets. He asked some of them to sing, others to speak of their activities at the Arangaon Baba-Centre. This naturally brought up the points of dispute and disagreements that had been rising among them in the doing of His work. Baba encouraged the different workers to air their grievances before Him, and cleared up the fog of their misunderstandings with the sunshine of His presence, making them realize the unimportance of such differences in the way He alone can. He told them to love one another, and the simple reply was "It is so easy to love you Baba, but difficult to love one another!". Baba said "I know, but if you do that it will be a miracle greater than the blessing of rain that has brought you here today." He added, "Try your best and I will help you."

A written statement in the form of a letter and signed by a number of the villagers, was presented at Meherabad a few days later. There is not room for me to give it all here, so I must be content with giving a few passages translated into English:

"Avatar Meher Baba sanctified Arangaon - Meherabad - in 1923. Here He established Meher Ashram. At that time we were just teenagers. We, the Harijan boys of Arangaon, were admitted to the Meher Ashram. It was the time when we were not only denied education and the primary necessities of life but were treated as 'untouchable' - the low in caste. But indeed we were very fortunate, for Baba personally looked after our needs and education. He uplifted the Harijans in all respects. Since then, in His unbounded compassion, He has been favouring us with His divine blessings in all ways of life. He is indeed the Saviour of the 'low and down-trodden'.

"Sat-Chit-Anand Avatar Meher Baba is God in human form. He is omnipresent - in all things and beings. Baba's light of love shines within the hearts of us all. He is the same One who descends on the earth and assumes human form. He was Rama, Krishna, and Buddha - the Ancient One. The Avatar's work in previous Advents was great, but in the present Advent, as Meher Baba, it is greatest. His ancient state and work are beyond the capacity of our understanding. He has not come to establish a new religion or to perform miracles, but He has come to awaken mankind to its spiritual heritage. It is therefore essential that every one of us should re-dedicate our lives at His holy feet, whole-heartedly."

Speaking of the blessing of rain they received, they declared: "It reminds us of the incident in Lord Krishna's life. Lord Krishna lifted the Govardhan (mountain) with one finger, gathered His lovers under it and saved them from the disaster that was caused by the rains. Now Meher Baba, the Avatar of the age, in response to our prayer has blessed us by showering plenty of rainfall. Hallowed be His Name!"

Unlike the rains, Baba's blessing is daily showered unseen in the lives of His lovers everywhere, as we gather from the reports coming in. We hear from them of the endless miracles of His compassion, of the ever growing number of men & women reaching out to the light of His Love, of the many little instances that reveal His omnipresence, and of the trials & afflictions in their personal lives that are but a 'seventh shadow' of the suffering borne by Him for the love that He bears for His creation. All this we hear, and we know that the Beloved's work goes on, seen & unseen, through His awakened ones wherever they are.

With each succeeding letter, for lack of space, it becomes more difficult for me to be able to report the continually increasing activities launched by His lovers who toil so that others may share in the knowledge that God walks the earth again. Happily, you are kept faithfully informed of these activities through the different Baba-magazines.

I find that the best part of the letter has been saved for the end after all! On having heard the contents of this letter (which was read out to Him at His wish), beloved Baba tells me to add that He sends His Love to you each dear one.

Ever lovingly,

MANI

Dearest Family,

The calendar reminds me that it is time for another news letter, and it seems incredible that eight weeks have gone by since the last one. Although we frequently remark "how time flies!" we never fail to be astonished at the amount of time that has flown by, particularly when such reminders as unattended letters, anniversaries, and birthdays come round. Despite the quiet summer we spent in Poona this year, we felt we had hardly settled down at Guruprasad before we were packing again for Meherazad. Perhaps this 'speeding' of time felt universally today, is a reflection of the quickening of the spiritual awakening awaiting mankind in this great Avataric age.

Beloved Baba left for Meherazad on 1st July, and His lovers in Poona were overjoyed to know that they could gather at the Bund Gardens for the usual farewell. Moreover, as many of them no doubt had prayed, the weather took a hand in making an improvement on this unexpected blessing. The monsoon broke early, and for a week before our departure it kept raining day & night, so that the idea of stopping at the Bund was dropped, and at daybreak of July 1st the members of His big Poona family had assembled in Guruprasad for their Beloved's darshan before He left. To those of us who sat in the car with Baba, the most touching glimpse of this momentary meeting & parting was when the car was wending its way out of Guruprasad grounds. After having their hurried share of His darshan in the Mandali's hall, men & women were standing in a line along the driveway upto and beyond the gate; and as Baba's car slowly passed by them, each one in turn surged forward to quickly touch or kiss His hand, crying out "Baba", "My Baba", "Meher Baba", "My Father", as the heart of each was prompted to exclaim. Baba, who was sitting by the window, smiling His Love on them, put His hand out further to make it easier for the eager hands reaching out towards Him. This fleeting panorama of faces, dark & fair, all equally aglow with love, flashed past us till we turned the corner round the gate - and remained with us long after we left Poona.

Baba looked so tired during and after the journey, that we couldn't help wondering how His health would withstand the strain of next summer's anticipated activity. And even in a letter of recent date, one of the Meherazad mandali writes: "Beloved Baba's health is like the weather-cock; sometimes pointing to radiant health, at other times to a very pulled down condition. It is like the sun in a clear sky becoming suddenly overshadowed by clouds. If the indication of His 'health weather' continues as it is at present, I cannot see how the darshan programmes in Poona next summer can be made possible! But please do not let this prompt you to request us for further health news of Baba, for there is nothing in particular to report - I am really giving you a general picture of His present divine mood....."

As we crossed the boundary from Poona into Ahmednagar district, the countryside took on the anaemic complexion of rain-starved earth, and I'm sure even a goat could not have found a green blade of grass in all that miles of space. We were looking forward to breathing the air of Meherazad once again, but we hadn't bargained for the quantity that greeted us on our home-coming! There was a giant wind blowing fiercely all round the house, roaring through the trees and turning the garden into an agitated mob of leaves. For days it was all wind and no rain. It was exasperating to watch the succulent rain-clouds race across the skies continually, their only answer to our plea being a growl of thunder. Then one afternoon the clouds broke down, and it poured so profusely that within half an hour Meherazad was looking like a duck pond. With beloved Baba we watched from the window of His room the saturated fields, and the nullahs overflowing with the torrent of water rushing down them. But if Meherazad has had a good rainfall so far this year, Meherabad (only a few miles away) has had no more than few skimpy showers that helps the present crop but can do nothing to bring water to the wells dried up from years of drought. As Padri so aptly described it in his report from Meherabad, these sprinkles have served as oxygen to the dying earth, but not as the blood trans- fusion it needs to recover.

For the 39th anniversary of His silence, beloved Baba's message was:

No message about Love and Truth can draw the seeker even nearer to the real experience of them; but the breaking of my silence will shatter the seeker's hard crust of ignorance and reveal to him their true meaning.

The united observance of the 10th July by His lovers round the world, is not so much a drop-offering to the Ocean of His silence, as the receiving of His blessing that we might hear His silence. Baba once said: Hear me while I am silent, for when I break my silence there will be nothing left for you to hear.

The Avatar Meher Baba Centres everywhere honoured the occasion with celebrations on different days and in different ways, with the common aim of making it one more channel for the flowing of His Love to others. While working to spread His Message to the people, those who love Baba are bound to come up against questions regarding the breaking of His silence and His repeated postponement of it; and the replies must surely be as varied as there are ways of trying to understand it. But "God cannot be understood, He can only be loved" as Baba has told us; whereas Kabir has said "There may be thousands of pundits and crores of intellectuals, but God's business God alone knows". Baba alone knows the reason for His setting & declaring a time for the breaking of His silence and then just not doing it, at least in the sense we understand it to mean. But the reason is undoubtedly there, serving in His tremendous spiritual work, for when the Avatar is the Pivot of the universe His very action must have universal significance. Those who have known or been with Baba for many years, have time & again been through the postponement of the breaking of His silence, and I recall with delight my first experience of it. It was as far back as 1931 when I was at school; and when I came to know that Baba intended to break His silence soon, I frantically wrote to Him begging Him to put it off till my school holidays began, so that I could be with Him at the great moment. In His reply, darling Baba solemnly promised that He would put it off till the time I could be with Him during my holidays!

In conclusion, I feel I must tell you of this year's slip-of-the-tongue (among the "silencers" on 10th July) that amused the Beloved and the Meherazad folk most. It took place between two members of a family in Poona, who were observing silence. One said something to the other. The other, looking aghast, said aloud: "But you are not supposed to talk!".

"We are filled with wonder at the miracles of Baba's Love". So writes our Jane from New York, speaking for all the dear ones who help to spread beloved Baba's message of Love & Truth from His little corner at the World's Fair. She says in her report to Adi:

"The most vital thing standing out in one's mind about Baba's beautiful space is the strong, radiant, loving, powerful Presence that is felt by all who serve. As soon as one enters the circular space, all white and soft and lit so strikingly, one begins to feel the warmth and sweetness of the Beloved's presence. He tells us: I am with you; I am with you always. We do not always believe this or allow it to become a living truth; in Baba's little corner He makes it such a reality that we are newly aware of the miracle of His ever-present omniscient Self. As dear Mani wrote 'Those whose hearts are meant to be touched will be touched'. And so it is. How can one account for the girls who go by, take the Message (printed folder) with a smile, pass on and in two seconds are back again saying: we would like to know more! Or the young man who drives the little Greyhound car that takes people round the Fair, who found himself upstairs standing in Baba's space, asking so many questions, taking happily the things on the desk that tell of Baba's Love; and when we asked him how he came to the building this day, said in wide-eyed amazement 'Oh, my machine stopped dead right in front of your building!' Or the two children

who walked boldly right into the little corner, which few do at first, took the 'Seven Realities' and beaming with joy bounced out again! Or the man interested in Theosophy who bought a copy of God Speaks and left, further along his goal. One soul comes forward gratefully, almost with hands out, and leaves with shining eyes for the gift of Love received; while another will pass, only a few feet away, and not look at all! How can one account for all those who come, who linger, who sometimes hardly know how they came.... Only one answer can be given. There is never a coincidence or accident or fluke; it is all a part of Baba's exquisite planning. How fascinating to watch and know with confident faith that those whom He will send will come; those He wishes to stay will stay; those who will go further, He will help them to do so. We need only to be there as His servants and sentinels. Each passing day proves from moment to moment the truth of this."

The revelation of Baba's Love as witnessed by the volunteers through many individual instances at His corner in the World's Fair, has come to us through letters; and we hope all will be able to share it through the Baba-magazines later on. For statistical information I quote here another passage from Jane's report:

"We had a directive from the firm in charge of public relations stating that the gate at the building ('American Interiors' which holds the Baba-space) has clocked 438,000 admissions up to July 15th. Of this number we judge that at least half have made their way to His little corner on the third floor since opening."

This is indeed a substantial number by any standard, even though it might not seem so much when compared to the milling crowds swarming the other pavillions that present free exhibits of scientific wonders, religion and art, and above all where amusement and entertainment is afforded. But then one wonders, is the result of any Baba-work to be measured in the scale of mathematics? Is actual numbers to be proof of the amount of struggle & work put into carrying out any project in His cause? For the Beloved, the only yardstick that can measure our efforts is our love for Him. And, as dear Kitty (Davy) says, 'Baba shows His Love for us in allowing us to work in some way, with the ability we have.' Moreover, in allowing us to work, Baba works in His own way, not only through us but within us; for if we are a means for the doing of His work, the work is often His means for the undoing of our ego. While the people are given His message of Love & Truth, His lovers are given the opportunity to live His message - by developing more tolerance, charity, understanding and love for those with whom we are harnessed in the labour of love. And if with every step we take and every stumble we make, some of our ego is worn down we should rejoice, for then His work is really being done.

Now that the time has come when Baba wishes us to let as many as possible know of Him and His ministry on earth, it is strange to look back on the early years of His work when He travelled incognito and the disciples travelling with Him were not allowed to reveal His identity under any circumstances. This concealment of His name was not always so simple or uneventful as might be thought. It has given rise to all sorts of situations during those incredible journeys that Baba undertook with a few of His mandali in search of 'masts' (the God-intoxicated souls) all over India, Pakistan & Ceylon - situations that were humorous, ironical, embarrassing, and exasperating. I heard Eruch relating some of them to Pukar this summer at Guruprasad, experiences of Baba's "leela" (divine play) as different from "miracles"; and most fascinating was the ironical one where a complete stranger severely rebuked the mandali for not knowing Meher Baba! But let me recount it from the beginning:

It was in 1942, during the second world war. Baba was travelling with 3 of His mandali in one of the third-class compartments of a train so packed with humanity that even the door steps were crowded with people hanging on to the handle bars; while the only means of entry left to the desperate was through

the windows. Baba & His men were tired after their strenuous hunt for masts, and even this cramped accommodation secured in the train meant some relaxation for them. After a station or two, an old Mohammedan with a white flowing beard was seen to rush to a window of their compartment, holding aloft a 5 year old boy, begging the sardine-packed passengers to take him in. With voluble protests the passengers kept pushing the boy away, saying it was absolutely impossible, and as the train whistled its starting signal the old man got desperate, shouting "For God's sake take the child in!" At this, Baba ordered the mandali to intervene and take the boy inside. Amidst loud arguments with their co-passengers, the mandali pulled the child inside; and the old man was just in time to run off to some perch next door as the train started. However, he kept returning at every stop to see if all was well with the boy, who was sitting beside Baba. Seeing his pathetic anxiety, and (as Eruch said) Baba has always had an affinity for bearded old men, Baba told the mandali to also get the old man in! The mandali set to work, and after a storm of protests, arguments and assurances, the old man was hauled in through the window - he squeezed himself into the space offered next to Baba and seated the child on his lap. Baba was "disguised" in ordinary clothes, fur hat (Kashmiri type), and dark glasses.

In the course of conversation with the old man, the mandali learned he was from Gulbarga (a town famous for one of the biggest shrines, of a Perfect Master, in India) and asked if he knew of any masts thereabouts, as they were in search of men absorbed in love for God. In reply the man shrewdly asked where they came from, and learning they were from Ahmednagar he expressed great astonishment that they should go in search of saintly persons. He asked if they had heard of Meher Baba, and when the mandali casually admitted they had, he laughed derisively at them and said that being Zoroastrians and living in Ahmednagar they should be ashamed to go in search of men absorbed in love of God when there was One in their own community and town who could give them God Himself! What an irony of fate it was, he said, that they who lived in Ahmednagar did not care to visit Meher Baba, while he being in Gulbarga had journeyed twice to visit Him at Meherabad and could not see Him - once because Meher Baba was away to a foreign country, and once because He was in seclusion. "But", he added "I am determined to pay my respects to Him before I die, and I will go to Meherabad with my whole family." When the train stopped at Gulbarga the old Mohammedan thanked the gracious passenger by his side for having taken such pains to accommodate him & his boy, and got down.

Shortly after, Baba told Eruch to run after the old man and present him with Baba's picture (which was in a copy of the 'Meher Baba Journal' that Eruch had with him), reveal to him who his companion in the train was, tell him that Meher Baba blessed him & his family and that now there was no need for him to visit Meherabad. Eruch caught the old man just outside the station getting into a tonga (a two-wheeled horse carriage), and delivered the picture and message. When the old man learned of Baba's identity, he exploded with anger at Eruch, roundly abusing him for having kept it a secret during all those hours when he had been sitting right next to Baba - not failing to include the entire "younger generation" in his abuse! As Eruch ran back to catch his train, the old man ran after him for all he was worth, reaching Baba's compartment just as the train was moving out of the station. Baba was ready at the window, wearing a happy smile, without hat or glasses, and leaning out He placed His hand on the old man's head in blessing.....

To you each dear one of His family, beloved Baba
sends His Love.

Ever lovingly,

MANI

Guruprasad,
Poona
17th June '64.

Dearest Family,

We have been here over eleven weeks, but the novelty of our experience of a silent Guruprasad has not worn off. The Beloved's family in the East and West have been wonderfully faithful in observing His wish not to disturb Him this year, and we can imagine how difficult this must be for them. For the many who are in Poona, to be so near Him and yet not to see Him must surely be like being in paradise blindfolded! There have however been darshan seekers, mostly individuals who had not seen beloved Baba before, coming from hundreds of miles for a glimpse of Him; and as a rule Baba remains "not at home" to visitors coming for His darshan. While we enjoy the comfort of Guruprasad as a home, visions of next year rise before us, floating on fond hopes and speculations woven from hints dropped by Baba that next summer He might make Himself available for darshan to all. And so we live in anticipation of the future and contentment of the present.

It is good to see beloved Baba relaxing, at least outwardly, and to see the course of His health maintaining a somewhat steadier pace than we usually expect, although the pain in His hip-joint has been steady too. In the mornings and afternoons Baba sits in the smaller hall with the Men mandali, and the group around Him grows bigger by a handful on weekends when a few of His close family are privileged to be with Him. While Baba is at the dining table with us for breakfast, we can see the fountain in the garden pond with the flash of pink bougainvillea behind it; and Baba often notices the doves & mynas & hawks that come to drink from the basin of the fountain and bathe in it. Just as breakfast is over, four tots troop in - the eldest being a boy of 5 and the youngest a girl eighteen months old who sometimes toddles in clutching some rose petals in her hand to place before Baba on the table that she can barely manage to reach. These young visitors, children of the caretaker and manager of Guruprasad Bungalow, sit every morning on the steps waiting to be called in to Baba, solemnly greet Him and receive His prasad of sweets. The toddler wants to be the first to get the prasad and often gives the sweet back to Baba for Him to unwrap it for her, which He does. Sometimes she brings her doll with her and gives it to Baba to play with.

