

AVATAR
The Life Story of the Perfect Master Meher Baba
A Narrative of Spiritual Experience

Second Edition (December, 1947)

By

Jean Adriel

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A V A T A R

“When you meet the true Guru, He will
awaken your heart;

He will tell you the secret of love and
detachment, and then you will know indeed that
He transcends this universe....

He comes to the Path of the Infinite on
whom the grace of the Lord descends: he is freed
from births and deaths who attains to Him.”

--Kabir

“It is my part in the Divine Plan to bring to the
Weary world a fresh dispensation of Eternal Love.”
--**MEHER BABA.**

A V A T A R

The Life Story of the Perfect Master

MEHER BABA

A Narrative of Spiritual Experience

By

JEAN ADRIEL

1947

J.F.ROWINY PRESS

SANTA BARBARA

CALIF.

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Ojai, Calif.

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Second Edition, December, 1947

TO THE LIVING CHRIST
WHOSE BEAUTY THE VERY HEAVENS CANNOT CONTAIN,
BUT WHOSE PRESENCE
MAY BE FOUND IN EVERY HUMBLE,
LOVING HEART

I wish to express my deep indebtedness to all those devotees--Eastern and Western-whose letters, diaries, and articles appearing in the Meher Baba Journal I have drawn upon for much of the material in this biography of the Master.

--J.A.

PREFACE

When Meher Baba told me, in India, to spend most of my time meditating upon him and writing down the fruits of my meditation, I little thought that they would find their way into print. It was not, in fact, until I had been back in America for about four years that the book AVATAR began to take its present form.

I had spent a couple of weeks at a psychological seminar conducted by Dr. Fritz Kunkel, the renowned psychiatrist. It had been a most inspiring and revealing fortnight, which for me had had the effect of not only helping me to understand better my own particular problems, but it had given me profound insight into many of the more puzzling aspects of Baba's technique with his disciples. Only one other member of the group had any interest in Baba, so I was compelled to keep my new insights largely to myself, but I recorded them all in my note-book.

As our stay drew to a close, I felt greatly quickened by the creative forces which had been released, as the leader, Dr. Kunkel, unfolded for us the dynamic possibilities inherent in the right understanding and application of "Introversion," which had been the subject of the seminar. He suggested that whatever life-bearing seeds had been sown during those weeks should be given the opportunity to mature and bear fruit. They should find outlet in some form of creative expression which would symbolize a totally new way of life. One of his concrete suggestions had been to write out our life-stories as a means of starting the creative flow. I considered his advice earnestly for some days. I finally came to the conclusion that the most fruitful course for me would be to write the life-story of my Master, Meher Baba, as I knew it, with particular emphasis upon my own experience with him.

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As I reviewed my own life-intensely colorful and dramatic in the spiritual sense, I knew that it derived all its significance from Baba; that it had for many years, even prior to my meeting him, drawn its very momentum from his inspiration. AVATAR is, therefore, a story within a story; a life within a life, as the disciple's life must inevitably be-hidden within the Master's.

About ten years have passed since the disciple in India was instructed to write down whatever came to her: "I shall be the force behind you," the Master had said. Now, as the book is finish, word has come from him that he places his blessing upon it and wishes it given to the world. In anticipation of his coming again to America a Center has been established for him at Myrtle Beach in South Carolina, and on the West coast, in the Upper Ojai Valley, a beautiful place, Meher Mount, awaits him.

-J.A.

Meher Mount,
Upper Ojai,
California.
September 1, 1946

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CHAPTER I

SOUL-AWAKENING

THOUGH I was not consciously seeking a spiritual Master I was seeking that spiritual fulfilment which had been the passionate longing of my soul for many years, when the Master, Meher Baba, first came into my outer life.

When I was twenty-one, through a priest of the Anglican Church, I had been initiated into the Kingdom of Reality. This spiritual awakening had precipitated a state of consciousness in which all my senses were suddenly merged into one unpremeditated awareness of a transcendent Presence which permeated every atom of space and quickened the whole of life with Its sublime beauty. Human beings, trees, flowers, even the concrete of the pavements upon which I walked were radiant with an unearthly light. The most sordid surroundings were enhanced by the inner glow of what I knew to be the Presence of God. I knew this because this Presence had awakened within my heart.

For a period of many months following the initial experience this blissful consciousness remained with me. Then, through bitter disillusionment and the bewildered state of mind, which it induced, I lost the heightened awareness. For long years I searched with heavy heart for the key to spiritual joy and peace.

Because I shared with many others the conviction that spiritual guidance must henceforth come from within, my search consisted in those practices of meditation and self-awareness which seemed most likely to re-establish the celestial joy. I was of the opinion that to depend upon any *outside* source would only postpone that consummation which my soul sought-union with the God-Self.

Now, with deeper understanding, I have become aware that life is an indivisible whole and that what we call 'outer'

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is but the objectification of inner processes-the spiritual Guide is the visible answer to the soul's inner call.

Once, during this period, as I sat in the dentist chair inhaling nitrous-oxide gas, I lost consciousness for a moment and in that brief interval I again recaptured the awareness which transcends three-dimensional existence. Before my inner sight a cosmic panorama of creation (life, death, and man's ultimate destiny) was revealed. The sorrows and problems of my own earth-life which had weighed heavily upon my spiritual shoulders slid easily from me. I was free! The limitations of the finite mind had vanished. By the power of directed will I soared high into space until I reached a sun-lit mountain-top. Then I looked down into the vast valley below me. There, milled the children of earth and though they were enveloped in gloomy shadow, and I seemed miles above them, I saw their features with startling clarity. For the most part their movements seemed aimless, but here and there one would strike out on an uncharted course, and soon others would break away from the human vortex to follow the trail-blazers.

I watched these adventurous pilgrims on their lonely way at the wide base of the mountain. As they advanced in their climb they were confronted by tremendous hazards. Discouraged by the initial hardships, terrified by the greater ones ahead, the faint-hearted dropped back into the maelstrom of earth. Others, more resolute, designed a slow spiral course upward, while a few-very few-climbed steadily to the summit in an almost undeviating line. As they reached the pinnacle of the great mountain I witnessed the joyous meeting of kindred souls in search of the same supreme objective. No word was spoken between these comrades. No word was needed: here thought, under the impulse of love, communicated itself without speech.

Here was the meeting ground of the soul with its Maker – the One whom we call God. By a process of inner unfolding I was made to understand that this One lives in all things and beings, yet is independent of his creation. It is union with this One which lovers seek in their beloveds. It is the power of this One which the conquerors of earth would as-

SOUL-AWAKENING

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sume. It is the knowledge of this One which the wise ones of earth have ever proclaimed. It is the peace and joy of this One which the saints of all ages and religions have sought and found.

As I became aware of my union with this One, there unfurled within my consciousness the pattern of creation. I saw, in space, a point of light whirling with terrifying velocity, and from within its rotation, stars, planets, worlds take form. Light and darkness balanced each other. In the midst of chaos order was being established. Then I felt within myself the consciousness of evolving life – so dense in the mineral, so delicate in the flower, so fierce in the wild animal. I could feel the slender pain, the dim awareness, the heavy ferocity which these lower forms of life experience, and I recognized these slower life-tremors as constituents of my own soul, with its more complex joys and sorrows. Never again could I deny to any aspect of God's creation its own particular awareness, nor could I exclude any emotion from the symphony of life.

It was revealed to me of what little moment were my sins, how equally unimportant my virtues, I saw clearly that good and evil are simply manifested aspects of this transitory life, while God, in essence, is beyond all opposites, This tremendous Reality was not concerned with my petty -world concept of vice and virtue. "Be spontaneous! wholly unfettered in response to life", was the burden of the message which this One in a thunderous yet still Voice spoke within me.

It revealed kaleidescopically how, through many lives of pain and joy, the soul in me-which was one with the soul of all and one with this Soul Supreme-had developed its capacity for conscious self-hood. It showed how many phases of tension and release had been necessary to weave for my individualized spirit a strong and resilient garment; and how, when this was ultimately achieved – after the saturation point of earth experience had been reached-my soul would be ready for the final evolutionary step-conscious reunion with God.

This 'one, far-off, divine event', which the poets of all

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time have proclaimed, I now experienced. In a tidal-wave of ecstasy the final remnant of my lesser self was engulfed in union with the Oversoul. For a timeless moment I was that One. My individuality was not lost; merely raised to the infinite proportions of God, endowed with his infinite capacities. Out, out into an eternal future, back into an ageless past-both blended in a dimensionless present-I saw worlds being formed, worlds destroyed; an infinite game being played by an infinite God, who, even in pain, perpetually enjoyed the imperishable bliss of his creation. For an eternal moment the dental chair had become my stratoplane into Infinity.

This vivid glimpse of Reality naturally left me with the inspiration and incentive to integrate as much as possible its transcendental wisdom into my conscious life,. Again, some years later, a door opened which admitted me for a few brief weeks to another intensified experience of expanded consciousness. All mind activity was utterly stilled by an ecstasy which almost consumed me. Like fire, this heightened vibration poured through my body and soul; in fact there seemed no longer to be any cleavage between physical and spiritual; The inner faculties of clairvoyance, clairsentience and levitation were awakened. One sunny morning in walking through Central Park, just off Fifth Avenue, I found myself rising about four feet from the ground and floating down the pathway with great freedom and joy, until some people approaching at a distance caused me to pull myself sown to earth again. I had no desire to become the object of sensational publicity.

A future was revealed to me in which this expanded consciousness would be the norm for many people. I understood how discord and war would automatically disappear when those qualities of universal love and joy which then poured through me were released in the soul of man. I perceived how unpossessive would be the relationships of that future day; how one would be able to retain the physical body as long as one desired to remain in it , and how the untrammelled spirit of man would constantly recreate life in a vehicle in which there would be no mental, emotion-

SOUL-AWAKENING

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al or physical strain to disintegrate it. It was also revealed to me how destructive to the finer vibrations of the spirit are the dissecting, separative and corroding propensities of the analytical mind, when it lacks the synthesizing faculty of the heart.

After a month, alas, this intensified awareness, too, abated. Painful as it was to continue living without it, I knew well what had to be accomplished before I could regain and maintain it as permanent state of consciousness. The experience had been induced by meditation on the resurrection of the body; and I was shown very clearly that before the body could sustain such a swift rate of vibration, every cell must be cleansed – attuned to the newly – released power; the egoistic mind stilled, the restless emotions purified. Every fibre of the body, every cranny of the mind had literally to be reconditioned in order to house permanently this exalted state of consciousness.

The experience left with me a fragment of that radiant life – force which had permeated it – to be used whenever the need became acute. The deep peace and causeless joy vanished, however, leaving with me a greatly augmented yearning for God. To have once experienced the inner life of the Kingdom is to become a God-addict. No physical nor mental pleasure, no earthly delight can ever satisfy the hunger of the soul which has once tasted God, though all human joy is infinitely enhanced by the divine afflatus.

During the succeeding two years I continued my inward search in company with a dear comrade, my former husband, Malcolm Schloss, while trying to help him keep our metaphysical center, the Northnode Bookshop in New York from financial failure. The events, which followed its ultimate collapse form an important segment in this story of meeting the Master, and the reason for its loss became apparent. But at the time its failure was difficult to understand, hard to accept.

One day, in those last strenuous weeks, a stranger came into the bookshop. After talking with Malcolm, and buying a volume of his mystical poems, *Songs to Celebrate the Sun.*, the man left with him a letter he had recently received

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from an Englishman, in which he described his spiritual retreat in Devonshire. The stranger intended to send the purchased copy of Malcolm's poems to this Englishman, also a poet.

Under the pressure of last-minute attempts to revive the failing life of the shop, Malcolm had put the letter aside, forgetting its existence, until one evening, seeing it on his desk, I picked it up and read it. I felt excited by the strange and moving power which seemed to pour through the words.

"There's something in this letter for us!" I exclaimed to him. "Let me read it to you."

As I read, I sensed that this power came, not from the pen of the writer, but from some source beyond it. I was not, therefore, surprised to learn from Malcolm that the Englishman had spent six months in India with a spiritual Master, and at his suggestion had established the Retreat in England to prepare the way for him when he should decide to make his first visit to the Western world.

BANKRUPTCY AND BOUNTY

The swiftly moving events of the next weeks drove the letter from our immediate consciousness. The financial pressure of the previous months had made it impossible for us to meet the rent for our small apartment which was situated in the same hotel as our bookshop.

Upon returning from a Decoration-Day week-end, which we had spent with friends outside of New York, We found ourselves locked out of our rooms, and all our belongings confiscated. Our total remaining possessions amounted to something around \$2.50 and the clothes which we had taken along in our week-end bags. The bankruptcy sale was to take place within a few days, so there was no hope for any financial help from, the sale of books. Malcolm moved in with his family and I went to the apartment of my friend, Princess Norina Matchabelli. Gradually, as other friends learned of our predicament, gifts of money and clothing came to us. After adjustment to the first shock of finding ourselves without funds and homeless, we rose to

BANKRUPTCY AND BOUNTY

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the potentialities of adventure in our acute situation. We realized that an old chapter was finished, and rather eagerly, joyfully, we turned the page, to find it bright with prospects for a pleasant vacation. We were invited to spend the summer with a group of friends on a large farm in New Hampshire. When the day finally came for our departure, we had all that we needed in the way of summer clothing; we had paid for our transportation, and had \$6.32 left over for summer spending money.

We welcomed the healing peace of the open country after the turmoil of the last weeks in New York. Malcolm particularly needed the refreshment which pine-laden air, unadulterated sunshine and still nights could give him, after the drastic operation of having his bookshop taken from him. So for a summer we lived the life of slightly animated vegetables, with very little work, intermittent play, and regular intervals of meditation. Only one member of the group seemed able to take himself seriously enough to write. The rest of us lazed in the sun, swam in the stream, read or meditated under the pines and ate the good vegetarian food which we raised in our own garden and prepared ourselves. Incidentally, we learned a little about group life; its advantages and difficulties, and two of us, at least, looked forward to the day when we might have a permanent place in the country which we could share with like-minded friends, who would care to explore with us the hidden treasures of the inner Kingdom.

NEW THREADS

Into this placid, sylvan life, came, one afternoon, a curious message. A friend at the near-by MacDowell colony telephoned to say that she would like to bring Milo over for a visit. Milo was a Harvard graduate, who had just arrived from England where, for the past year, he had lived in a spiritual Retreat. The head of the Retreat-the same Englishman whose letter so deeply stirred me some weeks before-had sent this young poet to America on a mission, the purpose of which he had not revealed to Milo. Our friend seemed, however, quite certain that the purpose

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was to contact Malcolm and me. This amused us, but we were quite naturally interested in meeting Milo and hearing, first-hand, of his experiences at the English Retreat.

The next afternoon they arrived for tea, and it so happened that all the other members of our group-family were in Boston that day. We plied Milo with all the questions which had been accumulating in our minds, especially concerning the Master from India; and we learned that this Master, Baba, as he is familiarly call, was expected that autumn in England, on his first visit to the West.

As we spoke of him I felt my inner life quickening into flame, "My heart burned within me!" I felt I was in the presence of mystery and power-the Master himself might have been in the room with us, so close he seemed, so strong and direct the current which flowed through me as my thoughts and questions turned toward him.

Intuitively I felt that Meredith Starr, The Englishman of whom Milo spoke, was merely a relaying station for the vibrations of the Master. But even a transmitter of such transcendent power might be the means of preparing the way for a meeting with the Master, so at the end of the poet's visit we were already turning our minds toward England and Devonshire Retreat. A few days later Milo came again to say goodbye. He had just received a cable from England summoning him to return. Apparently the purpose of his visit to America had been accomplished. He left with us a brochure describing the English Retreat, in which prospective visitors were asked to write a brief outline of their experiences and spiritual aspirations. Since Malcolm's mystical poems – in themselves indices of his ideals and inner experiences-had by this time reached Devonshire, I wrote the required letter to England, and expressed the hope that some day we might be able to visit the Retreat.