Another "baby" is the Siamese tomcat that adopted us last summer, seeming to come from nowhere and making itself completely at home in Guruprasad for the rest of our stay here. We kept searching for its owner, and the family that owned the cat kept searching for it. At last its charming mistress Mrs. Dolly Dedee traced her lost treasure to Guruprasad and found the greatest Treasure of all, BABA. She kept coming again at every opportunity last year for His darshan and is now one of His large family. She expressed her happiness at the cat's refusal to leave Guruprasad. 'How fortunate it is' she said, 'And how fortunate I am to have found Baba through my pet!' The cat, which by now has acquired a dozen nicknames, is with us again this summer; and although it is petted and fed and spoilt more than ever, its adoration for Baba stands out above everything. We see it sitting expectantly outside beloved Baba's room, and is the first to enter when the door is opened. It loves to rub its head on His feet, for all the world as though it were taking His darshan! When Baba is sitting on the chair, He will often bend down to pet it, and sometimes it will stand up and place its paws on His lap for one more caress. Whenever it meows the Beloved is convinced it is hungry, and has us give it a fresh bowl of milk despite our united assurance that it just had a good feed! We have often heard the expression "a lucky cat" - now we know one.

This year too we have known someone to have found Baba after losing a dear one - but in this case it was through a terrible personal tragedy. Keki Billimoria is a young man whose wife and lovely daughter (only child) were among those drowned in a motor-launch disaster at Bombay last month when the family were on their way to the Elephanta Caves with friends to enjoy a Sunday picnic. He is son-in-law to Jal Dorabjee of Edward Hotel in Poona, a man of fine qualities

whose many acts of unselfish service and unswerving faith in Baba have endeared him and his dear wife & family to us ever since we have known them. Beloved Baba's love for Jal Dorabjee was apparent when He made an exception to His own rule and called him and his wife after the double tragedy which deprived them of their only daughter and grand-daughter. The solace and strength they received from His Love helps them carry their burden of emptiness with a braveness of spirit and a resignation to God's Will that is poignant and fills us with deep admiration. Knowing that only Baba could calm his son-in-law's anguish of mind after the sudden loss of wife & daughter, Jal Dorabjee was happy when Keki expressed his desire to see Baba - and again the Beloved made an exception. Before leaving, the young man told Baba how his wife (who had come for Baba's darshan last year) had tried to persuade him to come too, saying 'I cannot express in words what you will get from Baba, but just sit for a few moments at His feet and you will know' - and still he did not come. He told Baba 'Now I have come, and I know what she meant. I will ever be grateful to her for this, but am filled with remorse that I did not come to you when she was alive.' When he left it was with a braver heart, a calmer mind and a deeper resignation, something of which he tried to express in a touching letter he wrote to Baba.

We hear from others how they were first awakened to Beloved Baba through what seemed amazing coincidences, or by merest chance, or through dreams. Dr.G.S.N.Moorty, who has been touring extensively for a year in many parts of India giving talks to people on Baba and winning over many in His Love, told us this delightful and profound experience of how a couple of vegetables brought a close friend of his to Baba. Dr.Moorty's friend did not believe in Baba despite the Doctor's continual efforts to convince him of Baba's Avatarhood. Then one day as Dr.Moorty and the friend were going to dinner at someone's home, and the conversation inevitably turned to Baba, the friend impulsively cried out 'If your Meher Baba really is what He says He is, then let the main dishes at our dinner this evening be bhendi (okra) and baingen (egg-plant). I will consider that convincing proof.' Dr.Moorty was dismayed at this challenge, not only because his friend's attitude towards an approach to Baba did not seem right, but because the vegetables were not right either - both these vegetables were out of season and not available in the market! By the time they reached their destination the topic was apparently forgotten. When their host led them to the dining room, they found the table set Indian fashion with the prepared dishes laid out on the table and covered with a cloth. When the cloth was removed, the eyes of Dr.Moorty and his friend were riveted in amazement and wonder on the dishes uncovered - the main vegetables in the central dishes were okra and egg-plant! Needless to say the friend is a firm Baba-follower since then - what all the eloquence of Dr.Moorty had failed to do, two inanimate objects were chosen to be His silent instruments to awaken a heart.

The following happened in Iran. The 'peesh Imam' (Mohammedan priest who leads the prayers) in Teheran, had a dream in which a voice told him that the eagerly awaited Imam Mehdi (the Saheb-e-Zaman, or Avatar) is now on earth, and he would find Him at a certain house in Teheran. In his dream he was guided to this house which he saw clearly before him in vivid detail. In the morning the priest went in search of the house, found it, and knocked. To the man who opened the door he said 'I have come to see Hazrat Saheb-e-Zaman'. He was asked to enter; and when he related his dream to the householder (Asfandiar Vesali) and his wife, tears flowed down their cheeks for they were lovers of Baba. Asfandiar Vesali came to see Baba at Poona in 1963, and was one of the Meher Ashram boys at Meherabad 34 years ago. His house that the priest was guided to in the dream, serves as the Avatar Meher Baba Centre in Teheran where weekly meetings are held in Baba's Love.

There was yet another surprise for Baba's Centre in Teheran. One morning one of the Baba-lovers went to the bazaar to buy bread, and seeing bystanders reading "Raushan-Fekr" (a leading weekly magazine of Teheran) he glanced at it and was astonished to find two full pages devoted to beloved Baba with His photos and messages! Having no money with him to buy a copy, he ran for home and sent his son to get a copy while he informed the others about it. Seen after,

the French magazine "Teheran Journal" also produced the articles in French along with photos of the Beloved and some of His group there. This is how it came about: One day a Baba-lover took some Persian books on Baba to the office of "Raushan-Fekr", and returned with a promise from the co-editor that he would look into them and show them to the Editor. Some days later, when the Baba-group had congregated for their weekly meeting at the Centre, there was the unexpected arrival of the Editor & staff of Raushan-Fekr. They seemed much impressed with all that they saw and heard, and at the end of the meeting asked questions and requested more books & photos of Baba. When leaving, the Editor demanded "Why did you not inform us about Meher Baba before?"!

Shantadevi, our gracious Maharani, was the only one called by Baba to visit Guruprasad this summer for any five days during our stay here. She chose the month of April, staying in Poona for about a week and coming every afternoon to pay her respects to Baba and have His beloved sahavas. She was not present when Baba opened the A.M.B.P.C. Hall on 1st May, but Eruch wrote to her a detailed account of the function from which I quote parts that will help you form a mind picture of the occasion:

When Baba arrived at the Hall it was surprising to find a large crowd of lovers of Baba from Poona waiting His arrival. The invitations were extended to about 200 persons, but the invitees also brought their families and the number swelled to almost 700 men, women and children! The Hall was well decorated and all the arrangements seen to with great care by the lovers there - some of them had worked round the clock for a week to complete every detail. The actual programme was very simple. Baba was garlanded at the entrance by the Chairman of the A.M.B.P.C. Trust, and then escorted by the Trustees into the Hall after He had cut the seven-coloured ribbons and unlocked the entrance door. When Baba was seated in the specially made sofa-chair on the dais, the crowd was permitted to enter the Hall and sat down in a very orderly fashion. When the Hall was entirely full, with the lovers facing their Beloved God in person, some children played a very prominent part in welcoming and entertaining Baba. They sang and danced pieces prepared solely for the occasion, and also recited the Prayers and sang the Arti. Baba appeared touched by the devotion of His dear ones there, and permitted each one to approach Him despite His previous ruling that none should do so. He was profusely garlanded by many who had brought garlands with them, and each of the gathering received His physical touch in the shape of a pat, a caress or an embrace. At the end of the programme He was conducted to an adjoining room which is reserved for Him, where He may relax before and after such programmes. There Baba drank some fresh coconut water, and the mandali with Him were served a light snack. The morning's programme had lasted two hours, and Baba returned to Guruprasad at 11 o'clock. Beloved Baba has told the Trustees that He will give darshan at the A.M.B.P.C. Hall just once more, on 1st May 1965, after which He will resume His darshan programmes as usual at Guruprasad.

India has emerged from its official mourning for the death of its Prime Minister, but in the hearts of the people the mourning continues. In the death of Jawaharlal Nehru, not only has India lost a beloved friend and a brilliant leader who was dedicated heart & soul to its people, but the world has lost an unrivalled champion for peace. In a letter to Wasdeo Kain (of The President's Estate, who is secretary of the Avatar Meher Baba Centre in Delhi), Eruch writes:

Beloved Baba remarked that with the passing away of Panditji, India has lost its first Prime Minister who also ranked first in dedicated service to India that he loved so dearly. Baba said that Jawaharlal Nehru was matchless as a statesman and India will have to wait another 700 years to find another jewel like him; he can be said to have been a Karma Yogi. It would be good if he has read at least some portion of "God Speaks" presented to

him by Sardar Amar Singh Saigal (M.P.). Baba added, "Only when I come again, during my next Advent on earth, will there be another like Jawaharlal."

The above comments from beloved Baba were broadcast ^{in part} by All India Radio, Delhi, on 5th June in all the regional languages.

We will be leaving for Meherazad (Ahmednagar) at the end of this month, and shall have unpacked and settled down to the old familiar routine of Meherazad life in time for the observance of beloved Baba's 39th silence anniversary. I am giving here the circular that Adi is sending out to all in the East, so that it is sure to reach you dear ones in the West well in time to observe it as wished by Baba:

On the 10th of July 1964, the 39th Anniversary of His Silence, Avatar Meher Baba wishes all who love and obey Him and all who would want to do so, to observe complete Silence for 24 hours beginning from midnight of the 9th of July to midnight of the 10th of July, in accordance with the local time.

Those who, for practical reasons, find that it is not possible to observe silence for the 24 hours on Friday the 10th of July 1964, should instead observe complete fast for twelve hours on that day, from 8.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. During this fast nothing must be consumed - not even water. Those who are fasting for the 12 hours on July 10th, should also observe partial fast in the morning from 6.00 a.m. to 8.00 a.m. by taking only one cup of tea or coffee (with or without milk), before beginning their complete fast at 8.00 a.m.

Baba sends His Love and Blessing to each one of His lovers for the Silence Day.

Very lovingly,

MANI

Guruprasad
22nd April '64

Dearest Family,

We waved goodbye to Meherazad in the early morning of 1st April, our kerchiefs fluttering from the car windows at dear Kaka and the staff & pets we were leaving behind, until the familiar gateway receded out of sight. To our right was Baba's Hill assuming different shapes from different angles, and when we got to the end of the road we saw the blue surface of the lake sprawling to our left. Before Baba's car had gone ten miles Baba got down to visit the homes of some intimate families in Ahmednagar, and was greeted by a large crowd of lovers waiting in the grounds of Adi's residence & office for a glimpse of Baba. A little further on another dear family had gathered by the road outside their bungalow, two invalided members in wheel-chairs, and Baba stopped to accept their love and bless them with His caress. Still further on, under a tree by the road that branches off to Meherabad, a throng of devoted ones from the village of Arangaon were waiting since dawn, and once again Baba's car slowed down and halted amidst shouts of "Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai!". Thus was the royal coach held up a number of times, and of course what these 'highwaymen' wanted to steal was a smile & a look from the Beloved.

Little surprise therefore, that although we left Meherazad at about 7.30, we reached Poona not before 11.30. As we crossed the Bundgarden bridge over the river on which Baba used to sail as a college boy, memories of previous Poona summers woke up & stretched themselves, and by the time we entered Guruprasad they were bright-eyed and chattering all around us. Having walked and climbed more steps that morning than usual, Baba's hipjoint was painful at the end of the tiring drive, and on arrival He was carried up the Guruprasad steps in the lift-chair by the mandali. As we stepped in we felt dwarfed by the space of the big verandah, and the hall with its chesterfields and chandelier seemed enormous. But uppermost among our first impressions was the difference in temperature, and we kept exclaiming 'How nice and cool it is!'. At Meherazad the summer had already set in with the determination of a broody hen before March was half way through, and we were thankful to be escaping the clutches of its scorching April. Perhaps this factor tipped the scales in favour of beloved Baba deciding on the move to Poona, for this year He had seemed reluctant to leave Meherazad.

In the three weeks' stay here we have come to realize the impact of Baba's message that was sent out to all concerned in the East & West (in the Circular issued on 23rd February), for Guruprasad has been a strangely silent abode. Missing is the human stream that flowed constantly along the driveway, and the happy stampede of darshaners that was almost a daily occurrence last summer. To the many who had hoped and planned to come to Poona this May, to stay as long as they could so as to have the Beloved's sahavas as much as they could, the announcement that He will NOT give darshan this year came as a 'bolt from the blue', and reacted on those around Baba too. But the empty feeling of disappointment that we felt for all these many dear ones, was filled with the revelation of their love for Baba expressed in their resignation to His Will. This has been most felt in the response from Baba's Western lovers, which could be summed up in the words of Dr. Ben Hayman (from Texas): "Baba's wish is supreme"! Truly the highest 'pooja' is performed by them who place the flowers of their longing at the altar of His wish.

At 5 o'clock in the morning of 25th February - the time and date of His Birth on earth - Baba-lovers everywhere were singing His Arti or repeating His name. We at Meherazad, at Baba's direction and in His presence, loudly called out the name of God at the stroke of 5. The message from the Beloved that was cabled to His Western groups - in U.S.A., England, France, Switzerland, Faroe Islands, Austria, Israel, Africa, Australia & New Zealand - for His 70th Birthday was:

ALTHOUGH I TAKE BIRTH FOR ALL MANKIND
FORTUNATE ARE THE ONES WHO LOVE ME
WHILE I AM ON EARTH

- MEHERBABA -

And on that Day of days, His lovers in different parts of the world expressed their good fortune by proclaiming to all who might share it, the fact that God walks the earth again. The measure and mode of their expression were varied; and if I were to put down all the reports this would turn out to be a book - besides, I'm sure you will read them in "Divya Vani". In the state of Andhra alone, 30 Baba-Centres celebrated the Birthday, some continuing to observe it from one week to three weeks! And, as the lovers there have the refreshing characteristic of being unrestricted in expressing their hearts' conviction, the Birthday functions at some of their Centres were magnificent. Widely distributed invitations carried Baba's picture and His Birthday message along with the day's programme. This invariably included a gorgeous procession through the town or main part of the city, with a large picture of Baba arranged artistically on a carriage or car profusely decorated & illuminated, and accompanied by music. Besides the usual unfurling of the Baba-flag of seven colours, singing of Arti & bhajans, speeches made in the vernacular & English, there was the enacting of Baba's life in the fascinating dance-drama 'Meher Leela', and the 'Burra-Katha' which depicts it in dialogue and song. There was the showing of Baba-films, and at Vijayawada the Birthday celebrations were announced in the daily local news broadcast over the radio. Slides of Baba's picture were seen by the public on the screens of the main cinemas, and enormous posters with a beautiful picture of the Beloved were placed high up along the main thoroughfares. An album of photos sent to Meherabad by one of the Centres there (Ramachandrapuram) gave us a glimpse of the grand 'mandap' that was put up to accommodate the big Birthday gathering that attended, with the stretch of road leading to it as brilliantly lighted as the interior. One snapshot showed huge mounds of cooked rice on matted palms, prepared for the feeding of hundreds of poor - an item that was included in the program of nearly every Baba-Centre in the East: feeding the poor, the disabled and the lepers, and distributing sweets to school children. Outstanding among the Baba-booklets printed in many places was a Marathi magazine published in Poona, carrying a coloured photo of Baba on the cover of its February issue which was devoted to His messages and biography. And, a most unusual touch to the Birthday programmes was given by the Rajahmundry Centre (Andhra): the unveiling of beloved Baba's portrait at a number of schools.

Not everywhere can the lamp of Baba's message shine unfogged by the challenge of public opposition, and we salute the Baba lovers of Karachi for their brave effort to shake up the hide-bound prejudices of the people there - especially the orthodox Parsi (Zoroastrian) community. The success of their plans for Baba's Birthday was all the sweeter for the hurdles they were faced with at every turn. They invited Dr. Hoshang Bharucha from Navsari for a lecture tour; the Beloved's East-West Gathering film which was shown at a number of places aroused keen interest, particularly among the young people; and the cream of their achievement was the broadcasting of Baba's 'Meher Mana' Arti over Radio Pakistan, Karachi. For the dear Baba-group of Zoroastrians in Karachi to set out to openly acclaim Baba as the "Messenger of God" was indeed a big step for Pakistan; and it caused much apprehension among its orthodox Zoroastrians who prefer to keep their heads buried in the sands of tradition - as was proved by their frantic thrusts of criticism through the Parsi press.

"I am happy to know that the 70th Birthday anniversary of Shri Meher Baba is being celebrated in Delhi. I send my best wishes on the occasion and hope that his teachings will continue to inspire a large number of people in our country." This message was sent by the President of India, Dr. Radhakrishnan,

for beloved Baba's Birthday function held in Delhi, the capital of India. The 25th was the crowning day of the Birthday Week celebrated by the Baba-lovers in Delhi, and the function was held at the Constitution Club -- inaugurated by Sardar Hukum Singh, Speaker of the Lok Sabha (House of Commons), and presided over by Shri D. Sanjivayya, Union Minister for labour & employment. Among the packed audience at the Constitution Club that evening were several other Ministers, Members of Parliament, and prominent personalities in the Capital. And so we find that gradually more & more, the men who guide the pattern of the country are beginning to be drawn into awareness of the One who holds the world in His hands. An unprecedented part of the Birthday celebrations in Delhi was that a section of the program was relayed over All India Radio; and far away in Meherazad we sat round our little Transistor that night and heard the commentator announce in Hindi: 'You are listening to a report of the 70th Birthday celebration of Meher Baba'. This little miracle was made possible by the efforts of Sardar Amarsingh Saigal, a Member of Parliament and a staunch lover of Baba. It also resulted in brief reports of the Birthday programme of some other cities in India being broadcast over the radio. I will quote from Eruch's letter to Sardar Saigal: "All mandali at Meherazad heard the ten-minute programme on 25th night at 10 o'clock relayed by A.I.R. Delhi. The way you recited the Master's prayer of "O Parvardigar" thrilled us all. The reception here was clear and your voice was ringing clearly over the wireless. We also received reports from Vijayawada, Hyderabad, Bhopal-Indore, Calcutta, Nagpur and Bombay, that these stations also relayed 'glimpses' of the 70th Birthday celebrations from their respective stations. It was the first time that the Avatar's Birthday was proclaimed over the wireless from the Capital of India. It is a unique occurrence in the history of the Avataric cycle and you are blessed to have been instrumental in this respect." It was a joy too to hear the gentle voice of Shri M. Thirumal Rao (M.P. and ex-governor of Vindhya Pradesh, who translated "God Speaks" into Telugu), who spoke in his welcome speech of the need to love without any selfish end, concluding: 'and that love you find at the feet of Meher Baba.'

Once again at Meherazad we heard the 'Parvardigar Prayer' over the radio, recited in Hindi in a clear sweet voice by one of beloved Baba's 'mahila mandali' (women's group) in Dehra Dun. This time the occasion being reported by the A.I.R. Delhi, was the inauguration of Baba's Centre - named MEHER DHAM* - at Dehra Dun that I spoke of in my last letter. We have heard reports of the glorious function from lovers in different parts of India who attended, and here is a little excerpt from brother Kutumba Sastri's letter to Adi: 'The function was a grand success. The great outpouring of Baba's Love and blessings was felt by all. There was abundant harmony and brotherly love among all those that assembled. Many Baba-lovers from different parts of the country came and participated. It was touching to see how three young lovers from Hamirpur area, who could not afford to travel by train, had cycled the whole distance of about 420 miles and reached the place in time to participate in the Baba-love programmes at Dehra Dun.'

Baba has said, every heart that loves Him is His Centre. Baba has also said that the time for His manifestation is near, and His lovers should spread His message as much as they can. The Baba-Centres that are blossoming in many parts of India and abroad, serve as worthy vessels in which is poured the energy & service of His lovers, and from which His message of Love may be dispensed to as many as will receive it. This 1st of May will truly be a May Day for the "Avatar Meher Baba Poona Centre". On this day beloved Baba will open the Centre personally - just as He did the "Avatar Meher Baba Ahmednagar Centre" over a year ago. It will be the first time since our coming to Poona this summer, that Baba will step out of Guruprasad where He has been maintaining a non-active

* 'Dham' means abode, and is pronounced to rhyme with 'farm'.

routine almost identical to that of Meherazad. However, it is not an unexpected move, for Baba had promised to bless the Centre with His presence when it was completed. Baba has directed Ramakrishnan (the devoted Secretary of the A.M.B.P.C.) to arrange the inauguration in a very simple and quiet manner, and so only a few Baba-lovers from Poona will be present at the opening. The Poona Centre is unique on a number of counts - the biggest being the fact that it is in the birthplace of the Avatar. A tremendous lot went into the making of it - determination & work, hope & despair, endless controversies & delays, and the love of thousands from many places who contributed funds to make it possible. At last the structure is complete - built on simple solid lines, its big hall can hold hundreds of people at a time. May it hold & share beloved Baba's Love in ever growing measure.

To posterity, every place hallowed by the Avatar's presence will be a Centre in the truest sense, and as such Poona can surely be called a beehive of Baba-Centres: the hospital where Baba was born, the house He lived in as child & man, the school & college He attended, the alley where He played games with other boys, the house with the well that has 'Baba's Room' in which He used to sit for hours and wherein lies the stone of incomparable significance - and of course Guruprasad, which He has declared will be 'immortal'.

Another important date is the 22nd of April - the date set for the opening of the World's Fair at New York which is graced by the beautifully arranged booth named "Meher Baba's Universal Message", and of which I spoke in my letter of last August. This project has proved a wonderful opportunity & challenge for Baba's lovers in the U.S.A., and their response to it has been more than wonderful. Contributing time, money and service to make it possible, they are now prepared for the mammoth job of manning the place all day and late into the night throughout the long term of the Fair's existence. 'As one small candle may light a thousand.....', may their love light the hearts of those who visit this little corner at the World's Fair, the corner that holds the eternal message of Love & Truth from the Ancient One. This is what the Beloved has said to them, in His cable sent for the opening:

BLESSED IS THE LOVE OF MY LOVERS IN AMERICA
THAT HAS ADORNED NEWYORK WORLDS FAIR WITH
MEHERBABAS UNIVERSAL MESSAGE STOP I SEND
MY BLESSING OF LOVE TO ALL MY LOVERS AND
WORKERS WHO MADE IT POSSIBLE AND WHO WILL
STAFF THE BOOTH FOR THE DURATION OF THE
WORLDS FAIR

- MEHERBABA -

Ever lovingly,

MANI

(over)

ATTENTION

The following is the copy of a circular letter
sent out by Adi K. Irani to all group-heads in India.

King's Road,
Ahmednagar
10th April 1964.

My dear

A number of you may have received a printed folder with the title "The Blows I Dedicate" from a man in Delhi called Krishnaji. This man is of South India (Kerala) who was for a time with Baba in Satara. Often he had confessed to the mandali that Baba's Love and compassion had retrieved him from a life of degradation, and that he had not known what love was before he met Baba. Being by nature an exhibitionist, Krishnaji wore a robe and kept his hair long, but Baba directed him to discard such sham and had him dress in ordinary clothes. Although he lived with the mandali for a while, he could not accommodate himself to the simple life lived by Baba's men. Shortly he found that his presence in his home-town was imperative due to some unpleasant affair he had been involved in, and beloved Baba instructed him to return home for good.

Later this Krishnaji came to Delhi, and reverting to robe and long hair began to observe periodic silence and to pose as the 'chargeman of Meher Baba'. Now he calls himself "BABA", claims to be observing complete silence and is said to communicate with visitors by means of an alphabet board. Thus this man trades in Baba's name to gain people's attention and to have the publicity he has always craved for; and in his frustration he is apt to go to any length in order to achieve it -- he has this trait. Therefore, you are advised to give no countenance to Krishnaji's cheap methods of trying to win people's sympathies and gather them round himself. It is best to disregard any communication you may receive from this source.

Please inform all Baba lovers in your jurisdiction by sending a copy of this letter to each of them in English or the needed transcript, and advise them that should they receive a copy of such a folder from Krishnaji, the best thing they could do is to ignore it.

Yours brotherly

ADI K. IRANI

Meherazad

7th February 1964

Dearest Family,

The aim of life is to love God.

The goal of life is to become one with God.

The surest and quickest way to achieve this goal is to hold on to my daaman by loving me more and more.

I have suffered much and will have to suffer much more till I break my silence.

I give my Love to my lovers.

- MEHER BABA -

This is the message beloved Baba has given to His lovers for 25th February 1964, His 70th birthday - a message that is surely for all time, comprehending all messages. May His message be our prayer, leaving nothing for us to ask of Him but His grace in loving Him more. 'I want nothing but to love You more and more, and that is wanting everything', a dear one from California had once said in a letter to Baba. Blessed are the fortunate few who ask for nothing less from the Highest of the High.

For Baba and the family at Meherazad, the Birthday will no doubt be one of the quietest periods of His seclusion; while for His lovers elsewhere it will be an opportunity to express their joy and obeisance to the glory of this Day of days which shall ever stand witness to God's Love for us, when once again He was 'born upon this earth that's thought so fair, that's but the Cross that He must bear'. Meherazad will be as the eye in the centre of the storm of celebrations expected to blaze at Baba-Centres everywhere this year, unlike last year when Baba did not wish His birthday to be observed.

After Christmas, Meherazad dropped the 'party look' that it wore for Mehera's birthday when a happy crowd of 250 women Baba-lovers spent the day in His beloved sahavas, and resumed its Cinderella appearance. We are made more than ever aware and appreciative of the prevailing quiet atmosphere by the thought of the approaching shift to Poona, when once again Guruprasad will spring to life and vibrate with the songs & throngs of lovers coming for His darshan. We try not to let even the thought of packing for the summer move encroach on our present mood, but we know March is round the corner waiting to shake us out of it. The first half of our winter has been something like an Indian scientific song - now rising to a high pitch, now dropping to an all-down low; but the good steady spell we've been recently having should take the sting out of our summer's dreaded approach. The neem trees are having their autumn, and the winds have a grand time shaking the leaves off from their branches and chasing them all over the grounds till they land up in golden piles against the walls or find refuge in flower beds. And then there is the Sunbird (or humming bird) - I'm sure some of you can't help smiling or frowning

at my inability to stay off the subject of birds, but when it is so clearly a part of our life at Meherazad it seems natural to include it. There is an arbour with a shady flower vine between Pendu & Eruch's rooms, and dangling from the tip of a slender twig is the incredible & fascinating nest of a tiny sunbird, right in front of Eruch's door and so low that one's head barely escapes touching it! But quite unmindful of the people going in and out of the room, the little mother sits swinging in her oval pouch of a nest, her head sticking out of the small entrance which is topped by a thatched shade projecting like the visor of a helmet.

Although as a rule Baba does not permit visitors when He is in Meherazad, there have been exceptions that prove the rule. One of them was Mr. Pataskar, his excellency the Governor of Madhya Pradesh (India's central state) who recently inaugurated the Avatar Meher Baba Centre in Raipur; and many heard the Beloved's name over the radio, for the governor's inaugural speech was relayed by the A.I.R. (All India Radio) Raipur. Mr. Pataskar and his wife expressed their keen desire to have Baba's darshan, and Baba sent word that they could come. And so one morning we found the long approach road that leads to the gate of Meherazad studded with police guards standing stiffly at attention as the governor's car with its convoy drove in. Mr. Pataskar won the hearts of the mandali with his sincerity and unaffected manner, and he was obviously moved when Baba embraced him. When his wife, who is afflicted with arthritis, was carried into the room on a chair and seated before Baba, she cried out 'Closer, closer, put me closer to Baba!' She talked to Baba with the confidence of one assured of His love & understanding, and some of her remarks were very touching. When at parting the Beloved said to them "Remember, I am God in human form", they acknowledged it by bowing with deep reverence. The guards stationed along the road did not miss their share of the blessing either, as their plea for Baba's darshan was granted soon after the procession of cars had left.

Another procession of cars, on another morning, brought a number of military officers stationed at Ahmednagar, with their wives and children. They had heard much about Baba from Sarosh and Villoo* and entreated them to request Baba to allow them to have His darshan. To complete the group of that morning there was the surprise arrival of General Bhandari and his very charming wife & daughter who were on their way to Delhi where they plan to settle down. This dear family has been growing close to us in Baba's Love since their first meeting with the Beloved over two years ago, and their home was among the very few that Baba visited last summer in Poona. Kamla (Mrs. Bhandari) writes from Delhi: 'I have not been able to get over the good fortune of having been graced with the Beloved's darshan before our final departure from Poona. You have no idea how this fact sustained us throughout our journey and still does..... We are now far away from beloved Baba, but I pray that He ever remains close in our hearts and guides us from within.....'

* Khan saheb Sarosh K. Irani & his wife who were hosts to the Western Novemberites when they visited Ahmednagar during their trip to Meherazad.

Just as the chiming of a clock in the stillness of night magnifies the silence that follows it, so the occasional visits allowed to darshan-seekers has served to emphasize His seclusion rather than disturbing it. Among those who have been to Meherazad were a family from Andhra; a doctor from the Evangeline Boothe hospital; a school-master from the village of Pimpalgaon; farmers & labourers from a neighbouring farm; the Collector of Ahmednagar; and some from the U.S.A. - Don Stevens, Stella Kusevich, and Baba's 'sailor-boy' Harry Dedolchow. One can never tell when Baba will be in the mood to say "yes" to allowing someone to visit Him, and when He will say "no". But whichever it be, it has been accepted happily by those who love Him enough to be happy in His will, knowing that He knows best. However, there was a letter recently from a Baba-lover in Poona which informed us that there were some who felt that only the rich people were given the permission to visit Him during His seclusion at Meherazad, while the poor were not. Although we know this to be far from true, the Beloved was amused when He heard the letter and remarked, "Howsoever it may appear to be, the recipient of my darshan owes it to his good fortune, be he minister or mendicant. If the 'rich' have been allowed, it is a matter of how rich their connection with me might be, and not their pockets. And the fact ~~xxxx~~ cannot be denied that while the so-called rich may bow down to me, I bow down to the poor."

Dr. Subodh Chandra Roy can certainly be said to be 'rich' in his connection with Baba, for Baba not only granted him permission to visit Him at Meherazad, but showed much concern when he failed to show up on the expected day - which was due to some incredible confusion that found the doctor at Ahmedabad instead of Ahmednagar, a difference of some 500 miles! But when the will is there the way is found, and at last Dr. Roy arrived one morning and received Baba's embrace. This brilliant Indian scholar, who lost his sight at the age of seven, has been teaching at the New School for Social Research in New York since 1948, and first heard of the Beloved from one of His lovers in the U.S.A. The subject of his present tour in India is "Modern Trends in Hinduism", made possible by a Fulbright Research Scholarship, and we learn that he is the first blind scholar to earn this coveted fellowship. Dr. Roy's desire for Baba's darshan grew to determination after his talk with our A.C.S. Chari of Calcutta, and he spoke of his coming visit to Baba at a press conference in Bombay and during his interview over the radio.

This genial scholar was with Baba for nearly three quarters of an hour. The Beloved was in the mood to discourse and answered the doctor's questions. When Dr. Roy asked what Baba's 'darshan' could mean to a person without sight, Baba lovingly drew His hand over the doctor's face and explained "All who come for my darshan are blind, for none can see me as I am. There are very few in the world who can 'see' me, the rest see only Illusion. But the contact of touching me or receiving my embrace is a darshan of untold blessing, and so you are blessed." When Baba was asked about the breaking of His silence, He said "The fact that I have observed silence, is in itself the answer that I must break it. My silence is no vow - I had the urge to observe silence, and I will equally have the urge to break it. An urge is independent of time, but the time is fast approaching when I will have the urge and break my silence." Dr. Roy spoke of his deep study and

findings of the different world religions and invited Baba's comment. The Beloved touched on the two aspects of religion, the ceremonial and the spiritual - i.e. the husk and the substance. Baba said that when man's consciousness begins to involve and he dives deep within, he can rightly assert that he belongs to no religion but that all religions belong to him. To some of the doctor's other questions Baba said he should look for the answers in "God Speaks", and told him to study it thoroughly and absorb it. Dr. Roy said that Baba's teaching was the same truth established through the ages, and Baba smiled and remarked, "If it were otherwise, it would not be Truth! Truth is but one, the same and eternal. However, I have not come to teach it but to give it", and He pointed to the metal plate on the wall. Eruch read out the wording of the saying on it: I HAVE COME NOT TO TEACH BUT TO AWAKEN. While leaving Meherazad the doctor told the mandali how happy and satisfied he was with this meeting with Baba, and said more than once 'Baba is indeed compassionate!'

That morning's topic of darshan made us recall the message Baba had given ten years ago, when we were in Dehra Dun after we returned from our visit to the beautiful Baba-Centre in Myrtle Beach, U.S.A. Dehra Dun is a town at the foot of the Himalayas, near Hardwar & Rishikesh, where we have stayed for long periods in the past during the 'gypsy' phase of our life when we travelled to many parts of India with the Beloved. To be given darshan, commonly means to be granted a meeting. To have darshan of, literally means 'to have a sight or vision of', and in Rishikesh & Hardwar (where Rishis & sadhus abound) it is not unusual to greet a friend with: 'I haven't had your darshan for quite some time!'. Devotionally speaking, to take darshan is to place one's head on the feet of the adored or revered object. What real darshan means, Baba has explained in the following message given by Him at the public darshan in Dehra Dun, on 1st November 1953:

"I am happy to be in your midst.

"It is the deep love of some of my lovers in Dehra Dun that has drawn you all together today to have my darshan.

"But to have my real darshan is not easy.

"To see me at close quarters, to do obeisance to me, to offer me fruits and flowers, to bow down to me and then to return to your homes can never mean that you have had my darshan.

"Having seen me with your eyes you have still not seen me as I am. You have not had even a glimpse of my true Being in spite of your having gone through the convention of so called 'darshan'.

"To have my real darshan is to find me.

"The way to find me is to find your abode in me.

"And the only one and sure way to find your abode in me is to love me.

"To love me as I love you, you must become the recipient of my grace. Only my grace can bestow the gift of divine Love.

"To receive my grace, you must obey me whole-heartedly with the firm foundation of unshakable faith in me.

"And you can only obey me spontaneously as I want when you completely surrender yourselves to me, so that my wish becomes your law and my love sustains your being.