We were just about to settle down again to our bovine life, when a book of Meredith Starr's poems arrived from England for Malcolm. Most of them had been written by Starr while he was in India with the Master. They bore

NEW THREADS

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the imprint of that experience and conveyed so much of the Master's love and power that when we read them to the group, under a large apple tree, at sun-down, I had difficulty in holding my consciousness in my body. Certainly this man, Baba, who through the medium of another's words could so tremendously quicken one's spirit, was no ordinary man. Also I now discovered that whenever Malcolm and I spoke of him, as we invariably did in the afternoon rest period, the same quickening took place within me.

In exactly the length of time required for a letter to reach England and for us to receive a reply, our answer came from Meredith Starr. It was a cordial response, inviting us to come whenever we could, emphasizing that if we were destined to come the way would open up for us, as he felt certain it would.

FED BY RAVENS

Simultaneously with the receipt of his letter, began a series of miraculous manifestations of bounty. In the same mail with Starr's letter came another from England for one of our group, from someone who wished to remain anonymous, in which was enclosed fifty dollars for Malcolm and me. A day or so later, our dear friend Julian Lamar came up to spend the week-end with us and, on departing, left with us twenty-five dollars, apologizing that it was so little. Another friend sent me the same amount by mail, and two of our group gave us thirty dollars. Then came a letter from a friend who had moved to the Isle of Jersey, and had only recently heard of the bookshop's bankruptcy. He regretted his inability to help much, but suggested that a large collection of old and rare books which he had sent to us on consignment might be sold, and the proceeds kept for our needs.

By this time we felt like a couple of Alices in Wonderland, and believed anything was possible! And indeed it was, for in the next mail-as if in answer to our question as to how we could dispose of the books-came a forwarded

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letter from a friend who had not heard of the bookshop's closing. Believing us to be sweltering in the heat of a New York summer, he invited us to spend a long week-end with him at his place in the country. In reply, we told him of our hoped-for trip to England, and of our need for a place in New York to display the books. Two days later we received a telegram from him, cordially offering his house in the city, and telling us where we would find the key.

It was the first week in September when we made the trip back to New York, our hearts exultant with a new joy. I had written Starr that we were helping to leave for England soon and in reply received word that the Master, Shri Meher Baba, was expected in England within a few weeks. This news naturally gave fresh impetus to our efforts in selling the books. Malcolm contacted prospective buyers and again money began pouring in. Topping the whole amazing series of events was the notice I received on my birthday, September 21st, from a New York bank, informing me of a hundred dollar draft on a London bank, from an anonymous sender, which it was holding for me.

We suspected that this new gift came from the same source as the fifty dollars which we had received while we were in New Hampshire and later, when we discovered the donor's identity, our supposition was confirmed.

Thomas A. Watson, was our nameless benefactor. We had met him in New York a few weeks after the 'raven days'. He was a man well past seventy, with a heart as young and responsive as that of unspoiled youth. At the inception of his career he had collaborated with Alexander Graham Bell in the invention and manufacture of the telephone, and throughout his long and helpful life he had been alert to creative ideas and processes which would help mankind to a higher, more God-inspired life. What he advocated for others he had demonstrated in his own life. So responsive did he remain to new inspirations, that when he was well past sixty he went to England to study acting as a member of a Shakesperian road company, with which he travelled for several years through rural England. Not many years before we met him he had taken up paint-

ing. In this field too he had manifested unusual ability.

One of his many proteges was Milo, the young poet, who had visited us during the summer. Through him Mr. Watson had heard about the English Retreat and of Baba's impending visit there. Feeling drawn by the reports he had heard of the Master, he arranged his summer itinerary to include a trip to Devonshire. When we met him he related to us the unique story of his meeting with Baba.

He had retired one night at the Retreat, sharing with many others the anticipation of Baba's arrival the next day. When he awakened, early in the morning, he found his pillow wet with unaccustomed tears which were still streaming from his eyes, and in his heart was an indescribable joy. He stood before his open window and pondered for a while as his eyes feasted on the peaceful beauty of the Devonshire country-side. What was the meaning of this strange phenomenon of tears-this profound, spontaneous joy? As he probed for the answer he felt a gentle hand upon his shoulder. The touch of that hand, and eyes of the Master smiling into his as he turned around, brought to him at last the knowledge of that Love of God for which he had been searching most of his life. Waves of ecstasy and light poured through his being as the flood-gates of his heart opened and suffused his eyes with a fresh deluge of tears. In the core of his being he knew that this meeting with Baba was the culmination of his quest for the Living Truth.

Later, during the day, he heard through Meredith Starr that he had shown Baba the letter in which I had described my spiritual experiences and aspirations, and expressed the hope that Malcolm and I might visit the Retreat. Baba's instant reaction was that Malcolm and I were 'his own' and that meeting us was essential. It was this declaration of the Master which had inspired dear Thomas Watson to send us the two anonymous gifts of money toward our passage to England. His heart and hand were always ready to help; his generosity ever gracious.

At the time of our meeting with Mr. Watson, we had already secured our passports and were about make reser-

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vations for sailing the middle of October, when we received a cable from Starr to defer our visit to England, as he and the Master's party were coming to America. During this period of eager waiting we received numerous cables, the first of which asked us if we could accommodate the party for a week. Thrilled by the prospect of acting as hosts to the Master, we decided to use the passage money for the purpose. I got in touch with a friend from whom we had once rented a furnished studio at Harmon-on-the-Hudson. In reply to my letter, in which I revealed the identity of our illustrious visitor, she responded with the gracious offer of her beautiful greystone house, high among the trees, which overhung the Croton river, as her contribution to the entertainment of the Master and his retinue.

The day before leaving for Harmon to prepare the house for the great event, I spent the afternoon with my friend, Norina Matchabelli, who had just returned to town. I had written her of our prospective plans—first of our hope of going to England, later of Baba's impending visit to America. With searing sarcasm, but more than usual emotional restraint, Norina pried me with questions, and wound up by asking: "Who is this Master at whose feet you would worship?" I tried to convey to her the little I had heard and read about Baba and abundance my heart had told me. She listened for about ten minutes; then, pacing back and forth the length of the living-room, she upbraided me:

"How can you worship at the feet of *any* man, even though he calls himself a 'Master'? Women like ourselves, who have had such deep inner experiences, need no man to show us the way to God. How can you allow yourself to be drawn into such foolishness?"

I waited until the torrent of her disapproval had run its course. Then, quietly, I told her that I felt strongly impelled to follow my one inner prompting, which I knew to be the deepest intuition of my life.

One of the things I had told Norina about Baba was the extraordinary phenomenon of tears which Mr. Watson and many others had experienced upon first meeting the Master. So, as I bid her goodbye, she laughingly remarked:

“Well, when your ‘Master’ arrives, I must meet him. I too, would like to weep!”

THE MASTER COMES

The next few weeks were busy ones, setting in order the greystone house, with the red window-trimmings and doors for our visitors from abroad-Meher Baba, two Indian disciples, Ali and Chanji, and Meredith Starr. Also as guests, were our five friends who had been with us in New Hampshire. No work ever seemed more joyous, more exhilarating. Yet, due to a rather frail body, I had little strength left when the preparations were finally completed.

Baba was scheduled to land in New York on the sixth of November. The night before, as I lay in bed, exhausted, wondering how I could muster sufficient strength to fill my role as cook and housekeeper for eleven people, I suddenly had the impression of my room being filled with light, and next moment there streamed into it through the walls and ceiling a host of angelic beings, singing celestial music, the beauty of which is indescribable. In the center of the white-clad figures I recognized the form and features of the priest--now deceased--who had first initiated me into the life of the spirit, sixteen years before. At that time he had predicted that many years hence, I would have an important part to play in what he described as the establishment of the Kingdome of Heaven upon earth. Now, as I saw him in this waking vision, he smiled at me and said:

“This, Jean, is the moment I predicted many years ago.” Then the heavenly messengers gradually faded and I fell into a happy, restful sleep.