"Age after age, many aspire for such a surrender, but only very few really attempt to surrender themselves to me completely as I want.

"He who succeeds, ultimately not only finds me but becomes me and realizes the goal of life.

"My being in your midst today would serve its purpose even if one from among this multitude has understood what I want you all to know.

"I give my blessings to you all."

The seed of His blessing must bear fruit when the time ripens; and since that last visit of Baba, more and more families in Dehra Dun have grown wholly ~~now~~ devoted to His cause, carrying the pollen of His Love from heart to heart. A long cherished dream of the lovers has been to build a Baba-Centre there, graced by a replica of the Beloved's form in marble. Now with land and money donated by the dear Balkishans, a family more recently awakened to His Love, the dream has come true; and on 23rd March of this year, the 'Avatar Meher Baba Dehra Dun Centre' will be declared open. Baba has appointed Sarosh & Viloo to inaugurate the Centre, and lovers from different parts of India will be there to participate in the feast of His Love and witness yet another expression of the love of His lovers.

The date finalised by Baba for our move to Poona, is the 1st of April. Baba has declared that He will not see people in the month of April. In MAY His lovers will be given the opportunity for His darshan at Guruprasad, during fixed hours on fixed days as decided by Him. From this we conclude that June will not be a darshan month either. We expect to return to Meherazad at the end of June. Please remember therefore, during the three months (April, May, June) to address your cables: MEHERBABA, GURUPRASAD, 24 BUNDROAD, POONA.

As there will be little to report in the way of news (and little time in which to report it) till after May, the next family letter will probably be going out in June. This one comes to you much sooner than expected, because of the Birthday message it carries to you from the Beloved. Baba wishes me to add that He is happy with the love of His dear Western family, received through the flood of Christmas cables from groups and individuals everywhere, and He sends His Love to you each.

Ever lovingly,

MANI

Mani

Meherazad
10th December 1963.

Dearest Family,

If I were to place on the Meherazad news-scales every grain of information stored since the last family letter, it would weigh considerably. However, it would be outweighed by our memories of the timeless event of over a year ago when three thousand lovers of Baba from the East and West, like the three wise men of yore, came from afar to pay homage to the King of kings - and the gift they brought to place at His feet was the love they carried in their hearts. As we stepped into another November we were plunged into remembrances of the last one, as no doubt every Novemberite was, each day bringing back the dear moments shared together in beloved Baba's sahas. Although Diwali, the festival of lights, was some days earlier by this year's calendar, its bright glow reflected last year's Diwali when a number of Baba's Western family landed in the land of His birth. We felt the joy of that event rekindle in our hearts as we watched the flames winking in the little oil-lamps placed on the doorsteps at dusk; and as we straightened up after lighting the numerous wicks we saw the sun setting in a glorious display of colours - the sky too was celebrating the anniversary!

In north India, yet another November memory was celebrated - a November eleven years old, when Baba first visited the district of Hamirpur in 1952. As an expression of their evergreen memory of that visit, the Hamirpur lovers hold a big "mela" (fair) each year at the places visited by Baba, where His lovers from all over Hamirpur district (and a number from other parts of India) gather to rejoice in the glory of His Love. It is at Nauranga that the lovers have built "Meher Dham" (Baba-Abode) which shelters a marble likeness of the Beloved; and so, like the central pearl of a jewel, the focal attention of the pilgrimage is held by Nauranga - a small place that cannot be found even on the biggest of road maps, but which has grown in unique significance with the breath of God's Love. Our Sarosh and his wife Viloo were among those who were sent by Baba from Ahmednagar to participate in the Meher Mela at Nauranga and Maheva this year. On their return they came to Meherazad and reported to Him of the love-feast they were privileged to take a chief part in. They said they had never before witnessed such devotion & enthusiasm at such a mass gathering held purely for the sake of love for Baba, in His physical absence.

Mehersthan, the Baba-abode at Kovvur in Andhra Pradesh (reported in my letter of February) is daily drawing more people to Baba's Love that reigns there. Among the pilgrims to Mehersthan recently have been the Governor of Andhra Pradesh with his family, and several ministers of the State. The mission of Moorthy - Dr.G.S.N.Moorthy M.A.Ph.D, who has been speaking on Baba to large gatherings all over the state of Andhra (& in other parts of India) during the past many months - has no doubt helped to fan the unawakened spark of Baba's Love in many a heart. A supreme speaker when on the subject of his Supreme Beloved, Moorthy has been in eager demand by Baba-Centres all over India; but as his tightly-packed schedule bulged to bursting point he was unable to accommodate every invitation.

Life at Meherazad runs along its customary pattern, and here time seems to run as fast as at any other place. The flower beds have been a blaze of yellow, reds, mauves & pinks, and the vegetable plots have responded with more grace than usual. This was made possible by the generous rains we had this year - while Meherabad, only 15 miles from here, has had one of its worst droughts, and the Baba-families residing there have to economize strictly on their daily ration of water supplied by wells that are fast drying up. Biki, our beloved bird, is back after her absence of seven months and remains unspoilt by all

our affection and attention. The Swifts* have grown up and winged off from their mudbowl nest, while the cherry-bottomed bulbuls have raised another family. The birds are a prominent feature of our daily "breakfast hour" when Baba is with us and the radio turned on; and they fly in through the window to have their breakfast from the feed-box placed on the window ledge inside the room, just five feet from Baba's chair. At first the mother bulbul would collect the big crumbs in her beak and keep flying out to feed her young trio perched on a bush near by. But soon she had a brighter idea and started bringing them right into the dining room to the feed-box, and as she shovelled the food down the gaping beaks of her brood who sprawled there quivering & chattering excitedly, Baba & we would watch with great delight! Now the trio are old enough to feed from the box on their own along with their elders. The other smaller birds patiently await their turn, and Baba is never quite happy until our favourite female robin (whom we've dubbed Pūtla) has come for her share. Pūtla seems to find our company as attractive as the food, for after a few pecks she just sits there on the mound of crumbs, cocking her head at us and seeming to listen to the songs over the radio with keen interest.

Many a time the songs rendered are by those who have sung before the Beloved at Guruprasād - among them Vithal Shinde, Hirabai Barodekar, and that incredible singer Vinayakrao Patwardhan who was chosen by Baba to sing before His Western lovers last November, and who has never failed to answer Baba's call for a program even when it has coincided with his engagement to sing elsewhere. Every time Baba has told him, "you are fortunate". Another fortunate artiste is Begum Akhtar, recently awakened to Baba's Love, who has been Baba's favourite kavvali singer for years and who is now one of His Family as well. She seems to be making up for some of the lost time when she had not known of the Beloved, for once again she took an opportunity to have Baba's darshan and sing to Him. It was during her recent visit to Poona to give a concert in aid of the Police Welfare Fund, which was announced in the papers in bold captions: 'Vocal musical recital by the famous Lucknow artiste, Begum Akhtar!' Through letter & phone calls she sent her plea to Baba to allow her to visit Him, and the Beloved did not have the heart to say No. She came with an enormous garland of fresh flowers for Baba, and with her came the famous tabla emponent Mohammed Ahmed who would not be denied this God-given opportunity of seeing Him again. And so it was that once again in the seclusion of Meherazad, with the few mandali as her audience, Begum Akhtar sang to Baba, songs she had just recorded during her visit to Poona & Bombay. It goes without saying how extremely happy Baba was with her singing, and equally so with her love when she requested to be allowed to stay at Meherazad for one month so that she could sing to Him every day! She is starting a music school in Lucknow which she asked Baba to bless, and she took along with her a large photo of Baba which will grace the school. She also visited the Meher-Dham Mela at Nauranga, cancelling her singing program at Aurangabad in order to do so.

18th October was chosen by Baba for another Song-day at Meherazad, a happy day for a number of Baba-lovers whom He permitted to attend and a tiny respite for Baba from the pressure of His universal work which good kavvali singing always gives Him. The well-known Jaipuri kavvals were the singers at this program, arranged by K. Gajwani, a dear Baba-lover who has seen more than sixty summers but whom Baba refers to as His "child". It was strictly an "All Men" gathering, the only exception made by Baba being our Maharani Shantadevi.

* Although we commonly refer to them as the Swifts because of their strong resemblance to swifts, according to the Who's Who of birds they are known as crag-martins.

If the women Baba-lovers have had cause to feel disheartened over the fact that the men are always given more opportunities to visit Baba than they are, they now have cause to rejoice, for Baba has fixed an "All Women" day on the 23rd of December when over 250 women will be spending the day at Meherazad! This will be the first such program of its kind, and truly befitting the occasion because the 23rd of December is the birthday* of dearest Mehera, in whose honour Baba has had it arranged. Even though the list of names consist of intimate Baba-lovers from only nearby places like Bombay, Poona, Ahmednagar and Navsari, the most difficult part of the arrangements has been the task of limiting the number to less than 300, which is over & above the maximum that Meherazad could accommodate. Eruch teasingly remarked, 'There seems lack of space even at the abode of the Maker of Space!' And we cannot help wondering, as the circle of His lovers expands in number and from place to place, what the problem of such an arrangement could be like in some years to come. Baba remarked to some intimate ones who recently visited Him and were seated before Him in the quiet of Meherazad, "Make the most of this opportunity. The time will soon come when you will find it difficult to obtain a close glimpse of me - you will be jostled to the rear by the crowds of 'new ones' who will be flocking to me"! As the sun of His Love ascends, we find its rays touching hearts & lands yet unawakened to His presence as the Avatar. Among them are Israel, and Iran, where barely a handful of Baba-lovers are spreading the light of His message; and Japan, where a lone Baba-lover has set out with the torch of the Beloved's Name - he is Rin Jubishi, who has started a Baba-magazine in Japanese entitled 'Aum'.

Perhaps this is the right place for me to give you a piece of really welcome news. Charles Purdom, English Baba-follower of many years standing and author of "The Perfect Master" published in 1936, has written another invaluable book - a comprehensive life of Baba entitled THE GOD-MAN which is to be published in London (by George Allen & Unwin) by next May. It is an entirely new work, not merely an enlarged edition of his previous book "The Perfect Master", although it incorporates all factual material from that book. This new book by C.B. Purdom will be a volume of nearly 500 pages, with 8 pages of illustrations, and will contain an account of Baba's life, journeys, work, and His more important messages and declarations. It will also contain an interpretation of His spiritual explanations, His silence, and His significance for mankind. As no Baba-lover would want to be without a copy of this priceless book, I must not fail to mention the price, which is estimated to be 42 sh. per copy (or about Rs.28).

The Beloved is with His mandali from about 8 to 12 every morning, and for about two hours every afternoon. The first thing, both morning and afternoon, the Master's Prayer and the Prayer of Repentance are recited by the mandali before Baba. When we pass by the Hall door we can hear Eruch's voice reciting the Prayers, or reading out important correspondence and telegrams to Baba who is seated in the high-backed chair. If pain were a human being, it would surely be listed among the staunchest of Baba-lovers, for it is holding firmly to Baba's "daaman" despite all that we can do to make it ease its grasp. The hip joint (known I believe as the 'universal joint') has now become not only painful enough to restrict His walking to a minimum, but it makes the hours that He spends seated in the chair increasingly difficult. However, we cannot say it is unexpected when we remember what Baba had said in Poona this summer: "After I return to Meherazad, there will be an increase in suffering and chaos the world over. It will be a reflection of the suffering I will undergo during the nine months...." We have often been reminded of these words since our return from Poona, by the news of the world received through newspapers and radio. The most shocking among them was the assassination of the

* according to the Zoroastrian calendar.

U.S. President, John F. Kennedy, which has proved to be not only a tragedy for the U.S.A. but a loss mourned by nations and individuals all over the world. India has described his murder as 'a crime against humanity', and it is indeed amazing how President Kennedy's death has been felt as a personal loss by the man on the street everywhere! This could only be because he sincerely made his fellow human beings feel he was a brother to them, and championed the cause of the downtrodden. Beloved Baba said of him: He was a great man, good and sincere. Dying as he did, has not only made him immortal in mankind's memory and history, but it has given him a great push forward spiritually. However, although he was assassinated because it was ordained to be, it is not a good thing and it portends more suffering ahead for the world.

At the time of writing, arrangements are in full swing for the accommodation of the large number of women-guests coming on Mehera's birthday, and the space problem that concerns us is "Meherazad space". But, this does not mean we have no other space interests, with all we read and hear of man's achievements in outer space! Science's leap into the exploration of outer space does not constitute even a baby-step into the unimaginable vastness of boundless nothingness. Even so it is a staggering move, and surely the deeper man goes in search for knowledge of Creation, the closer it must bring him to the conviction that there is a Divine Hand that has created it and sustains it. The renowned space-age scientist, Wernher Von Braun, has said: 'Manned space flight is an amazing achievement. But it has opened for us thus far only a tiny door for viewing the awesome reaches of space. Our outlook through this peephole at the vast mysteries of the universe only confirms our belief in the Creator.' One morning some remark from one of the mandali inspired Baba to touch on the topic of space, and He explained: However far man may fling himself into outer space, even if he were to succeed in reaching the furthestmost object in the universe, man will not change - wherever he goes, he will remain what he is. It is when man travels within himself, that he experiences a metamorphosis of his self. It is this journeying that matters, for the infinite Treasure - GOD - is within man, and not to be found anywhere outside of himself.

This opened a door in our memory three summers old, when the Beloved, seated before a roomful of His lovers at Guruprasad, told them of this Treasure that lies hidden. Baba said: The infinite Treasure is within you. The only drawback to your realizing it is that you do not seek it within you. You look without. This has been your habit for endless lives since your apparent birth in the beginningless Beyond. The moment you get up from sleep, you start looking outside of you! When you are on the Path, you begin to look within you and see some sparks of the Treasure - but these are just reflections from the Real Treasure. The Perfect Master has the key that opens the last gate which holds this Treasure from you. To aspire to this infinite Treasure is in a way sheer madness, and it has to be that degree of madness which remains unaffected by the most alluring of pleasures or the most painful of sorrows! The infinitely compassionate look - nazar - of the Perfect Master can awaken such 'madness' in you. And for this to happen, you have to live in complete obedience to the Master, in complete resignation to His will. It makes no difference whether you are physically near or away from Him.

Beloved Baba sends His Love to you each of His dear family, and wants me to add that His wish regarding not writing letters to Him, nor writing to the men or women mandali residing with Him (except only for some specific work), is to continue until He directs otherwise. You may continue to communicate with Him via cable or telegram in case of emergency and also when you wish to send a greeting of love on happy occasions, including the occasion of His Birthday.

The next family letter will not be going out before end of February, so I'm glad this one has been quite a longish one.

With loving Baba-wishes to you all from your family
at Meherazad,

ever lovingly,

MANI

P.S. Please remember to continue to send a reply-paid form with your cables or telegrams.

I would like to draw the attention of His dear U.S.A. lovers that the amount for this should not be less than the equivalent of \$ 3.00. Nor should it be more than the equivalent of \$ 4.00 as otherwise it would exceed the cost of a cabled message of about 30 words, and each reply-prepaid form can be utilized by us for sending out only one cable.

Meherazad

26th Sept. - 3rd October '63.

Dearest Family,

I was determined not to begin the letter with a remark on the weather, but found it difficult to dodge past a topic that has been looming largely in our small talk - not because we have been short of subjects for conversation, but because we have had the novel experience of being short of sunshine. Some real hard rains we had prayed for and got, but the long spells of chilly drizzle was not on our list of silent prayers. At such times it was as if the sky had a perpetual cold, its swollen & puffy clouds constantly streaming, its wheezy breath blowing down the back of our necks. On the other hand, now when we get snatches of really sunny days (which means as a rule that it's hot) we wish for more rain. I don't know who it was that wrote: 'As a rule a man's a fool; when it's hot he wants it cool; when it's cool he wants it hot; always wanting what is not'

The year has grown some twelve weeks older since our return from Poona. After the first refreshing plunge into Meherazad's quiet life we cease to gasp in renewed wonder at all the little things that make Meherazad what it is, but we can never completely take its blessings for granted. In the moonlight, when the jasmine bushes look like leafy nets that have caught a shower of fallen stars, we still gaze fascinated. And when at dawn these fragrant little flowers cover the garden paths like white carpets, we still find time to stand and stare. Of course there is the other side to Nature's coin, and competing with the profusion of the jasmine are the midges and the mosquitoes that seem immune to all our attempts to outwit them; and when on an evening we hear the sound of vigorous slaps & claps, it is no cause for concern - one or the other of us is up in arms against these humming horrors. However, pleasing form of life has also been on the increase, and it is already difficult for us to tell the babies apart from the parents - I'm talking of course of the birds: the bulbuls, sunbirds, mynahs & others; while Mrs. Swift is in the process of hatching her family in her little mud bowl of a nest outside our cottage wall. When some restless or curious fledgling would drop out of its nest, we would put it back in its frantic mother's care. We played the role of anxious aunties when they ventured on their first non-stop flight from one tree to another; for, not all of them are little Lindbergs, and more than once we've picked up a bewildered & bedraggled young bird from one of the water tanks in the garden. Whenever this happens, after the bird is thoroughly dried by the log fire until its feathers are fluffy and it has regained its aplomb & lung power, before setting it free we invariably take it to Baba. The Beloved gently caresses its sleek head, and sometimes blesses it with a kiss. That is as far as we see of the blessing - how can we fathom its unseen depths? How can we understand the silent miracle of His presence that wipes out hordes of sanskaras, the alchemy of His touch that turns the consciousness of a bird or animal into that of a human being in its next life? As Kabir has said: 'One moment, half a moment, even half of a half moment spent in the company of a Perfect Master, cuts away crores of one's sanskaras'.

If the Perfect Ones of the past have explained this for us, beloved Baba also has done so on rare occasions. For instance when we were in Agra, during our Bus Tour in 1938, one morning we found a bird lying in the grounds, a woodpecker that had been badly injured by the sling-shot of some boy. We brought it in, dressed the wound & bandaged it. Baba held it in His lap, caressed it, fed it. For all our nursing the bird did not survive long, and just before the end it struggled out of its box towards where Baba was sitting and dropped dead at His feet. Baba picked it up, and then said (in gestures of course), "You can have no idea how fortunate this bird is - it will now incarnate in the form of a human being." We reflect how the receiver of this immeasurable blessing was unaware and unconscious of it - and it is the same

indeed with all of us, who can never know the magnitude of our good fortune in having Him in our midst. God's blessings spring from the compassion of His all-knowing Heart, and so they come to us in silence, or in disguise. After all, the greatest Blessing for mankind is the One in disguise - the Infinite in finite form, the Avatar!

Keshav Nigam, a dear Baba-lover of Hamirpur who is editor of "Meher Pukar", the Hindi Baba-magazine that he has kept running for over ten years, has composed forty verses in praise of Baba, known as Meher Chalisa. Baba has often had Keshav recite the Chalisa to Him, for the quiet depth of his recitation is as beautiful as the verses of his love-song to the Beloved. One verse says:

Though limitless, Thou hast come to us as God-Man;
Though Infinite, Thou hast bound Thyself with finiteness
in order to uphold and prove
the limitations of the finite.

That we may 'find' Him, He allows the finite to 'bind' Him. And while bound, He is human enough to miss His infinitely Free State of Being, as we gather from His comments. In Poona this summer Baba said, "In Me I am Free, but in you I feel bound. In the Parabrahma (Beyond) State there is no binding; there is absolute Freedom, absolute Existence. What a sublime State it is! From that sublime State I have come to your level. Babajan often used to remark on my having come down from that exalted State to get myself bound here, quoting to me the Persian lines: Having gained Freedom, you have come back as prisoner (to free others)."

Whenever the Beloved talks of Babajan, it is with a deep love that is sensed by all who are present. He told us that in her previous incarnation she was the Sufi saint, Rabia. In the days when He was still Merwan, Baba used to visit Babajan daily, along with Gustadji. Although she would not allow anyone to touch her person, she would ask Merwan (Baba) to scratch her head & her back - and He would do so for hours. At that time none could persuade her to have some shelter built overhead where she used to sit under the Neem tree, nor would she consent to have some sort of a seat made for her so she would not have to sit on the bare ground. But when Baba requested her, she allowed Him to have a low wooden platform made for her, with a cotton mattress placed on it for her comfort. The mattress had an amusing sequel for Gustadji, because one day when it rained heavily and the mattress got soaked, she had Gustadji carry it on his head so it could dry! Babajan explained the reason to Gustadji, saying "It is a very precious mattress, because my Son (Merwan) has given it to me." Although Babajan would talk with others always in mysterious & cryptic sentences, when alone with Baba her speech would be quite normal & clear, and once she related to Him at length the story of her early life. Baba told us that Babajan had come all the way from her birthplace in Baluchistan and settled down in Poona because of the Avatar's advent - she had come to Poona solely for Baba. Baba has often referred to her as "Emperor", in the spiritual sense; and indeed she herself was very averse to being called 'Amma' (mother), and hence was called 'Baba' (father) Jan. She would flare up if anyone called her Mother, for women are considered to be the weaker sex, and she would state that God-realization was not for weaklings!

There is an island quality to our life at Meherazad, for we seldom go outside of it during the many months that we stay here after our return from Poona. Having a visitor is an occasion for us, and indeed a very special occasion for the Baba-lover visiting because rarely does the Beloved permit anyone to visit Him here, and still more rarely to stay for some days. But

there are times when a number are expressly invited, as they are on the 28th of this month (September), when Baba has arranged to have a singing program at Meherazad. The singer is from Bombay, now a Baba-lover since having come many times to Guruprasad this summer to regale the Beloved with very good ghazals and also some songs of his own composition in praise of Baba. This man, M.Y.Mohan is popularly called Mohan-Saigal, because his wonderful voice has a twin resemblance to that of Saigal, a nationally popular singer who is now dead. It is interesting how his first visit to Baba, at Poona, came about. A telegram was sent asking if he would come to sing for Baba. He was naturally addressed as M Y Mohan, which read in the telegram as "My Mohan", and his instantaneous response was "Your Mohan is most happy to come". And so 'Baba's Mohan' will be singing again to Baba, on the 28th - as I have started drafting this letter before that date, I might recount the program in the next letter.

Baba's love for music was outstanding even as a boy, as was the quality of His own singing. Years later, whenever a neighbour would talk about 'Merwan' to Baba's mother, one of the most consistent remarks would be 'How beautifully Merwan used to sing!' Once Baba told a gathering of His lovers; "Three things make me happy: taking on the suffering of the universe; hearing good music (good music mind you, not Dr.Deshmukh's brand!); playing cards with my Boys & seeing them rub noses on the floor."

Although this game of cards is known as Larisque, the way it is played by Baba & His men it is as unique as it is delightful, and defies all known conventions of the game, or indeed of any card game. At times, when Baba is at Guruprasad, the players are as many as forty in number, so that even though most of two packs of cards are used, each player gets only two cards. The game is divided into two parties, and half the fun is the uproar the men create when they disagree on some point, or think someone has been cheating to add zest to the game. Although it is all in the fun & spirit of the game, I don't see how anyone's argument can be heard for they all talk atonce - until Baba, pink in the face from silent laughter, gives a loud clap that brings the clamour to a sudden halt. However, the best part is reserved for the last when the game is over, and the losers bend over together and rub their noses on the ground before Baba; and that I fancy is the part many of them look forward to most! Once Baba explained to a lover, a Judge, who was participating in the game for the first time, "My reason for playing this game of cards is threefold: 1) The burden of my universal work gets lightened; (2) The minds of the players are focussed on me in a most natural manner; (3) Those who lose have to rub their noses on the carpet before me, the Highest of the High. This is a privilege filled with significance, and thus the losers become the winners." Baba then quoted the Urdu lines, which mean 'It is a game in which the winner feels ashamed and the loser rejoices.'

You must be wondering when I'll get down to mentioning about the Beloved's health - but I can't help evading a subject that is always the most difficult part of the letter; and by the time the report reaches you there might well be a change for the better or worse. The pain in the hip joint was considerably less a few days ago, and now it seems to have started in earnest. The little walking exercise He used to get when going to & fro from the Mandali's has still not been resumed and the lift-chair is still used. One lover writes, 'If Baba is well, the world is well.' We think it is more likely to be the other way round, for His suffering reflects the pulse of the world, and the world is far from well!

Perhaps He allows His dear & near ones to share in some form or another, for 1963 seems to have been a record year for sickness among Baba-lovers, including such stalwarts of the Mandali as dear Kaka & Baidul; and most recently Baba's indispensable "right-hand and mouth-piece", Eruch, who returned home yesterday after two weeks at the hospital. The 'emergency' telegrams & cables received almost daily make us realize that quite a number

of Baba-lovers are blessed with physical suffering or mental agony at this time. What does Baba say? Well, at Poona He once said to one of His lovers, a police officer who was facing some agonizing family troubles: "Be courageous. Think more and more of me. I know your love for me and the circumstances you are placed in. Don't wear yourself out with worry. Instead, thank me for the suffering that has come to you", and Baba quoted the Persian lines: 'I may cause my enemies to flourish and kill my friends. This I may do, and none has the right to demand why I do so!'" To another, Baba said, "It is natural that at times you feel 100% miserable. Be sure that I know everything. When everything goes wrong, the mind becomes helpless and has to rely on the heart. These are the moments when you resign to my will and rely solely on my help. When you leave all to ME, I dare not neglect you, and you get relief from your predicament. I am the Ocean of Love and Compassion. Indicating the helplessness of a lover, the poet Hafiz has said 'In loving my Beloved, I have become like an ant under the foot of an elephant - safe and secure, but helpless to move'. To demand anything from the Beloved is an insult to Love. Love only gives and goes on giving till the will of the Beloved alone manifests through the lover."

Tukaram, a Perfect Master of the sixteenth century, says in his writings: 'Sahaj bolanay hech updesh' - which means 'Even the most casual remark of the Perfect Master has the significance of a sermon'. When God is with us as Compassionate Father, Friend and Master, He guides us in the silence of His Love and in the declarations of His discourses. Lest we get confused or distracted on the way, He reminds us to be vigilant, warns us not to let the stream of our life be ever diverted from its straight course to the Ocean - BABA.

Recently the Beloved sent a cable to Irwin & Edward Luck, young Baba-lovers of Florida (U.S.A.) as follows: "You should under no circumstances contact any spiritual teacher or master, easterner or westerner." It makes me recall what Baba said to His lovers one time at Guruprasad: "Remember the way is slippery. Guard yourself against 'posing'. The hypocrite deceives himself and others. The sin that God does not forgive is hypocrisy; and even though I am the Ocean of Compassion, I feel nauseated by the hypocritical saints & masters that now flourish everywhere like poisonous mushrooms."

Again Baba says, "Keep your hold on my daaman even if 'heaven and earth become one'. Don't worry about conflicting thoughts, but keep constant vigilance over your grip on my daaman - do not let your grip relax at any time."

Beloved Baba sends His blessing of Love to you each.

Ever lovingly,

MANI

(MORE)

A loving Reminder: In order to help our heavy postal budget, please do NOT fail to send your cables reply prepaid whether a reply is indicated or not.

P.S. In my April letter I had mentioned about two gems that you must not fail to add to your treasure chest of Baba-books. One of these, THE EVERY-THING AND THE NOTHING* is a new harvest of Baba's discourses for Truth-starved humanity, and you all will have received copies of it by now. In the meantime, the entire first edition of this has been sold out. However, a paper-back edition is in the process of being printed by Meher House Publications (Australia) and many of you will no doubt wish to obtain copies of this second edition to use as inexpensive but ideal gifts for every suitable occasion. As the printing is not completed, the exact price is not yet known, but it is expected to be 70¢ for the U.S.A.; Sterling 4/-

The other book, THE EAST WEST GATHERING* by Francis Brabazon has more than satisfied our expectations, & has enabled us to relive the precious moments of the Event that this book celebrates. I use the word 'celebrate' deliberately, for it is no journalist's report but truly a celebration in prose, verses & songs of those memorable days. It is not merely a shore account of that oceanic event in history - Francis has sailed beyond the horizon to reveal a breath-taking expanse of the beauty of God as Man! You must not miss this book - it is also published by Meher House Publications, beautifully printed and bound, and is priced \$ 1.80; sterling 13/-

* place orders through your group-head or write direct to William LePage, Meher House, Kalianna Crescent, Beacon Hill, N.S.W., Australia.

Easterners please place your orders with Adi K. Irani, through group-heads or individually.

Meherazad
9th August 1963

Dearest Family,

I've been sitting at the typewriter for half an hour ready to begin the letter, but the page before me has remained as blank as my mind seemed to be. It is an unusually still morning in absence of the gusty wind that has lately been blowing itself hoarse through the trees, rattling our windows and tempers, whisking off papers that are not under paper-weights, and whipping one's hair up in the latest 'beehive' fashion. A lizard is digging the soft earth by a flower bed to lay its eggs in, and the pert little tailor-bird is tugging at strands of coir from the mat just a few feet away from where I sit, to line the nest of the family it is planning. The sky is a thick canopy of clouds, but in the dictionary of Meherazad clouds don't necessarily mean rain.* When the sun comes out the bumble-bees buzz in busy circles round the blue flowers of the jacaranda. Another bloom that welcomed us on our return to Meherazad was that of the Cactus plant which flowers once in a long while, but which seems to make up for lost time by the richness of its exquisite blossom! It is Meherazad in one of its pleasantest moods, but one which the Meherazadians have not often the time or mood to appreciate or enjoy - life with Baba rarely permits it. Each of us is kept continually occupied with his or her duties, allotted or unexpected, with little time that can be called 'one's own' - but then that is as it should be, when one's all is His!

Baba has been with the mandali all morning, and soon now He will come over to the women's quarters for lunch. He will be carried in a lift-chair by the boys, because the pain in His hip-joint is considerably more (partly owing no doubt to this cloudy weather) and walking the distance becomes an ordeal for Him. To us this means one more 'binding' that the Beloved has imposed upon Himself - one of the innumerable bindings God takes on when He has bound Himself in the human form for the sake of humanity. As we have seen through the years, doctors & health, as everything else concerned with Baba, serve as a smoke-screen for the real purpose of His work not revealed to us. As I once wrote to Harry Kenmore: So that we might 'remember' our True Self in Him, Baba does a lot of 'forgetting' to Himself. He has 'forgotten' to make speech, He has 'forgotten' to write, He has 'forgotten' almost to walk and scarcely to eat. May we always remember His forgetting, and forget our remembering, till there is nothing to remember except just HIM!

It is over a month since we left Poona, and although our Guruprasad stay seems a long distance away, it stands out in detail before our mind's eye - it is like looking at an object from the opposite end of a pair of binoculars. Particular moments and scenes stand out with shining clarity, and here are some flashes from the endearing memories of this summer at Guruprasad:

Baba was in the assembly hall, and the crowd of His lovers seated before Him seemed to cover every inch of floor space available. Baba singled out a little girl barely four years old and called her to Him. She trotted up eagerly and bowed down at His feet like any grown-up, and then an ecstatic smile lit her face as Baba drew her to Him and embraced her and caressed her cheeks. She was from Sagar, a place long way away from Poona, and her parents were not with her - she had come with her neighbours. When she heard that her neighbours were going to Poona to see Baba, she pleaded with her Mummy to let her go with them, insisting with all the determination and

* Since writing this, we have had good rains!

tearful persistence of a child who will not be deterred from its object. She won her point, Baba's embrace, and the hearts of all who heard the story of her purposeful pilgrimage.

One crowded Sunday we saw among the long queue of darshaners who were awaiting their turn to approach Baba, a woman who was having trouble keeping her two boisterous youngsters in order. I did not think the Beloved could even have seen her, surrounded as He was with the others who were garlanding Him, taking His darshan and offering sweets or fruit which often He would touch and return to them as prasad. But He had! When the woman came up to Baba, He asked her, "Do these kids trouble you?". She feelingly replied "Yes Baba, indeed they do!" With a twinkle in His eyes Baba said, "If only two children can make your life a hell, can you imagine My plight who has billions of children?!" I'm sure that remark must have warmed the mother's heart and brought Baba closer to her than any books or explanations could have done.

On a weekend in April, a small village somewhere near Bombay wore a completely deserted air. Its thirty odd mud houses were shut, nobody was about, and the cattle were under their shelters with enough fodder near them to last till their owners' return next morning. The reason for this was that the entire village had gone to Poona for the day to have Baba's darshan! Baba's love had been ignited in the hearts of these village folk by a Baba-lover of Bombay. This lover has a bushy beard; and Baba teased him, saying that he looked like Father Christmas. One of the mandali remarked that if the beard were white, he would positively have looked the part. Eruch then put in that he could rightly be called Father Christmas, since he had brought the gift of Baba's love to all these villagers! Baba embraced each of them, and expressed His happiness at their coming. As He has said more than once, "When I break My silence, all will come to know Me. Fortunate are those who know Me now."

15th & 16th June comprised the last weekend for darshan seekers from outstations, and among those who did not fail to take this final opportunity were a couple from the south - Andhra state's Minister for excise, prohibition & social welfare, Sri M.R.Apparao and his attractive wife. What makes their visit unforgettable to us is the expression of their love for Baba that we were witness to. Firstly they were granted their wish of doing Baba's 'pada-pooja' (literal meaning 'feet-worship'), a rare privilege, and they washed and anointed Baba's feet with milk, honey, curds, spices and perfume. And then Sri Apparao said to the Beloved that, on behalf of himself and his wife, he wished to declare publicly what they had believed in their hearts - that Baba is the Avatar, God in human form.

During a kavvali singing program, Baba would explain to us some lines from the ghazals. One of them was: The lover says to the Beloved, 'I experience the parched desert of separation as an ocean of water, for I have grown so much in love that I quench my thirst by thirst itself!' Another line was; 'Only those eyes which have intense longing for a sight of the Beloved, can have some inkling of the secret of that intoxication which the Beloved's eyes impart.' Baba then said: "See the irony of it. In spite of the prevailing law of Prohibition in the country, there are many people who continue to drink. Now, where the 'wine' of Divine Love is concerned, there is no prohibition. It is abundant and free for any and all who may wish to have it, and yet there is rarely a one who wants to drink it or craves for it - that is the humour of it!"

One morning someone from a theosophical society, obviously a very learned person in his own estimation, came to see Baba for the first time, and asked Him for a message. Baba said, "My message is, love God to such an extent that you become God. That Love is a gift from God. One of the means by which it can also be won is selfless service - but the selfless service should be so sublime that you should not even have a thought that you are

serving! Truth has to be experienced, and for that one has to go beyond mind, which is so difficult that it is just about impossible! You can love God. You can see God. He is not anywhere outside, but right within you. So you must seek Him within. Conviction through understanding is possible (by reading and contemplation etc.), but conviction by sight is the real conviction. After that, some rare one can achieve conviction by actual becoming - i.e. realizing God.