The next evening, as one of our friends stood in the kitchen with me, peering through the kitchen window into the silent darkness of the wooded road that led to the house, the head-lights of a car appeared in the distance, and we knew our long anticipated visitor was approaching. My husband and most of our friends had driven three cars into New York that morning to meet the boat and provide transportation for the party and their luggage. For us, who had stayed behind, it had been a day crowded with last

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minute preparations, electric with eager expectancy. Now the grate moment was at hand.

I walked to the small courtyard upon which the doorway opened and lit the hanging lantern, then stood in the passage-way, waiting. The cars pulled into the driveway. Meredith Starr got out first and came forward with outstretched hand. I returned his greeting, but my eyes were on the Master, who was directly behind him, looking into me with a deeply knowing smile. How long his eyes embraced me I do not know, but at some moment Meredith's voice recalled me to temporal surroundings:

“Jean, this is Shri Meher Baba.”

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

“I'm so happy you have come,” I finally managed to say. Hearing myself say it, I felt acutely the inadequacy of this greeting from one who had just experienced the merging of time and space into fathomless Eternity in which the cosmic drama, portraying God, was again being cast with the age-old characters re-living their ordained parts.

Here I am impelled to put on record something which to the Western reader may savor of sacrilege or childish fantasy. From my earliest childhood I had always felt I would some day meet the Saviour in the flesh. I remember that it came to me first when I was about four years old and attended a Sunday Infant School, where we sang the children's hymn:

“I think when I read that sweet story of old,
How Jesus was here among men,
How he called little children
Like lambs to His fold,
I wish I had been with Him then”.

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I remember the ecstasy with which I entered into the emotional longing of the hymn, then the vivid certainty that I had been with him then and I would be with him again.

This childhood experience had sunk into my sub-conscious and was not to appear again until the day of the priest's prediction, years later. Now, once more, it came to life as I looked into the divinity of Baba's loving eyes and knew that this was indeed the moment for renewing an age-old and sacred relationship.

I knew that *he* knew all I yearned to say but could not utter. Later I showed him to his rooms, and sat beside him on the divan as I told him of the members of our group, and placed the house and our services at his disposal, to be used by him as he deemed best. Only *my* words were spoken, because Baba had been maintaining silence then for seven years. Yet, to my heart he said many things, and on his little alphabet board, which Starr read for me he spelled out: "I am so happy, so very happy!" His eyes were filled with tears which overflowed from a heart that knows only eternal love. I knew then that it was a momentous meeting, not only for me, but also for him; for reunion with his 'own' is ever a joyous experience for the Master.

Suddenly a cloud of concern passed over his happy face as he noticed my bandaged thumb. I had cut it deeply that evening with a bread knife. He wanted to know how it had happened. I tried to make light of it as it deserved. But Baba insisted on knowing the details. Tenderly he placed his hand over the bandage and spelled out on his alphabet board that it would be entirely healed by morning. It was. I mention this incident not only because it was in the nature of a minor miracle, but what is of greater importance, because it exemplifies a fact which I have since had many opportunities to observe: that no detail of life that pertains to human need or suffering is too trivial or unimportant for Baba's merciful consideration.

Having heard that he usually had his meals alone in his room, I told Baba that I had made arrangements accordingly. He smiled his thanks, but indicated that this night he would have dinner with the group if we would like it. I

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assured him we would be delighted. So, for our first communal evening meal at Harmon, Baba sat at the head of the long table, pouring out his silent benediction upon us all. This is no mere figure of speech; Baba's presence is so electric with spiritual charge that even to be in the same house with him, and much more at the same table, is a soul-stirring experience. Slowly, his dark, luminous eyes passed from one face to another as we sat around the table, and I felt he was making a soul-survey of the inner life of all of us. Yet nothing which he beheld in the chambers of our hearts brought any sign of condemnation or criticism to his countenance-only evidence of deep tolerance and understanding .

Before bidding us good-night, he said he would see only the members of our group-family the following day, and since I was keeper of the house, he would see me first. So the next morning after breakfast, while our friends waited eagerly in the room below, I went up to Baba's quarters. I felt I wanted only to be quiet in his presence, and for five wonderful minutes he let me sit silently with him. Then he asked, spelling out the words on his board: "What are you thinking about?"

I could not put my thoughts into words. In truth, they were, I told Baba, too abstract even to recall. He replied: "You need not try. I know what you were thinking. I know what you thought yesterday, what you will think a year from now." For a long moment I was speechless. Never before had I encountered such egoless omniscience. Yet I accepted his statement naturally, without question. The force of his pure integrity lay behind it. Then I found my voice: "Is it because you see things whole-unfettered by time?" He nodded his confirmation. Again I sat silent for a few moments before replying: "This seems so familiar, to be sitting here with you like this, Baba. I feel as if I had always done it." He assured me it was so: "You've been with me for ages."

By this time the dissolving of my artificial shell was well under way. With no emotional appeal, such as is inherent in the spoken word, but through the more penetrating in-

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fluence of pure Being, he had accomplished the initial untying of painful knots and bonds of egoistic self-consciousness, fear and ignorance. I left the room in tears-purifying tears in which joy and pain strangely mingle; unashamed tears which both humble and exalt one. Later the other members of our family kept their appointments with the Mater in the upper room and without exception they descended again to the world of everyday things in the same transport of inner release; back into a world which by now Baba's divine alchemy had transmuted into a realm of wonder and beauty.

Baba's faculty of penetrating the mask of even the most sophisticated is due to his seeing the Eternal Self in people. Since this Self is *perfect* in everyone it naturally, follows that Baba's calling it into the consciousness of the individual, by his spontaneous recognition of it, causes many people to feel a temporary release from their every-day limited consciousness. Those whose egoistic vitality has been weakened by the impact of previous glimpses of higher consciousness, or by the disciplinary hand of life experience, feel a sublime joy mixed with a salutary kind of pain, at the moment of meeting Baba. The mirror of perfection which he holds before their consciousness reinforces their intuition of the Truth of themselves, in spite of the contrasting anguish which their present limited awareness generates in them. Others, of course, who are deeply crystalized in their passions, desires and opinions resist this purging activity of God in their souls. This deflation of their self-esteem causes them to turn from and often against Baba.

METAMORPHOSIS

The next day began the interviews with our New York friends to whom we had relayed word of Baba's arrival. Norina Matchabelli, who had laughingly declared that she too, 'would like to weep,' was among the first to arrive. Something extraordinary had apparently happened to her since I had last seen her. She had the desired tears in her eyes and her attitude was that of a puzzled child; a sharp contrast to her usual self-assurance.

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“Tell me about him.” She whispered as I led her into the living-room.

“You will see for yourself, in a few moments. But what has happened to you ?” I asked.

She then told me that ever since the moment Baba’s feet had touched the shores of America she had done nothing but weep. She had been compelled to cancel all of her social engagements. The old hauteur of sophistication was replaced by child-like wonder. Then word came that Baba would see her. About ten minutes later Malcolm happened to be passing the stairs that led to Baba’s room. He saw Norina, on her way down, in what seemed like a state of profound agitation, holding on to the bannister to steady herself. He ran up to give her his supporting arm and assisted her to the living-room where she fell into my arms, weeping as if her heart were breaking in an ecstasy of pain. Another shell was being dissolved. As other friends began to arrive I took Norina up to my room where she stayed for the day, resting on my bed. Every hour or so Baba would go with me to my room and stay for a few moments to compose Norina with balm of his healing Presence. Before she left that evening he said he would like her to come out every day during his stay at Harmon.

Norina had had considerable psychic experience in her life and so it was but natural that her immediate reaction to the Master should have had psychic implications. When, on entering Baba’s room, she saw him for the first time, sitting on the low divan at the far end, white-robed, cross-legged, she was momentarily blinded by the intensity of radiance that emanated from his person and which eclipsed the bright light of the sun that was steaming through the window. She staggered across the room with the help of one of the Master’ disciples, and falling to her knees beside Baba, pleaded:

“Take me out of this. Oh, take me away from it all!”

Little had Norina suspected when she said goodbye to me so lightly a few weeks before, that not only would she ‘weep’ but that Baba would become her revered spiritual Master and that his unspoken God-words would become her

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law. Nor did she know that for the next three years she would continue to go through the outer motions of her accustomed way of life while she was being prepared inwardly, for the new one. Nor that at the end of this period, her husband, Prince Matchabelli, would die and release her to devote all her time, all her substance, and all her energies, to the service of the Mater.

PENETRATING THE VEILS

In varying degrees this experience of Norina's was duplicated many times during the four weeks of Baba's visit. Men as well as women (doctors, lawyers, psychiatrists and hard-headed unemotional business executives) found their way to that upper room. Some came out of curiosity, a few to pay homage, others, perhaps, to scoff, but without exception they all remained to worship.

There was, for example, the reaction of a renowned professor of Western philosophy, Dr. Frederick Kettner, a man deeply read in the wisdom of East and West and Founder of the teaching known as Biosophy. In the presence of Baba he too fell to his knees and found himself unable to speak. He came from the room in a daze, his eyes glistening with tears.

The experience of another man of intellectual background, L.H., was outwardly less pronounced but his testimony as an eminent psychologist is illuminating. Though his training had conditioned him in the purely scientific approach to human nature he admitted to me that he had long felt the need for a deeper insight than that afforded by the rational mind. He felt in Baba this insight which he craved: "He seems to see through all veils and from my short interview with him I believe he is the guide who could help me to do likewise."

Even a few minutes with Baba seemed to stir the inmost depths of every visitor, and bring to the surface long-concealed shadows as well as light. One poignant illustration of his power to uncover the hidden sin was the case of the mother whose daughter had been told she could remain

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with us, after Baba's departure, to help Malcolm with secretarial work, in preparation for Baba's return visit in the spring. The daughter came dancing into the dining-room one evening, just as we were sitting down to our dinner, and with shining eyes shared with us this glad news which Baba had just given her. We all rejoiced with her, except the mother, whose face clouded with dark emotion. There was no mistaking the symptoms. Her daughter had achieved a place in the family-group which she, the had coveted in vain. Immediately after dinner word came from Baba for us all to meet in his room. Only we who had sat at the table were witness to the minor tragedy that had been mutely enacted there; and none had left the table.

We all gathered around Baba and sat silently for a few minutes while he quietly twirled his small alphabet board. Suddenly he touched the mother's shoulder:

"Happy?" he asked on his board.

She started, and turned to him her astonished face.

"Do you know what I am thinking, Baba?"

He nodded, looking deep into her eyes.

"And you don't condemn me?"

Slowly he shook his head, compassion pouring from his eyes. The next moment she broke into a torrent of weeping and hid her face on his knees. The mother's shell had been pierced.

In such simple, irresistible ways does Baba bring to light what modern psychologists call out 'shadow'-the symbol of all that is repugnant and reprehensible in our unconscious psychic life-which we all possess, but of which few of us are aware.

Another dramatic event occurred when the principal parties to a notorious feud met by 'chance' at our house. For many months there had been nothing but bitterness and recrimination between them, growing out of some widely noised financial manipulations of a well-known metaphysical teacher in New York. I happened to be in the library when the wife of the teacher and his tow chief opponents came face to face with each other, prior to their interviews with Baba. They stopped in their tracks, their faces flushed

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with heart-corroding emotions of rage, bitter resentment and wounded self-esteem. It was only the inhibitions of their civilized background that seemed to restrain them from flying at each other's hair and throats! In this Baba-charged atmosphere of self-unveiling their caveman tendencies, hitherto repressed, were being forced to the surface of their consciousness.

Later, when one by one they descended into the living-room, after only few minutes with Baba, it was strikingly evident that they had gone through an amazing transformation. What transpired in that upper room I do not know; but when they emerged from it their faces were aglow with such an inner light that all traces of bitterness and animosity had completely vanished from them. In the crucible of Divine Love the dross of their emotions had been consumed. Concealed elemental forces had been brought into the open and overcome. Less than twenty minutes before these women had been mortal enemies. Now, with tears in their eyes, they embraced each other.

POCKET-BOOK CONSCIOUSNESS

During his month's stay at Harmon, Baba gave many examples of his mastery in precipitating situations that revealed in a dramatic, unmistakable way our subconscious fears, inhibitions and prejudices. He had selected certain people from the list of scheduled appointments and ordered Malcolm and Norina to approach them for donations toward the establishment of spiritual retreats in India and Persia. Norina took the charge in her stride, but Malcolm responded with serious misgivings. To solicit our friends as they emerged from their interviews with Baba-to intrude upon the very rapture of that first meeting with a point-blank request for money-seemed to Malcolm in bad taste and extremely embarrassing. This reaction was in keeping with his views on the subject. He had long believed-and practised it in his bookshop classes-that spiritual teachers should never ask for money. It was his fixed conviction that spirituality and emphasis on money were simply not compatible! Baba, of course, was aware of Malcolm's

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viewpoint and anticipated his reluctance to comply with the order. He called him to his room and rebuked him.

“It is not the money that is important,” Baba spelled out on his board, “but that you obey me – implicitly and without hesitation-just as Arjuna obeyed Krishna when he told him that it was necessary for him to slay his kinsfolk.”

This was a large order for a Western intellectual to swallow. Malcolm himself was surprised by his spontaneous acceptance of the Master’s reprimand and by the alacrity with which he proceeded to carry out the painful task.

“I had never in my life taken orders graciously from anyone,” were Malcolm’s words in summing up the experience. “Yet Baba’s slightest wish became a sacred trust, an inescapable command; and this *before* I had been converted to the idea of the Master-disciple relationship.”

As part of this assignment Malcolm was called upon to ask one of our house guests-a prominent Theosophical lecturer-if, on returning to his home in the West, he would undertake to raise money for Baba’s work. This our guest flatly refused to do; for too many years he had shared Malcolm’s viewpoint, and he was not disposed to change it. Before anyone had a chance to relate the incident to Baba he summoned me to his room and feigned deep sorrow that our friend should so misinterpret the request as to imply that he, Baba, cared a pinhead about money. I remarked that our friend’s reaction was not illogical since Baba had been placing considerable emphasis upon money. Looking at me a little sadly he pointed out that whether he asked for money or did not ask for it our friend should have known that he had no personal interest in material things; that money in itself is neither good nor bad, but one’s *attitude* toward it that makes it so. In the West-especially in America-money has become polluted because of the unreal value which people place upon it. It is this destructive misvaluation which must be changed.

I felt the integrity of Baba’s statements. From my first meeting with him I had been aware of his utter detachment from all things mundane. During my subsequent, more intimate association with Baba, I learned that he possesses

nothing for himself-not so much as a penny of his own. Whatever money is given to Baba is used for the current requirements of his work, or placed in a trust fund for the need of its larger aspects, which are universal in scope.

Out of this fund, among other things, Baba provides the means of livelihood for hundreds of destitute Indian families within the sphere of his immediate influence, who are unable to obtain sufficient work to make ends meet. In times of acute distress, which under present conditions in India are frequent, Baba also distributes essential food and clothing to tens of thousands of victims who might otherwise perish. In addition to this he assumes full responsibility for every physical need of the Indian men and women who have been accepted by him as disciples, in accordance with the age-old tradition of Perfect Masters in the East.

Even strictly personal gifts are either given away by Baba or shared with others. The one thing to which I have ever seen him appear to be even remotely attached is a threadbare coat, so patched and worn that its original material is scarcely perceptible. And even this, I believe, is dear to him only because of the sagging pockets which for years have bulged with loving letters of his devotees.

Once during his visit Baba expressed a desire to motor through New York's financial district. It happened to be on a Sunday. As we drove through the narrow canyons converging on Wall Street, now like a quiet, deserted ghost town, we looked up at the solid and impressive banking houses and the empty Stock Exchange in which on week-days the powerful emotions of greed and fear are so rampant. "How ephemeral and unreal this money madness is," I thought. The next moment Baba smiled at me and indicated as he pointed to the buildings: "It is all a bubble. So easy to prick!"