"What I say is not mere words of intellect, but of Experience. They are not words coming from the mind, but from experience of the Beyond. I am the One, the Only One, and experience Myself one with all. When I break My silence the world will come to know who I am. As a rule, in the past it has been the lot of posterity to know who the Avatar was. But in this unique Avataric advent the world will know who the Avatar IS while Baba is yet on earth."

At another occasion Baba said, "God is not to be found in the skies or in the caves of the Himalayas. God is in the heart of each one. Once your heart is clean, God will shine out in it. But it is not easy to clean one's heart. It is like diving deep into a sea of fire! To love Me is to lose yourself. Hence, where you are, God is not; and where God is, you are not. It is easy to become good but very difficult to become God." With tongue in cheek, Adi remarked that it should be easy to become God after becoming 'good' - one just had to knock off an 'O'. Baba replied, "It is no joke to do that - even if one were to die in the attempt to knock off that O one would not succeed!" Baba continued, "To love God is not easy. The easy path is to hold fast to My daaman. Throw down all your burden of sanskaras at My feet by complete surrender to Me. I am the Ocean and can absorb all your burden. But in fact there is no such thing as 'burden' - it is all imagination, a play of Maya." Baba said, "Maya has been compared to ringworm infection. The more you scratch, the more you want to scratch, and the more miserable you become. In the same way, the more you indulge in Maya the more you want to indulge in it, and become all the more miserable."

Baba touched on the subject of 'saints' and 'masters' that abound in the East today. He said, "They are like seashells scattered on the beach, their superfluous glitter attracting the loiterers on the beach who pick them up and think they have gained the treasure of the sea. But it is a far cry from the Pearl ensconced in the deeps of the Ocean! And so it is that Hafiz says how foolish people are who compare pearls with seashells. The Real Pearl is here, (Baba pointed to Himself). Do not go after shells." The Perfect Master, Sant Tukaram, spoke strongly of the hypocrites who set themselves up as spiritual teachers, and among the poetical compositions he left for posterity, one of his favourite ones was: 'Wearing long matted hair and with ash-besmeared body, there are many frauds in varied guises. Tukaram says let their (dead) conscience get burnt - it is no sin to thrash them!' Baba had Eruch recite it in the original.

The weekend mass of humanity gathered around Baba was always made up of men & women of diverse religions - Hindus, Muslims, Zoroastrians, Sikhs, Sindhis, Christians & others; of different castes & creeds, and from varied walks of life. The 'tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, rich man, poor man.....' of the game we used to enjoy as children, were all there. Concentrating on a corner of the hall, to the left of Baba, I once tried to make a list of the men sitting there, by their professions and occupations; and the result was as interesting as I expected. Among that group were: a lawyer, yogi, businessmen, cricketer, medical doctor, clerk, bakery owner, army colonel, poet, wing-commander of the Air force, journalist, sessions judge, school-boy, major-general of the army, musician, university professor, farmer, member of parliament, principal of a college, typist, chiropractor, editor, shop-keeper, school teacher, bank accountant, cook, motor mechanic, geologist, priest, college student, pathologist, singer and salesman. But however varied their

religion and mode of life, like flowers threaded together in a garland they were united in their love for Baba, in their desire to love Him as He should be loved, and in the conviction of their hearts that He is God incarnate, the Avatar of the age.

Among the gathering we also saw many faces we had not seen before - 'new-comers' who had heard of Baba from other lovers. We gather too from letters, how the Beloved's Family grows daily, in the East and in the West. Baba-centres have sprung up all over India, the workers carrying His message and Name to as many as possible through individual and combined efforts. There are atleast three men who we know have taken a 'holiday' from their jobs till the end of this year and are individually touring India, giving talks about Baba at every town or city they halt. Others give His messages in newspapers and magazines, in the vernacular and in English. Through various means and in different ways Baba's Name reaches the eyes and ears of the multitude, making a channel for Baba to touch the hearts that are ripe to open to His Love. But even just to hear His Name is a 'contact' that must benefit the hearer, for Baba tells us that the time is near when the divine 'power-house' will be switched on and all hearts connected to it will receive directly of His Love, and those that come even within the orbit of His Name will get its warmth and glow.

The spreading of His beloved Name & message seems about to be carried out on a world-wide scale through the medium of THE WORLD FAIR that is being held in the U.S.A. starting from April 1964 and running for two years. This World Fair project of America is a gigantic affair costing 100 billion dollars, covering hundreds of acres with magnificent buildings that will represent and exhibit the culture, industry, religion and art of almost every country in the world. President Kennedy has estimated that seventy million people will visit the Fair during its life term of two years. Jane Barry Haynes is a very dear Baba-lover in the U.S.A. who had come to India for the November Gathering with her three children who adore Baba. When Jane knew of the World Fair she couldn't help thinking 'What a wonderful opportunity this would be of spreading Baba's message of Love!' But could she dare bring that thought outside the realm of 'a beautiful dream' that it seemed, into the daylight of reality? She did, and the dream is fast becoming a reality. The staggering task of obtaining a little space for Baba's work at The World Fair has been achieved, with the help of His many lovers in the U.S.A. The innumerable barriers that stood in the way were surmounted, for when it is His Will we are always shown the way. As Jane says, He is the Doer, we are but instruments. She said in one of her earlier letters to Adi:

'On the day we arrived in India, here (in the U.S.A.) the ground was broken for the Vatican City Pavilion, an awe-inspiring building that will house the original sculpture of the Pieta by Michelangelo sent over by the Pope for the Fair. When I saw the plans for this building, and a tremendous one for the Protestant Center, another for the Mormon Church, I was glad that spiritual life would be incorporated in the Fair as in one way it will make our work easier. I was sad too, to the point of tears, to look at all the grandeur planned in Christ's Name and in His Cause, when He is with us here once again, and we must pray and plead to have one little space in His Cause! This is ever the way, though, of the messengers of God. They work in God's Way, their Way, and how blessed we are to share this Work.'

When the idea was first submitted for Baba's decision, Baba expressed His happiness and approval, and sent a cabled message for all lovers to help as they could in the project. The response was wonderful, and contributions flowed in from Baba-lovers all over the States to make up the sum of over \$7,000. that was required to lease the 100 square feet space, which has been obtained in the Western section of the Fair as wished by Baba. MEHER BABA'S UNIVERSAL MESSAGE is the title that will crown the reserved space

ong with a picture of the Beloved - and thus will the 'universe' be accommodated in a little corner of the plot representing the 'world'!

But there is much yet to be accomplished before the opening of the Fair. Visitors stopping at the Baba-stall will want to know about Meher Baba and His universal message. For this it is planned to bring out a pamphlet giving a short life-sketch of the Beloved and His message, to be given free to the visitors - and at least a million copies must be on hand. To meet this expense, as well as towards other items essential for the work, generous contributions will again be needed - and beloved Baba would wish that His Western lovers respond once again to the need of the Project. Jane will soon be sending out a circular letter to the U.S.A. groups about this in more detail.

And now, as I'm overstepping the margin of five pages set for the letter, I must close - with the message that Baba gave for His 38th silence anniversary on 10th July 1963, in response to a request from our Swami Satyaprakash Udaseen, editor of the English Baba-magazine 'Divya Vani' issued quarterly in Andhra State:

MY SILENCE AND THE BREAKING OF MY SILENCE AT THE APPOINTED
TIME WILL MAKE SILENT THOSE WHO TALK OF EVERYTHING BUT GOD

=MEHER BABA=

Very lovingly,

Guruprasad, Poona

12th June 1963

Dearest Family,

Once when our dear maharani Shantadevi came in to say good-bye to us, she told us delightedly, "Baba said we are both going to become immortal". To our questioning look as to who the other one was besides herself, she replied "Guruprasad and I"! Unique beyond doubt is the role played by Guruprasad in the life and activities of the Avatar of the Age, and by its gracious and fortunate owner who has placed it at His service in love.

This summer a rich harvest of the Beloved's sahavas has been gathered by Baba-lovers from many parts of India, and Guruprasad has added to its score of cherished memories many more Baba-occasions, expected and unexpected. There was "Meher Leela", a drama depicting Baba's life and enacted in dance by the students of Kalakshetra dancing school of Eluru (Andhra), which was first presented at the opening of Mehersthan in Kovvur and which Baba asked to have performed before Him at Guruprasad. Beautifully danced by a cast consisting mostly of girls under twelve, it earned frequent bursts of applause from Baba and the assembly. The first scene when Lord Vishnu (played by natyacharya Gudimetla Krishna) hears the cry of Mother Earth imploring the Ancient One to descend again and restore dharma, was splendid - as was the dance expressing Nature's ecstasy when atlast the Avatar has come. One of the youngest dancers who played the role of "Baba", stole our hearts by her performance - particularly in the scene where, as Merwan, she cycled past Babajan before receiving the Kiss. Backstage, two blind musicians supplied fascinating music on the violin, harmonium and flute; and their moment of joy obviously came when Baba embraced them. The songs that accompanied each dance were rendered by two young women, who as girls took up the profession of street-singers to support their mother and little brother. They went thru years of bitter trials & temptations. Then Baba stepped into their life, and its course changed completely - and so did their songs. They still sing from street to street, from place to place, from district to district of Andhra State; but instead of the common songs considered popular, they now sing songs about Baba. This change earned the sisters not only respect but much popularity, and their singing is in demand on festive occasions and at private functions. Baba was touched when He heard of their recent contribution towards India's defence fund, earned from singing Baba-songs.

We think of that weekend as the 'Andhra-weekend' - nearly 200 Andhraites came by special train carriages, including a number of children and the inevitable babes in arms who were placed by their mothers at Baba's feet for their share of His darshan. That Sunday there was Burra-Katha also, as desired by the Beloved. It is a sketch conveying the story of Baba's life and the glory of His Avatarhood, performed partly in dialogue and partly in song by the Trio who originated it, and played before Baba at Meherabad during the 1958 sahavas. It was their fourth performance in His presence, since the eight years they have devotedly played it over a hundred and fifty times to crowds of thousands of people in Andhra, thus carrying Baba's dear Name and message of Love to villages & towns & cities all over the state.

The Hamirpur weekend was no less memorable. Two large groups came - one by train, the other by private bus across which was painted in Hindi: "Avatar Meher Baba ki jai!". Their contribution to the weekend's program was unexpected but thoroughly enjoyed by all - they enacted, in condensed form, one of Bhau's plays. A simple affair, seasoned with much humour and spicy acting (especially as the women's roles were played by men), it revealed the true story of Hamirpur before the tide of Baba's love swept away the severe opposition that faced the first few lovers who pioneered to spread Baba's message in that district. The priests and the orthodox were scared of this unknown 'menace' which threatened to dissolve all distinction of caste & creed in a brotherliness and oneness of love for God, and so they incited the

people to harass these followers of Meher Baba and stop them from endangering their age-old ideas and customs. When Baba first visited Hamirpur, He was to give darshan at Nauranga - the place where Meher Dhām now stands - a little village where rural life and transport facilities are primitive. Water is channeled to the heart of the fields thru big arteries of canals that are crossed by crude bridges. A few hours before the morning Baba was to arrive, the opposition party tore down the bridge and breached the canals, flooding the area & the surrounding fields, so that Baba had to give darshan on the outskirts of the village. But Love won, as sooner or later it must. On Baba's next visit there about a year later, the opposers were among the foremost to welcome Him. Today Hamirpur district has one of the largest Bāba following and yearly big fairs are held at the different places sanctified by His visits.

Every day seems a Sahavas Day for some Baba group or other. The number increases in size by Friday when outstation Baba-lovers rush down to Poona for the weekend, swelling into such a crowd every Sunday morning & afternoon that the palace seems too small a place to hold them! But like a mother hen Guruprasad manages to spread itself to accommodate under its wings all the Baba-chicks gathered around Him for their hearts' feed of His presence. Baba gives them His darshan or embrace; He gives them spiritual discourses; He listens to the singing or musical recital with obvious enjoyment & appreciation; He teases Dr. Deshmukh whose outburst of song at unexpected moments is expected by all; He recalls some amusing incident of the past or asks someone to narrate a joke and the hall resounds with laughter. And Baba says: "You see Me doing all this, but simultaneously My work continues. It is as breathing is to you - you talk, work, play, eat, sleep etc. but you never stop breathing. It is the same with My work which continues without a stop whatever else I may appear to be doing. However, when I have special work to do I go into seclusion and wish not to be disturbed."

At another time Baba said "I am so Infinite that I myself cannot fathom my own infinity. My shadow (Illusion) also is so infinite, that once when I tried to count the universes that come out of Me - not galaxies mind you, but innumerable universes - I could not do so. Infinity cannot be fathomed - and, just as there is no end to Reality, so there is no end to its shadow, Illusion. All of you are addicted to Illusion, just as some are addicted to drink or tobacco etc. But there is no addiction like Maya! You can give up drinking or smoking, but Maya is an addiction that is impossible to give up - unless by God's (My) grace.

"Only Dnyan (Self-knowledge) can make you realize that I am nearer to you than what you are to your own self. Nearest to your vision are your eyes, with which you see everything around you. Yet the eyes, that are instrumental in seeing everything, do not see themselves. You have to hold a mirror before you in order to see your eyes. Thus to see your inner Self you have to hold the mirror of Dnyan before you - and only Baba can give you that mirror."

The sun of His Knowledge threw a ray of light on the present panicky problem of over-population everywhere, and revealed an explanation as intriguing as it is unique! Baba gave us to understand that there are 18,000 worlds in Creation which are inhabited, some by human beings with 100% intelligence, others with lesser and varying degrees of it. But the value of our Earth, where mind & heart balance, is inestimable. For it is here, and here alone that one can go thru the process of Involution and experience the subtle and mental spheres; here alone that God-realization can be attained. Thus it is that souls (jiv-atmas) from other inhabited worlds finally take birth on this Earth for their emancipation, more so during the Avataric advent when the highest spiritual benefit is gained - and most so when the Avataric manifestation is greatest. Hence the present influx of population on Earth is but the natural outcome of the rush of 'migration' from other worlds, and the ones migrating from the worlds of highest intelligence are responsible for carrying

Science to the peak it has reached today. Baba said, "All this has been recurring since timeless ages, in a never ending tide and ebb. Even this Earth expends itself in time and another such earth takes its place. Science will soon come to know a little of what I have said.

"I will break my Silence and manifest when on the one hand science reaches its highest level and on the other hand anti-God elements rise to their peak. Accordingly, my spiritual Manifestation will also be of the highest. When I break my Silence the world will be shaken into realization of Who I Am. When I break my Silence the impact will jolt the world out of its spiritual lethargy, and will push open the hearts of all who love Me and are connected with Me. What will happen when I break my Silence, is what has never happened before."

We who are with Baba, are understandably not excited when the Beloved pinpoints a time when He says He will break His silence. Those concerned most with Him, are somehow least concerned about when He will break it. But at this time, Baba has so often been saying that it will be in nine months' time that I feel I must record it here. Baba has compared the nine months before His silence ends, to the gestation period when the child is carried in the mother's womb. Baba said, "Wherever we turn we find depression, confusion, conflict. It is nothing but a sign of my soon breaking silence and releasing a fresh dispensation of Truth. After I return to Meherazad, there will be an increase in pain & suffering, mental torture & chaos, the world over. It will be a reflection of the suffering I will undergo during the nine months, reaching its height at the time of 'delivery' (the breaking of my Silence). Then will come the Birth, when both "mother & baby" will get relief.

"The time is arriving, and very close it is in arriving, when I will shake everything off Me - that is why I keep saying let your hold on my daaman be very strong. The coming nine months before I break my Silence are very important. So in the nine months at your disposal engage yourselves in spreading my message of Love, and trying your utmost to live the life you ask others to live. You must live what you say, otherwise the best thing would be to keep your mouth shut. There can be no compromise. My lovers should be 100% honest in spreading my message of Love & Truth. Don't let any hypocrisy enter into it. Don't let jealousy or backbiting creep into it, or the thing will be spoilt. If you travel about to do my work and cannot afford to do so by jet plane or train or car or even a bullock-cart, then go about on foot. But, whatever work you do for Baba, do it honestly. Don't think you are doing the work - it is done by God's Will."

The Beloved gave a special message on a special occasion - in fact "unique" is the best adjective to describe the occasion, for never before has Baba taken part in such a function, and the newspapers rightly proclaimed: "Sports history was made at Poona....." It all began when Mr. Pulsulay & Mr. Rege of The Poona District Cricket Association came for Baba's darshan and requested Him to award prizes to the winners at this year's Annual Prize Distribution Function, which they would arrange to hold wherever it would be most convenient to Him. The outcome was that Baba accepted, and chose Guruprasad as the place where the function would be held. And so the afternoon of Sunday the 26th of May found the assembly hall at Guruprasad filled with cricketers and members of the P.D.C.A., while the verandah and adjoining rooms were packed with the usual gathering of Baba-lovers. It was a field day for the cricketers. They received their trophies of shields, cups & merit-certificates from Baba's hands, along with His blessing of Love; they received His darshan and participated in the Arti sung at the end of the function. As one who knows & loves cricket, Baba advised them to play bright cricket and not to make it boring for the spectators just for the sake of remaining unbeaten. To illustrate this He cited a humorous incident of His school days when He was wicket-keeper batsman, and the cricketers seated before Him thoroughly appreciated and enjoyed the story - and The Times of India spread headlines over its sports page: GO IN FOR BRIGHT CRICKET SAYS MEHER BABA.