But our Theosophical friend had not yet learned that secret, nor was he evidently destined in this life to learn it. Baba declared that he could not carry on his work in an atmosphere of distrust, without impairment of efficiency. For the same reason that caused Jesus to dismiss the doubters from the scene of his divine ministrations, Baba instruct-

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ed me to tell our visitors from the West that he could not continue his work in an atmosphere of doubt and that he would therefore have to leave our house. Naturally, when our guests heard this they declared that they would be the ones to leave. When I told Baba of their decision he stipulated that during the twenty-four hours which they required to prepare for their departure they were not to share our table but must eat alone. Right here I had to face a little corner of my own 'shadow'! To say or do the disagreeable thing deliberately had never been my long suit! I liked harmony too well; I like people to like me. I feared their displeasure. My reluctance to say the drastic but sometimes necessary thing was, of course, reverting to my childhood pattern of seeking the approval of my superiors. With his unerring instinct Baba had put his finger on this weak spot in my character and had contrived a situation that would compel me to face and transcend it.

So I swallowed hard, and with as much grace as I could muster, transmitted the painful message. Our friend left these parting words for Baba; "Tell him I love him, but don't quite understand." To this statement Baba made no reply; but he might well have remarked what later in India I knew him to express more than once: "The true lover withhold nothing for himself; he neither bargains nor doubts."

This memorable episode was the first in which Baba's technique had vividly brought home to me how fatally the egoistic intellect with its preconceived opinions and prejudices can block the way to deeper spiritual insight. Many times since, however, have I witnessed re-enactments of this same drama. There are many people who are not ready for Baba. To my knowledge, more have turned against him for this one reason than for any other. The unprecedented things which Baba so often says or does are inexplicable to the spiritually unready, and often outrage the intellect which, according to Baba, is the co-partner of the ego. For men, particularly, the highest standards of value are generally determined by the intellect, and since the most drastic aspect of Baba's spiritual technique has for its object

the elimination of the ego, it naturally follows that its close partner, the intellect, is considerably perturbed. Inevitably, a major conflict is aroused in those who are not yet willing to surrender their egoistic opinions and values.

REVELATION

At first Malcolm's dearly-held convictions stood in the way of his whole-hearted yielding to Baba's divine influence, Gradually, however, he found himself relinquishing, one after another, his most prized prejudices.

"I was not seeking a Master." Are his own words. "I did not wish to become a disciple. Yet there, as our guests, was a man who claimed to be a supreme Master-an Incarnation of Divinity, a Jesus, a Krishna, a Buddha-and who, moreover, every moment of the day and night was proving his mastery, was establishing his claim."

It was not, however, until the twelfth night of Baba's visit that Malcolm capitulated unreservedly. Our Western house guest were gathered after dinner in the living-room, where Meredith Starr was explaining to some of the group Baba's teachings concerning the inner cosmic planes.

"I grew suddenly very tired of words," Malcolm confesses. "I was glad that Baba, at least, was silent." Excusing himself, he went to his room and prepared for bed. But before he retired, Meredith stopped at Malcolm's room to tell him that Baba wished everyone to think of him just before going to sleep. Still uncertain of the desirability of the Master-disciple relationship-at least as far as he was concerned-Malcolm determined not to accede to this request. He did not desire to place himself in a position where his outlook might be influenced. He did not then believe in meditation on any person. He had never done it, nor did he wish now to do it.

But when he started to go to sleep he found himself thinking of Baba in spite of his decision. He could not erase him from his mind. He attributed this to the power of suggestion, to which he would be no party. He would overcome it by concentrating on something else.

"Upon my wife, Jean, whom I loved deeply, I felt I

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could meditate without hesitation. So I started to meditate on her, and was just about to fall peacefully asleep when suddenly the thought of Baba popped into my mind-Baba in relation to Jean-my last conscious thought before I slipped into unconsciousness!"

It was near midnight when he awoke from sleep, with tears pouring from his eyes, and a realization, in his mind, of Baba's true nature and mission; a realization so transcendent, so beyond the mind of man to comprehend, much less to describe, that he could not put it into words. Kabir, the great Indian poet and Master of the fifteenth century, says of such an experience:

"It can never be told with the words of the mouth,
It can never be written on paper."

Malcolm was convinced that Baba had revealed to him his Universal Form, as Krishna revealed his to Arjuna-and the revelation wiped out all his reservations and doubts. He now knew Who Baba was. He knew what his mission was; and he knew it was his destiny to serve him.

The following morning, on meeting Malcolm, Baba embraced him and, with a twinkle in his eyes, asked by way of his board, whether he had slept well. Malcolm nodded, then exclaimed: "Oh, Baba! Why don't you reveal yourself to everyone as you revealed yourself to me last night? There would then be no more wars and conflict".

Baba's only reply was a deeply-knowing smile and another tender embrace. But he has since assured us that when, through his spoken word, mankind becomes initiated into a higher state of consciousness, the causes which lead to war will disintegrate. "This idea of the self as a limited, separate entity will vanish. Cooperation will replace competition; certainty will replace fear; generosity will replace greed; exploitation will be no more. When I speak, I will reveal the One Supreme Self which is in everyone."

MIND-READING

Throughout Baba's visit, his extraordinary capacity to read our innermost thoughts and desires was revealed to us countless numbers of times. Perhaps no incident better il-

illustrates the supra-normal quality of Baba's mind than the experience of a friend of ours who came for his interview with the Master.

Harry Barnhart had, from childhood, possessed the faculty of accurately reading people's minds. To meet a Master and read *his* mind would no doubt be a unique experience. So it proved to be! To our friend's amazement he could read nothing, intensely though he tried. He had the peculiar sensation that Baba's mind was an absolute blank; there seemed to be nothing there to read.

"Yet all through the interview," he explained to us later, "I knew that Baba was reading my every thought and feeling!" When, that evening, we spoke to Baba about this, his answer was: "I have no mind, in the customary sense of the word—only a Universal Mind; which, to read, requires a Universal Mind."

When Chanji (Baba's secretary) heard of this experience he told us of the Indian lawyer who had come with a number of questions which he wished Baba to answer. Glancing at the secretary who had taken him to Baba's presence, the lawyer pleaded that his questions were of very personal nature and requested that he might be allowed to ask them privately. So Baba told him to sit at the far end of the room and write them down on a slate. Then Baba requested another slate. When the man had finished his list of questions and took his slate over to the Master, Baba in turn handed him his own slate. A look of amazement spread over the lawyer's countenance, as he looked at the blackboard. White against it were the answers to all his questions, in the order in which he had written them down; Baba had recorded his answers at the same time as the man was engrossed in writing out his questions.

GARMENT OF FLESH AND BLOOD

Toward the end of the Master's visit I was present at an interview in the course of which a doubting Thomas, steeped in intellectual theories about higher states of consciousness, tried to explain to Baba why he could not agree with those who had come to regard him as a God-realized Master:

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“How can your mind be infinite?” he argued. “You are limited to the form which you use as Baba, just as I am limited to mine. Your very use of ‘I’ and ‘my’, ‘you’ and ‘your’ denotes your sense of separateness.”

He was unaware, of course, that he was projecting upon the Master the limitations of his own consciousness. Baba smiled and spelled out on his board:

“No—I am not limited by this form. I use it like a garment, to make myself visible to you; without it you could not see me. And I communicate with you through words best fitted to *your* understanding. If I used the language of my own consciousness, you would not know what I was talking about.”

Shortly after this interview I had an opportunity of witnessing the facility with which Baba uses his body ‘like a garment.’ Two carloads of us were on our way for a brief visit to Boston. I happened to be sitting next to Baba. Suddenly he threw over his head the blue cloak which lay on his lap. The next moment his body became lifeless. Baba—that dynamic, radiant embodiment of spirit—was no longer beside me. I was startled and for a moment, frightened. Then I remembered that the limp body next to me was that of no ordinary man. I had learned enough of this supernatural being not to be alarmed, no matter what he might do or initiate; so I sat motionless, in silent wonderment. About five minutes later I could sense the life-force taking possession of his body once again. The next moment I felt a slight movement under the cloak. Then Baba straightened up and removed the cape from his head. When his eyes looked into mine I knew that what I had witnessed could have been no hallucination. His eyes were deeper and blacker than I had ever before seen them and they seemed slightly crossed. They gave the impression of having been on a far journey of exploration into fathomless depths. During this amazing ten-hour trip to Boston Baba must have gone in and out of his body a dozen times. He explained to us later that there are constant calls on his inner counsel from all over the universe, often requiring of him urgent work of a nature which necessitates his presence elsewhere

GARMENT OF FLESH AND BLOOD

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for brief periods. He added that during such spiritual journeys, in which time and space are no factors of limitation, it is unavoidable that he shed the ballast of his physical body, to be picked up again on his return.