The Indian Express produced part of His message and said "Hundreds of his devotees witnessed Avatar Meher Baba preside at the function, which in the words of a veteran sportsman was 'unique'." Another paper commented "Avatar Meher Baba has devotees by the thousands, not only in India but in other parts of the world. Baba has a big following of cricketers, prominent among whom are India's skipper Nari Contractor, Polly Umrigar, Khandu Rangnekar, and others."

The message that Baba gave them on the occasion was:

"I am happy to present these trophies today. When I was a boy in school and college I played cricket. Now I play my Divine Universal Game, which includes cricket, and so I am still fond of that game.

"It is good to excel in whatever one takes up, so long as with excellence there is a feeling of humility; for this leads to love of God, and to love God as He should be loved is the best excellence.

"I give you my blessing that one day each of you may have that love."

Although the programmes mentioned here have been given in details to some extent, for lack of space it is not possible to include all the events and song feasts held at Guruprasad. But I would be sorely amiss if I did not speak of the program that towered over the many "singing Sundays" of this summer - Begum Akhtar's. Begum Akhtar sang to the Beloved for two afternoons, in a Guruprasad that overflowed with His lovers. Her love for Baba, and the charm & warmth of her personality, added to the richness of her songs - and though we expected highly of this favourite kavvali singer of our Highest of the High, she surpassed our expectations. Underneath the serene clarity of her voice lay a storm of feeling, and she skirted the musical precipices with intoxicating ease. By gestures of hand and radiance of face Baba expressed His happiness at her singing, and turning to us He would repeatedly say what a magnificent voice she had. Baba told Begum Akhtar "A voice such as you have is very very rare." She bowed and said "It is all Your grace." Among the things that He gave her as His prasad of love, was a ring set with His picture and a pink scarf that she wore throughout the afternoon. Once again (as in Meherazad) Baba gave her His handkerchief to wipe the tears that coursed down her cheeks during a song. The song that Baba loves best she reserved for the last - its first line is: 'I am the smoke from a snuffed out candle and am going towards my Goal.' After hearing her in person, I doubt if we can ever fully enjoy her short recordings as we used to, for they do poor justice to the vocal beauty expressed in her full-length songs. I must also add that Mohammed Ahmed, the famous tabla exponent, offered to come along as her accompanist when he heard about Baba from Begum Akhtar. It was as fascinating to listen to his tabla (Indian drums) as it was to watch him play it, and he seemed to enjoy playing for Baba as much as Baba enjoyed his excellent performance.

England is the poorer by the loss of one of Baba's oldest and dearest lovers: Will Backett, who died last month after a short illness. As Charles Purdom writes, "Will gave his life to Baba's work - indeed he lived it." For dear Will himself it was nothing but gain, as we can see from the message that beloved Baba sent in a cable to Mollie Eve of His English group:

"Your cable regarding Will's passing away received.

Both my dear archangels Will & Mary Backett have come to Me for all time.

= BABA. "

Another dear one that has come to Baba is Judith Humphries of Australia, one of the Novemberites who wanted to stay on in India but who returned to Australia in accordance with Baba's wish.

I asked Baba how He would wish His Silence anniversary observed this year by His lovers in the West & East, so that His directions regarding it could reach you dear ones in time thru this letter. Baba has decided that it be observed according to the directions sent out last year for the 37th Silence anniversary.

Please note therefore:

On the 10th of July 1963, the 38th Anniversary of His Silence, Avatar Meher Baba wishes all who love and obey Him and all who would want to do so, to observe complete silence for 24 hours beginning from midnight of the 9th of July to midnight of the 10th of July, in accordance with the local time.

Those who, for practical reasons, find that it is not possible to observe silence for the 24 hours on Wednesday the 10th of July 1963, should observe complete fast instead, for twelve hours of that day from 8.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. During this fast nothing must be consumed - not even water.

Those who are fasting for the 12 hours on July 10th, should also observe partial fast in the morning from 6.00 a.m. to 8.00 a.m. by taking only one cup of tea or coffee (with or without milk), before beginning their complete fast at 8.00 a.m.

Baba sends His Love-Blessing to each one of His lovers for the Silence Day.

Ever lovingly,

MANI

P.S. We leave for Meherazad (Ahmednagar) end of June.

Guruprasad, Poona

13th April 1963

Dearest Family,

Just as the perfume from a sachet placed among clothes comes up to greet you when the trunk is opened, so did the sweetly familiar memories of the East-West gathering embrace us when we walked up the steps of Guruprasad. The happy ghosts of those unforgettable November days came out to greet us from round the corners of the verandah and from every room we stepped into. Now as we look out of the pantry windows our eyes see a grass-patched expanse where the caretaker's children play and goats graze and dogs romp, but our minds behold the huge gay awning wherein thousands of His eastern and western children sat together before Him, filling their eyes and hearts with His Presence. In the evenings, the plaintive twittering of swallows as they circle about before getting into their nests for the night, brings this picture startlingly to life, and I think of what the Beloved said recently at Meherazad: "Only on certain occasions do I open My Heart and give out a little Love. At Poona in November I opened a small window in My Heart and doled out a little Love. When I break My Silence I shall open My Heart completely, and keep it open."

We left Meherazad after breakfast on March 24th, enjoyed a sandwich-lunch as usual in the car, and soon as we entered Guruprasad, fell to untying and unpacking the innumerable packages of household and personal belongings that we had spent so much energy in packing at Meherazad. On the way to Poona, Baba had the car stopped under a tree, apparently for some toilet purpose. However, as He stepped out & stood for a moment by the door, a black car which had been behind us for some time drew up in front, from which a man alighted and with joined hands walked straight towards Baba. As he bowed down to Baba he explained that he had last seen Baba in Toka, about 35 years ago, and expressed his joy at the unexpected blessing he had received from this chance meeting on the road! Baba smiled and gestured that He too was happy about it. The actual reason for Baba having stopped the car at that time and place seemed no longer obscure to us.

Guruprasad is "switched on" again and the light of the Beloved's presence is flooding the lives of His lovers in Poona and shedding its rays over the city's teeming population whether it is aware or unaware of the blessing. The lovers wait in tiptoed hope for a call from Baba that will throw open to them the gates of Guruprasad so that they might enter into the presence of God. Baidul, usually the appointed Peter of this heaven of Baba-lovers, knows the days and occasions permitted by Baba, and during holidays and Sundays he waves the visitors in with a vehemence that tunes in with their happy mood. They come walking, cycling, by car, bus, taxi or tonga; they come alone; they come with children, with garlands, with joy-rubbed faces. They come not just because of their love, but because of their Beloved's compassion which overrules the rules He put down in November about "no visitors, no darshan, no programs." In fact Baba has announced that this summer's stay of three months at Guruprasad will be dotted with musical programs fixed for every Sunday afternoon from 3 to 6 o'clock, during which time His lovers can be in His presence. It will be an Eastern gathering of Baba-lovers in a complete sense, for even the singers will sing for Baba in love, their reward being the privilege of singing to Him. This honour goes to such nationally renowned artistes as Begum Akhtar, Hirabai Barodekar, Vinayakrao Patwardhan, Saraswati Ranay, Shahu Modak (who is also a famous film actor), and others. Begum Akhtar, fulfilling her promise given to Baba at Meherazad, will be in Poona for four days, and Baba has reserved two afternoons for her performance at Guruprasad - the first Saturday & Sunday of May.

This, Baba told us, will give Him some much-needed relaxation after the intense inner work He has been doing in Meherazad since the last three months - working with Kaikobad and often by Himself in the seclusion of His room, and which work He will carry on with doubled intensity on returning to Meherazad. When we plead with Him not to thus tax His health, He says He cannot afford to be kind to Himself - there is not much time left and He wants to break His Silence by the end of this year. He added "When I break my Silence my Presence will flood the world, and even an inanimate thing like a stone will feel my Love"! However, throughout that period of overwork, the radiance of Baba's dynamic mood was felt by all; the mandali would bask in the warmth of its vital fire, and often would feel scorched from the immensity of His presence and proximity. Mornings and afternoons Baba poured into them spiritual discourses & explanations, mainly inspired by some verse or ode from Hafiz of Shiraz, that incomparable Persian poet who was a Perfect Master and of whom Baba says "his words are as pearls in the Ocean of divinity, though to the average reader his words are as oysters." Baba would unfold to the mandali the pearl hidden in each oyster, as Baba, and Baba alone, could do.

Poona is a crippled city since the fantastic flood two years ago when the city was drowned in the water stored for its supply. The water problem still has top priority in the people's daily lives which must be adjusted to suit the hours of water allowance. Electricity too seems no longer a blessing to be taken for granted, and a sudden & complete black-out on any evening at what always seems to be the most critical hour or occasion, is worth the moment of happy relief we experience at the equally sudden re-appearance of lights some time later. But perhaps these uncertainties could best serve us as reminders that all things are transitory and cannot endure. As Baba said repeatedly to Joseph Harb during his & Kari's interview with Him on the day we arrived here, "I am the only Reality. All else that seems real is illusion. I am God, 100% so! There is nothing besides Me. Therefore think only of Me and constantly repeat My Name. If you were to drop your body this instant, this alone will be of use to you." Joseph has been very ill for some time from a gall-bladder trouble of many years' standing, which took a serious turn and surgery was found essential. Baba told him to be operated on by Dr. Gharpure in Poona, and just as last summer three days after our arrival Pendu underwent a major operation, so this year did Joseph. The operation was successful and dear Joseph is home again. Beloved Baba went three times to see him at the hospital, and these visits were the strongest tonic that pulled Joseph out of the woods. At one time the doctors strongly suspected malignancy, but Baba assured Joseph "I tell you, you have no cancer. As a matter of fact, it is I who have cancer, for you all around Me, and the whole world, are my cancerous growth and so I suffer continually."

Since my attempt to approach the subject of Baba's suffering, in a family-letter last June, Baba has personally clarified it. This was on the memorable 9th of December, when some of His lovers from Poona & Bombay were given the coveted chance of spending a day with Him at Meherazad. The Beloved was in a generous mood and doled out a drop of nectar from the ocean of His Knowledge, to feed His ever-hungry children in a measure to suit their capacity of understanding. For us, the drop was a feast!

About His suffering, Baba explained: "Why and how can I suffer when I am the Ocean of Power Knowledge and Bliss? God has infinite Power, infinite Knowledge and infinite Bliss. The Avatar is God Himself incarnate on earth as Man. During His ministry as Avatar, He uses only infinite Knowledge. He does not make use of His infinite Power and infinite Bliss. 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, but even while on the Cross did not help Himself from the Power and Bliss that were His. Instead He cried, 'Father, why hast Thou forsaken me!' He said it to Himself of course, for He and the Father are One.

"Again and again, God takes human form to suffer for His Creation. I am that One. Like you I have a body and mind and so I feel hunger and thirst, etc. But I also have Universal Body and Universal Mind, and therefore your individual suffering is as nothing compared to My eternal, universal suffering! I have infinite Knowledge. I do not have to use My mind in order to know - I just know. I use My infinite Knowledge. But although I have infinite Bliss and infinite Power, I do not make use of them. If I were to make use of the Bliss that is at My beck and call, how could My suffering be 'suffering'? And of what benefit would it be to mankind? I also do not use My infinite Power. If I were to use it, how would I remain helpless? I remain infinitely helpless because while having infinite Power at My command, I do not use it! I shall use it only when I break My Silence to give a universal spiritual Awakening; and when I drop this Body I shall use My Bliss for 700 years till My next advent.

"Hold fast to Me so that I will take you where I go, otherwise you will be lost. I am the Emperor, If you belong to Me, you will have access to the Infinite Treasure that is Mine. But if, instead, you go after the guards and servants of the palace (the Sants and Sadhus) it is sheer folly on your part!

"I suffer physically and mentally. My physical suffering can be seen. My mental suffering is much more intense than the physical, and is due to the anti-God element that is at its height, and the universal prevalence of hypocrisy - specially of those who profess themselves to be saints and spiritual personalities. I suffer spiritually because although in Me I am Free, in you I see and feel Myself bound by your ignorance; and so I suffer infinitely. In no previous Avatatic period have I disclosed these secrets, because the time was not ripe for it then. At present science has advanced by leaps and bounds; and anti-God element is at its maximum; why then should not spirituality also be at its maximum! Blessed is he who holds fast to My daaman." *

* Note: "daaman" (literal meaning 'hem of the garment') is pronounced to rhyme with salmon.

Referring to the anti-God element rising to its height, Baba remarked that Tibet which was once considered to be "the seat of God" is now transformed into a military camp since the Chinese invasion. For India, in general, the attack on her borders by China has meant untold privations added to the common man's daily struggle for existence. But it has also meant a national unity of purpose, determination and courage, that has drawn the friendly hand of sympathy & generous help from our brothers across the oceans.

Tek Chand, an ardent Baba-lover from Delhi who is in the army, was home recently on a few days' leave and gave a talk at the Delhi Baba-Centre on his experiences during the recent Chinese invasion, and which we have gathered as follows from a Baba-lover's letters: Tek Chand who is with the frontier road-building set-up, was deep in the Subansiri division on 9th November together with 700 non-combatants without arms, when the Chinese began encircling them. They received orders to withdraw immediately, leaving everything behind. Panic seized them as they had no food and no arms! Tek Chand instilled hope and courage into his men by assuring them they had nothing to fear because the living God, Avatar Meher Baba, was with them, and so no harm would come to them and they would get back safely. His men were visibly cheered by this, and Tek Chand told them more about Baba. Taking the help of some hill tribesmen Tek Chand with the 700 men trekked back through the jungles. They trekked for seven days and nights, through unfamiliar terrain, without food and without protective clothing, in the biting cold & rain & slush - Tek Chand singing bhajans in praise of beloved Baba, with the men joining in and taking Baba's Name. They encountered breathtaking hardships on the way. Some of the men had to swim across the turbulent waters of a river when the temporary bridge gave way under their weight, but they managed to get across safely. Others, overcome with hunger, ate D.D.T. that they found at an abandoned post, mistaking it for flour! However, they were violently sick and brought up the poison, and their brothers helped them to carry on. Through it all, there was the constant fear of being spied by the Chinese. At last the incredible journey was over and the men returned to their post in Assam, famished and looking terribly emaciated in their tattered clothes, but without a single casualty. In fact not one of them suffered frost-bite or any lung infection despite hopelessly inadequate protection from the cruel cold. Thus did Tek Chand return from the frontier, instrumental in bringing back his 700 men to safety through Baba's Love.

Although the Beloved's Birthday celebrations were silent this year, there was a grand chorus of Birthday greetings sung through cables and telegrams from His lovers in the East and the West, and no herald angels could have sung a sweeter melody than was this "love-song" to the Creator, from those chosen to know and adore Him while He walks the earth again as Man. Every note touched Baba's heart, and He has told me to convey to you each dear one His Love.

Feramroj, an old Baba-lover who is one of the main pillars that sustains Baba's office at Ahmednagar, is a thin man whose looks belie his age and whose serious demeanour fails to hide his inexhaustible store of wit. One of Adi's helpmates for years, he always has his nose to the grindstone of Baba-work. On Baba's Birthday this year, the deluge of telegrams and cables to Baba came from all over the world and lasted for nearly a week! This has been too much for the small and meagrely staffed Telegraph Office at Ahmednagar, and an extra rush of work for Feram who was kept legging it to the T.O. all day long for confirmation or correction of the speedily deciphered contents, or to check the accuracy of the reply-paid forms. Feram's note to Meherazad spoke volumes and I can't help reproducing it here: "My dear Eruch, the local T.O. is in a hustle and bustle, as also, I hear, the Poona T.O. Even Bombay is wondering who Meher Baba is, because for an individual this rush of cables and telegrams is unprecedented. The local T.O. is hard pressed and the clerk told me that for the last few days they are dealing only with "Meher Baba". So much the better, as their sanskaras will be lessened. Even with my over-growth of hair on the chin, I was sirred and stooled (meaning I was addressed as 'Sir' and offered a stool to sit on, which is a rare honour for a shirt-pant-sandalled individual as I am). But I am not flattered because I have had no rest! However I look forward to better days."

Shantadevi, our charming Maharani, on the first of her many visits to Baba at Guruprasad this summer narrated to us the glorious event at Kovvur, which she described as "out of this world". But, she said, she had no words in which to express the depth of the Andhraites' love for Baba that they unostentatiously expressed in everything they did or said; and she also spoke of how very much Baba's presence was felt by all at Mehersthan. On the morning of 28th February, we all who were at Meherazad, both women and men mandali, stood before Baba in the hall. At 7.32, exactly at the moment Shantadevi unveiled the Statue at Mehersthan, Baba clapped - and we all shouted with one voice "PARVARDIGAR"! This was at Baba's express wish. An old Baba-lover from Bombay who was one of the pilgrims to Kovvur, sent a wire to Baba: "Manifestation of Your Love felt and evidenced at Kovvur. May Your Love manifestation deluge the world soon with Your Glorification before I die." And this is the message Beloved Baba sent by telegram to dear Koduri Krishna Rao and his wife whose love has made Mehersthan possible: "You are blessed in your love for Me. The love of My lovers gathered in Kovvur for the opening of Mehersthan on 28th February has filled Mehersthan with My Presence for I abide where My lovers are. I give My blessing to Mehersthan and to all who have made this pilgrimage to Kovvur to welcome Me."

It looks as though this family-letter too is going to be six pages long, yet I feel there is much more I could say. And yet again, what is there that one can really say about Baba! As Sant Tukaram says: "Were I to have Your sahavas (close company) continually, the mystery of Your Being would still not be unfolded to me." This couplet Baba has referred to at times, saying to the mandali that although they were with Him all the time, yet they could not really see Him. To illustrate it, Baba would put up His hands in front of His face, and would ask one of us sitting near Him, "Now can you see My face, although you are so close to Me?" The answer would of course be "No"! "That is how the thick curtain of Maya hides My Face from your sight" Baba explained. "But", He added, "do not let it worry you. Let your only worry be as to how to love Me and obey Me more and more."

Ever lovingly,

MANI

Important: There are two gems you must not fail to add to your treasure-chest of Baba books - a priceless one of discourses by Baba, discourses never before printed; and another of rare beauty and brilliancy, by Francis. Details regarding these two books will be mentioned in the next family-letter, which I hope to send out before leaving Poona end of June.

Meherazad

5th December 1962

Dear Family,

"My words can never be in vain. Whatever I have said must and will come true. When it appears otherwise, it is due to your ignorance and lack of patience." Years ago Baba said this to us, and this November we had special cause to remember it, when the East-West gathering in India that Baba had spoken of long ago took place at last, and many of His Family from the East and West assembled together at His feet and partook of the feast of His Presence. Guruprasad, chosen to be the setting for many precious Baba-occasions and darshans through the years, gained its height in pride and joy when it was chosen to be the rendezvous for this unique global gathering of Baba-lovers "who came, who saw and who surrendered to His Love."

A difficulty in writing this letter lies not in what to say, but what not to say! This is because most of you who will receive this have been blessed with the good fortune to personally participate and need no description from me. And it is for you to give a picture, verbally and through accounts in The Awaken, Divya Vani and Meher Pukar, to those of you who could not come and had to accept in silent resignation His silent Will - even though the accounts I could give and you will give, can only express the expressible. What each one receives from Him in the silence of His Love can only be between The One and the one. As a dear one from U.S.A. wrote to beloved Baba: "You do not give in words, nor can express in words, the Love that you make one feel and know. My response is but a bit of your Grace returning to you."

We women of the Beloved's household had a "back-stage" view of the darshan proceedings for although Baba did not want us to be seated among the gathering, He allowed us to watch from behind the windows and door. Hence we could only see Baba's back. Yet we saw His Face, reflected in the sea of faces facing us - His radiance and beauty mirrored in the eyes that were fixed on Him in adoration. To be able to see The One in everyone, was for us who are with Him and see Him daily, an unforgettable experience.

Just as we received the reflection of His darshan through the direct recipients of it, we received the impression of His Westerners' visit through their letters pouring to their Beloved. Reading out to Him these letters is an experience that is deeply moving, and to behold the radiance of Love on His face while He listens to them is a gladness that fills the being. With Baba's permission, I quote excerpts from a few of them - some flashes that reveal a glimpse of this "coming together of children of East and West in the house of their Father", as Baba said in His message given on 2nd November.

One writes to Baba "So often while I was with You the phrase "my cup runneth over" ran joyously through my mind. I was filled with wonder at Your Love for us all - Love that revealed itself in endless ways from the most insignificant detail of our daily life to the miracle of our being privileged to receive Your Darshan."

Speaking of the 'public darshan' afternoon, a young woman says: "Seeing You work in India, giving darshan to all these people, impressed me more than ever with the fact that You are the Ocean of Love. You are like the sun and cannot help giving Your love. That is why, I suppose, that You do not have to pay particular attention to each one as they touch Your feet. The action is automatic; one dips the cup in the ocean, it is only natural that it be filled with water. All one has to do is dip." Yet another writes: "I remember being suddenly and overwhelmingly struck during the public darshan that last afternoon, by the fact that here I was sitting in front of God - absolutely, positively God - while thousands of people filed past you, hour after hour. I remember too the contrast of the morning sessions when You fulfilled all the and more than all of my longing as a child, a teenager, and even as a grown college student, for 'this Friend who is God.'" A boy of 13 writes: "How radiant You looked dear Baba when we were sitting there watching You embrace thousands! To do that as well as carry the burdens of the world was a feat only possible for You. I know that the Westerners would never have believed it unless they saw it. You gave each of us so much love and so much joy."

If I allow the heart to take over, I can go on endlessly quoting from all the very precious letters that have come from His Western family who came to India, but the mind gives me a tight-lipped reminder that to attempt such a Herculean task would be impracticable. So lastly, to see the visit from the eyes of the oldest Novemberite, I give a line from the letter of dear Ruth White of Myrtle Beach. She says to Baba: "This letter is written to give thanks unto Thee and say my visit was not so much to a place but to a kingdom of enlightenment, joy and devotion." And so it verily has been and is, His "kingdom on earth" which is the envy of "heaven", for Baba has more than once explained to His disciples that the angels in heaven envy human beings who have the means and opportunity to serve and be near the God-Man.

It is nearly a month since we are back in the lap of Meherazad, and all we wanted to do for the first few days was to sleep, sleep and sleep! We felt the utter contentment and drowsiness that follows a feast fully enjoyed, basking in the grateful knowledge of a program well accomplished. We are fairly "awake" again, and the reality of this November Gathering which now seems as a dream, is very much alive in our hearts and minds - for it is a dream of a dream come true. Meeting you dear ones and seeing you with Baba in India has meant inexpressible joy for us - marred only by the absence of those who could not come. But this absence was physical only, for Baba said to them in His cable: "While your love is with me here, I am with you there." On 10th November, when leaving Poona, Baba very compassionately spoke of His lovers' tears that flowed on that farewell morning at the Bund Gardens. Although there can be no "parting" from Baba, He felt the sadness of each heart that sorrowed at this separation.

Except to tell us to be prepared for whatever changes that may occur during 1963, Baba tells us nothing of His plans for the year. But He repeatedly hints that He wishes to be "free" from this 10th of December, free to attend to the carrying out of the work He has set for Himself. So He wishes dear Mehara's birthday to be celebrated on the 9th of December this year (instead of 23rd), when there will be a kavvali singing program at Meherazad. One change for 1963 is already manifest in the circular that has been sent out to all concerned in the East and which He wishes me to give here for all you dear ones in the West:

For reason of His very important work, Avatar Meher Baba wishes that Meher Centres in India and elsewhere do NOT have any sort of celebration for His 69th Birthday in February 1963. However, lovers of Baba are permitted to send Birthday greetings to Him, by a cable.

Baba wants His lovers to spread far and wide His message of Love & Truth, in the spirit of His messages "My dear Children" and "My dear Workers" given by Him during the East-West gathering at Poona in November 1962.

During the year 1963, Baba wishes His lovers NOT to write any letters to Him, and also NOT to write to any of the men or women mandali residing with Him. In case of emergency a direct communication may be sent to Baba, by a cable only. Such a cable must simply be addressed:- MEHERBABA AHMEDNAGAR, * and must always be accompanied by a reply-prepaid form which must sufficiently cover the cost of a reply.

Where His Western family is concerned, letters to and from Meherazad are allowed but ONLY for some specific work. Also, He wishes me to continue sending the family-letters, from four to six times in the year.

The Beloved wants me to include here the message for you, that although He is with you all the time you should consciously keep Him with you as much as possible, not worrying about the nothings that seem everything but leaving all to Him who is All.

Baba sends His Love-Blessing to you each.

Ever lovingly,

Haw

* as I have mentioned before, this is our telegraphic & cable address, and it is a waste of money to put the long postal address in your cable as many of you do.

FORTY-NINTH FAMILY LETTER FROM MEHER BABA'S SISTER, MANI,

RECEIVED BY ELIZABETH AND KITTY, AT MYRTLE BEACH, S.C.

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Meherazad, 20 September 1962.

Dear Family,

This is the unexpected letter that I expected to write before His dear Novemberites leave their homes on their "journey to God".

The List of those of His Western family attending the November Gathering, now numbers 171 - with a few marked "tentative". This is made up roughly of 123 from U.S.A., 33 from Australia and New Zealand, and the rest from England and Europe. The youngest of these will be a fair six year old from Australia, Radha Rouse; while the eldest will be 92 year old dear Ruth White from His Centre at Myrtle Beach in U.S.A. Every name on the List has been read to Baba, and Baba wants me to say that He knows the sacrifice it entails for a number of you in making this trip, and the heartache it entails for still more who cannot make it to India. He is happy for those of you who are able to come, and wants the rest of you to be happy in the knowledge that He will be present with you during your absence from the November Gathering.

While the problem of mass accommodation for the 2,000 Easterners from out-stations is nearly and unexpectedly solved, suitable Hotel accommodation for His growing number of Western Novemberites is beginning to cause some slight anxiety. This does not mean there will be lack of accommodation, but it might mean less comfortable accommodation as a result of rooming perhaps more individuals together. However, any hardship is a worthy part of every true pilgrimage, and should not be a subject for concern when the Object is the Highest of the High! Drowned in the outpouring of His Love, all discomfort is as the particle in the oyster that becomes the pearl. I cannot help recalling the first lecture that our dear Kaka gave to the Beloved's Western followers gathered with Him in Cannes (France) in the year 1937, in his halting English. Although many of those who heard it at the time have actually lived the lesson many times over during their long and hardy years of life with Baba, I reproduce here an excerpt from Kaka's short but comprehensive lecture as it might help others who are coming to Poona for the November Gathering:

"Now I want to talk about our Master's order. When Master passes order it must be obeyed. Never mind if you like it or not. There should be no discussion. When you follow the Master, every desire must be left. Somebody wants good food, somebody wants good bed, somebody wants go swimming, somebody wants go shopping - then what use coming to the Master? Go holidays!"

A very near and dear one has "come to Baba" before November - she is Baba's beloved archangel Mary Backet (of England) who passed away on 5th September, conveying her love to her Beloved Baba just before breathing her last. Along with dear Will Backett, her husband, she was of the small group of Westerners who stayed in India, at Nasik, in 1937. This devoted couple, whose very lives have been Baba's message of Love, have always been referred to by Baba as His "Archangels", and Baba sent Will a cable as follows: "My Archangel Mary has come to Me after fulfilling her appointed task. Be happy in My Love."

All our grumbling and complaining about the shameful lack of rain has been put to a complete end by the glorious downpours we have been having since the last letter. Often, the boy who cycles over daily from the King's Road office at Ahmednager (9 miles away) with our mail, has to wade through waist-high water when crossing the usually dry river-bed about midway. The garden and the countryside seem drunkenly happy, and our potted rose bushes have burst out in a rash of roses - one little bush has three bouquets of over 15 roses each! The jasmine are as fair and plentiful as God's uncounted blessings, and each morning we find carpets of jasmine on the ground while the vines are no less studded with them. Mehera is planning many little additions to Meherazad's "garden of Allah" for the very special visitors who will grace it on 6th November.

Beloved Baba sends His Love to you each.

Ever lovingly,

Mani.

N.B. BABA wishes you to take very careful note of the Circular attached herewith: "ATTENTION Western Novemberites" for which this special family-letter is being sent out. Please bring with you this important Circular to Poona, for your reference.

Meherazad
20th September, 1962

ATTENTION Western Novemberites!

To be on the safe side, all available accommodation at all suitable hotels in Poona is being reserved from 28th October. It is Baba's wish therefore, that all who possibly can should arrive in Poona on 28th. He wishes that you do NOT tarry in Bombay after your arrival there on or after the 28th, but catch the soonest train possible for Poona. Those whose flight is arranged so as to reach Bombay on 29th or 30th, may thus arrive in Poona on 29th or 30th. All must be in Poona by latest 31st morning (except some of the Australians whose ship arrives on 1st November).

Baba wants you EACH ONE TO IMMEDIATELY AND FINALLY LET MEHERJEE KNOW the exact date of your arrival in Poona. Despite this reminder in the last family letter, many have not done so! But whether you have already done so or not, Baba wants you to rush to Meherjee a final confirmation of the dates of your arrivals and departures, in and from Bombay and Poona, and whether you are coming independently or by a Group Flight arrangement (stating Group flight number and name of the Baba-lover under whom it is arranged).

For our double checking, those in charge of Group Flights must also please intimate Meherjee well in advance (if it is not already done) details of GROUP flights arranged: Flight No., the number and names of passengers, arrival date and time in Bombay and in Poona, and departure dates and time and flight No. from Bombay. Individuals flying independently must also furnish Meherjee with the above information which is most essential and must reach Meherjee right away.

On your arrival in Poona, Meherjee will help you in intimating the authorities concerned regarding your Foreigners' Registration (this does not apply to British and Australian passports), and in confirming your return flights.

If you are stranded and need to contact the Mandali in an emergency (during the day time) you may phone Guruprasad: 23158. After 7.00 p.m. phone Meherjee's residence: 24578. Also take note of Guruprasad address: 24-Bund Garden Road; and cable address: Care IRANTOJJAR, Poona.

Regarding any electrical equipment you may bring with you (shavers etc.) note that the voltage applicable in Bombay and Poona is 220 Volts A.C.

A word of caution for you to remember during your stay in Hotels: please keep your cash and valuables locked before leaving your hotels.

As failure of electricity is not an unfrequent occurrence in Poona, you will find a torch (flash-light) a useful item to bring with you.

PROGRAM DURING YOUR STAY IN POONA: Beloved Baba is reserving the morning hours from 9.00 to 12.00 noon exclusively for the gathering of His Western lovers, to be held inside the hall at Guruprasad from 1st to 5th November. In the afternoons, during the gatherings under the Pandal (Awning) at Guruprasad from 3.00 to 6.00 p.m. from 1st to 4th November the Westerners will participate with the Easterners.

Jal will arrange for transportation to bring you to Guruprasad each morning and afternoon, for you to reach Guruprasad at the following times: On the mornings of 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th November, by 10 minutes to 9.00; on the afternoons of 1st, 2nd and 3rd November, by 10 minutes to 3.00. On the afternoon of 4th November, by 10 minutes to 2.00. On the 5th morning also, Baba wishes you to be at Guruprasad by 10 minutes to 9.00, for a final program and embrace.

Jal, with his group of Baba-lovers to assist him, will also arrange for your sight-seeing of some Baba-places (as per list attached), in groups on 29th, 30th and 31st October, in accordance with your arrival in Poona. Those who feel indisposed need not go, but should at the time inform Jal accordingly.

All such transport expenses will be borne by you, in arrangement with Jal. This includes your trip to Ahmednagar-Meherazad-Meherabad on 6th November. Sarosh and his wife Villoo, will be your host and hostess at their home in Ahmednagar during your halt there for refreshments and lunch enroute to Meherazad and Meherabad. You will also be visiting the Meher Publications Office and the Baba-Centre at Ahmednagar that afternoon on your way to Meherabad. You will have to leave Poona at 7.00 in the morning, to return the same evening. The entire mileage of your trip on that day will total about 180 miles.

Baba has appointed Dr. William Donkin in charge of the welfare of the Western Novemberites' health with the assistance of Dr. Hoshang Bharucha, and in co-operation with Dr.(Mrs.) Bhandari who is also in charge of the Eastern women Novemberites' health. It is Baba's wish that you must therefore promptly inform Dr. Donkin whenever you feel indisposed, night or day. In the daytime Dr. Donkin will make the round of your different hotels at least once, and will be at Guruprasad during the morning and afternoon Gatherings there. At night he will be on call at the Napier Hotel, and anybody needing any medical aid should without fail phone him at: Napier Hotel, phone no. 22627.

A Circular is being sent out by Adi to all Eastern Novemberites, and Baba wants me to draw your attention to the following paragraph in it, because it equally applies to His Western Novemberites:-

"Avatar Meher Baba wants me to draw the attention of all His lovers visiting Him from different parts of the world, to the fact that they should come with the sole idea of enjoying His PRESENCE collectively, and NOT hope or want or ask for any individual personal attention or guidance from Him - regarding any matter concerning themselves or their families and friends, or in connection with Baba-work or Group and Centre activities. NO questions should be asked, spiritual or otherwise."

Mani.

(Instructions to Jal)

PLACES TO BE SHOWN ROUND BY JAL

To The Western Novemberites.

- 1) Sassoon Hospital where Baba was born.
- 2) The house with the well where Baba and family moved after His sister Mani's birth and where now His brother Beheram lives with his family. This house has the room where Baba used to knock His forehead on a stone on the floor, during that period of infinite agony after the meeting with Babajan. This is known as "Baba's Room".
- 3) Point out the house where Baba spent His childhood and much of His boyhood. It is known as 'Bhopla' (pumpkin) House, because of the large round stone at the entrance.
- 4) St. Vincent School (where Baba studied right thru school).
- 5) Deccan College (that Baba attended after leaving school).
- 6) Babajan's shrine by the neem Tree, in Poona cantonement.
- 7) The Bund Gardens that Baba often visited, as a boy and later.

Show the Mango-tree under which Babajan used to sit often with her followers, at the Bund Gardens.
- 8) Tower of Silence which Baba frequently visited in order to sit there for hours at a stretch.

(Jal to make sure beforehand that the car can go right up).
- 9) Take them via Laxmi Road and Janglay Maharaj Road, and show statue of Jhansi-ki-Rani (the Mahratta warrior queen).
- 10) Take them round Race Course side (of recent years Baba has often been there in the mornings to have a quiet walk with the mandali).
- 11) Take them to the site of Avatar Meher Baba Poona Centre where the Centre Hall is under construction.

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