Fantastic as this may seem to the uninitiated, I doubt whether the rankest skeptic in my stead, during that all-day drive, could have remained unconvinced that before his very eyes was repeatedly taking place something that transcended the rational mind, yet which was fully under Baba's control. There was in it no make-believe or pretense, no striving for effect upon impressionable neophytes. Nor were the sudden transitions from sparkling vitality to lifeless inertness and back again to his customary aliveness due to some physical anomaly or mental eccentricity, as the scientific mind might at first have surmised. No one who had observed, as I had, the tremendous concentration, the acute awareness which animated Baba throughout the day, could have dodged the conclusion that there was an esoteric reason, a sublime and directed purpose behind this strange phenomenon. I have since discovered that Baba is *never* unaware, never inactive; these are two of his major characteristics. Yet, at all times, he conveys the impression of profound serenity and complete detachment.

That this apparently singular phenomenon is not peculiar to Baba is verified by the recorded instances of similar withdrawals of which Roerich gives some examples in his *Altai Himalaya*, where he speaks of the Tibetan *lamas* who often cover their heads with cloth, during what they call their 'hearings'. He recalls also the statement of Damias (the pupil of Appolonius of Tyana) of how Appolonius, when he heard the 'soft voice', always wrapped himself from head to foot in a long scarf of woolen texture. Tradition has also recorded how astonished were the contemporaries of the *Comte de St. Germain* at the manner in which he sometimes 'wrapped himself up'.

WRITTEN IN FLAMES

The fifth night of Baba's visit was enlivened by a dramatic episode which is illuminating for its symbolic significance.

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I was awakened about midnight by a gentle medley of insistent calls at the front door. Considerate of Baba and the other sleeping guests, I tip-toed downstairs and opened the door to an excited group of people-our out-of-town-visitors-who had been sleeping across the river in a guest house also loaned by our friend. From the scramble of their agitated whispers I learned that the guest house had burned down. They were shivering with emotion and the crisp mid-November night wind, so I gathered them into the warmth of the kitchen, where they gave me a spirited account of the calamity. The caretaker, it appeared, had left the lower door open, after piling the furnace high with coal. This had intensified the draught and caused the flames to ascend through the floor-register of the central hall, ignite carpets and curtains, and within a few minutes set the whole house on fire. This happened after they had all retired and though the wildly spreading flames left the occupants of the guest house barely time to save their lives, miraculously they all escaped without harm. The only injury was a slight scratch which one of the guest suffered while crawling through a window.

Greatly relieved, I rummaged through the house to improvise overnight accommodations for the victims of the fire, which happily I contrived without rousing our sleeping guests. When I related the eventful experience to Baba, the next morning, he showed no surprise; merely asked: "There was no one injured?" When I assured him that all the guests had escaped without injury, he then asked: "Will our hostess suffer financial loss?"

"On the contrary," I told him, "it so happens that she is in greater need of money than of the guest house, and will benefit by the cash which the insurance company will pay her."

Baba seemed very pleased, and summed up for us the significance of the event: "Since no one will suffer severely through this experience we should rejoice that it happened. It is a good symbol. Those who lost their few belongings through the fire will begin a new life. Those who man-

aged to save their possessions will have to wait awhile for their new beginning.”

And thus, to the letter, has it since proven to be.

FAREWELL TO ECSTASY

Exactly one month after the day of his arrival, Baba left America for Europe and India. It had been month of deep inner experience for hundreds of people, particularly for those of us fortunate enough to have lived under the same roof with the Master. For us, it was like the *agape* of the early Christians—a continual love-feast-in which all the daily problems and frictions were mysteriously resolved by the power of the divine love which emanated ceaselessly and spontaneously from Baba, and in which we all shared.

With heavy hearts we bade farewell to Baba. Yet, as I look back over the years, during which these painful separations from Baba occurred again and again, I see that they have been quite as necessary as the joyous meetings. In the early days of our association with Baba they were essential for some of us if we were to remain in our physical bodies, because protracted close contact with the Master so quickens the vibratory rate of his disciples that, until their bodies become gradually attuned to it, they are apt to suffer the effect of the swifter current.

In my own case the regenerative process was so intense that on the fifth day I was compelled to turnover my house-keeping duties to one of our guests and under Baba's orders spend most of the time in my room resting. During this period I saw Baba's face in everything—sky, trees, water, other people's faces, the walls of my room, my own hand—everything upon which my vision focused. It was, therefore, not surprising that I had no desire for material food. When a tray was brought to my room I would look at it for a moment, resolved to eat what had been so kindly prepared; but immediately Baba's face would appear, blotting out food and dishes. When, however, Baba discovered that I was not eating, he made a point of coming to my room at meal-times. Sitting on the edge of the bed, he would, like a loving father, tenderly feed me the food from my tray,

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until finally overwhelmed by this act of compassion, I forced myself to eat.

Though infinitely more satisfying is spiritual food, food for the body is essential on this plane to help us keep balance between heaven and earth, in order that the *whole* man, with his human needs as well as his divine aspirations, may be taken into God. As Baba has often said, the purpose of earthly incarnation is to bring the unconscious into consciousness-not to inundate consciousness by too swift transcendent metamorphosis. Such precipitate transitions would but defeat God's purpose.

Baba functions in full knowledge of God's laws; he knows exactly how much of the 'heavenly food' his disciples have the capacity to digest at any time. Only when they have fully integrated into their consciousness whatever intimations of divine Reality have been vouchsafed them, does the Master open wider the door to the inner chambers of the spiritual Kingdom.

CHAPTER II

INDIA'S CONTRIBUTION

Only yesterday, to the vast majority of Westerners, India was a land of snake-charmers and Maharajas, a sub-continent of mystery and fabulous wealth. Of the true significance of India the bulk of mankind knew less than nothing; nor did it ever occur to the average man that the four hundred million people of India might have an important role to play in the destiny of humanity. But today the eyes of the whole world are upon India and scores of millions, instead of handfuls, of people everywhere are asking what manner of country is this-what contribution to the world's need may we expect from her?

As one who knows something of India first-hand, I am convinced that her greatest contribution will come not so much from her potential wealth and man-power, as from her spiritually illumined souls, her God-men who have the capacity to effect for humanity the soul-quickenning it so desperately needs, if civilization is not utterly to perish from this earth.

In India, the appellative 'God-man' carries with it no prejudiced connotation as it does to us in the West. For us, conditioned as we are by Christianity, there is but one God-man, our great Master, Jesus. And I, whose spiritual perceptions were first quickened by surrender to that Blessed One, would be the last to detract one iota from his glory, beauty and perfection. But soul experience, born of long years of ardent search for sustained inner peace and joy, compels me to recognize that life is an infinite adventure-an eternal game which the Father plays with his created children-and when, at certain evolutionary periods, man is in need of the physical embodiment of Godhead for his

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quicken upon earth, the Supreme One takes upon himself the garment of flesh and dwells among us.

To the cultured Indian this is a self-evident truth. To recognize Jesus, Buddha, Zoroaster, Moahammed, Krishna, as God-men, equally endowed with spiritual power and wisdom—though *expressing* it in different degrees and qualities, as the exigencies of the age demand—requires no effort on his part, erects no mental hurdles to surmount. The Orientals are an ancient people—the least of them wiser, in some respects, than the most learned savants among us, because their wisdom is of the soul and not of the intellect.

Theirs is the perspective of Eternity, which recognizes that a perfection once achieved in consciousness is forever recurrent in manifested form, because inherent in such a consciousness is the desire to help all other sentient beings to attain that same perfection. To the Indian mind it is unthinkable that God should not manifest himself again and again throughout the ages, in all his beauty, in the form of perfect man. Their sacred literature abounds with accounts of God-men—souls who have attained complete and permanent realization of God—who have left upon their age the imprint of their immortal lives. And when there is a “decline of virtue and an insurrection of vice and injustice in the world”, then, as one of the great Bibles of the world—the Bhagavad Gita—says, God incarnates as the Avatar or Saviour, “to destroy the wicked and to re-establish righteousness and preserve the just.”

Certainly, the world needs a Saviour today as never before in the history of mankind, a Perfect One, whose knowledge and power qualify him to resurrect man from his ignorance, to liberate him from his self-imposed bondage of greed, selfishness and fear.

At the moment we are concerned with trying to establish and maintain a peace which will guarantee man’s basic freedoms of speech, action and worship, if war in vastly greater horror is not to be repeated within another generation. None, I am sure, will gainsay the importance of these objectives. But wars and their aftermath are merely the projection of individual conflict, magnified to national

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or world proportions. Some means is therefore needed which will resolve for the individual his inner turmoil and establish for him *true* freedom-freedom of spirit and freedom of consciousness that will be his even though he languish behind prison bars or slave in bondage to a tyrant. Such is the freedom which Jesus had, which other God-men have had, and which Shri Meher Baba, of whom I write, gives every evidence of having; a freedom that may be communicated to those who turn from the bankruptcy of their intellectually-conceived panaceas, and call from the depth of their souls upon God for help.

DESCENT OF GRACE

The story of how Baba became conscious of his God-hood and of his role as Avatar was first recounted to us by Baba's devoted secretary, Chanji, on their first visit to America. Later, in India, it was amplified and re-told many times by Baba's brothers and other disciples.

As a lad of eighteen, Shri Meher Baba, or Merwan, as he was then called, was riding his wheel along the hot, dusty Poona road in western India. He was on his way home from Deccan college, where he was a student. As he approached a large, shady lime tree, a very old woman rose from the midst of a group which sat beneath tree, and came forward to meet him. He dismounted his wheel and the two looked into each other's eyes. Then the woman kissed him on the forehead, between the eyes, and returned to the waiting group. Not a word was spoken.

The boy mounted his wheel again and continued on his way home. Such was the simple and apparently insignificant incident which occurred to Merwan Sheriar Irani, in the year 1913. Yet, the repercussions of that meeting effected in him such a cataclysmic revolution of consciousness that for some years thereafter he was regarded by his family and friends as a happy madman.

Baba relates that at the moment of his contact with the aged woman, a tremendous current, as of electricity, shot through his body, leaving in its wake a feeling of unearthly ecstasy. It remained with him for several months, until

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one night, just prior to sleep, he suddenly lost all awareness of his physical body and found himself lifted into a state of super-consciousness.

That such an apparently slight occurrence as his strange meeting with this ancient woman should cause such monumental changes in his being may seem incredibly fantastic to the matter-of-fact Western mind. But not to the people of the East, whose vast storehouse of sacred literature is rich in similar accounts of supra-normal states of consciousness, induced by contact with spiritually advanced souls.

GOD-WOMAN

Babajan was the name of the remarkable woman who came so dramatically into the life of Baba. She was known as a Perfect Master or *Sadguru*. In the East, this appellation refers to the few rare human beings whose consciousness has transcended the finite boundaries of the limited self. Their minds being merged with the Universal Mind of God, they are completely *conscious* of the Unconscious, but without loss of awareness and mastery of the physical body. Perfect Masters function in outer respects as normal men and women, while at the same time they enjoy inwardly all the prerogatives and responsibilities of Godhood.

Babajan is one of the few known examples of Perfect Mastership in a woman. According to Sufi tradition, Babajan's manifestation of spiritual perfection in a *female* body symbolizes the end of the old world order and heralds the beginning of the new age in which woman will take her place beside man in bringing about that transformation of consciousness which will elevate the feminine principle of life-the heart-to its rightful place of pre-eminence.

Babajan was born in Afghanistan of well-to-do, aristocratic Mohammedan parentage. Her maiden name was *Gul-rukh* (Rose-face) which name she well merited, for even in extreme old age her complexion was clear as a young girl's. Her training followed the pattern of the Afghan Mohammedan nobility. At a very early age she had learned the Koran by heart, and later learned to speak and read Arabic, Persian, and the Indian dialects of Pushtoo and

Urdu. Unlike most young girls of her age and background, she found her greatest joy in meditation and solitude, much to the chagrin of her parents: From their point of view it was unthinkable that a girl of her caste, tradition and beauty, should not fulfill her function as woman through the only avenue which they knew to be open to woman-marriage and motherhood.

The inner bliss, however, which this unique girl derived from her way of life made her unalterably opposed to her parents' traditional desire. *Gul-rukh* had made her decision; marriage was not for her. But her parents were persistent, and when they tried to force her into an unwanted alliance, she made her escape to Peshawar, India, and later to Rawalpindi. For a young girl of her background, brought up in the strict seclusion of the *purdah* tradition, this was an unprecedented and no small undertaking. Doubtless her great spiritual destiny aided her in covering up her tracks until she reached the safe harbor of India.

Here she continued her life of spiritual aspiration through prolonged meditation and fasting, until at length she was guided to a Hindu Master who initiated her into the spiritual path. For nearly seventeen months following this initiation she imposed upon herself severe spiritual austerities in the seclusion of a mountain cave.

At the age of thirty-seven she was guided to a Mohammedan Master who put an end to her spiritual struggles by freeing her from the illusion of separation from God. She knew, however, that a further adjustment in her consciousness had to take place. The realization of her Godhood must be perfectly balanced with her physical consciousness if she were to fulfill her inwardly revealed function of becoming the leading Perfect Master of her time, destined to awaken the Avatar of the new age to his God-ordained mission and to relinquish to him her spiritual leadership. For this final step in consciousness she was led back to the Hindu Master who had first guided her. Through his ministrations she achieved the ultimate in consciousness and subsequently became the head of the spiritual hierarchy of her day.

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Shortly after this supreme attainment she travelled from one end of India to the other, staying at one period of time in the Punjab in northern India. While there she was heard one day-during divine ecstasy-to declare that she was God. To the orthodox zealots of the Punjab this was rank blasphemy; in their rage they had her buried alive. Through her supra-normal powers, which all God-realized Masters possess but which is beyond the rational mind to comprehend, she managed to escape, and some years later took up her abode in Poona, one-hundred and twenty mile southeast of Bombay. It was here that some soldiers of the Baluchi regiment were stunned with amazement to find the woman they had buried alive, years before, sitting under a large tree-very much resurrected and surrounded by her devotees. Overawed by her spiritual magnitude, in the presence of some of Babajan's disciples, they prostrated themselves reverently before her and later recounted their part in her burial to by-standers. As the result of this incident the fame of her saint-hood spread far and wide.

One of Baba's women disciples, who had the privilege of knowing Babajan well, related to me that her presence was magnetic that no passer-by could resist turning his head for a second glance. She was short in stature, firm and agile in gait; her skin was fair and sunburnt, her face broad, with high cheek bones, and a wealth of thick white hair hung loosely to her shoulders. Her voice was deep and sonorous, her eyes fathomless pools of liquid blue light.

After a number of years of roaming about the city of Poona-to all appearances as a mendicant-sitting or resting wherever her fancy led her, she took up her 'seat'-as the permanent abode of a saint or Master is termed-underneath the lime tree where many years later Baba was destined to meet her. At that time, this particular spot was an eyesore of dirt, desolation and ugliness; a breeding place of plague and pestilence, and the favorite haunt of the city's riff-raff. Here Babajan improvised an apology of a shelter with some sticks and gunny-sacks, and here, through the driving rains of the monsoon, and the scorching heat of the Indian summer, Babajan remained.

Within ten years her 'seat' became a focal point of pilgrimage for thousands of spiritual aspirants. The neighboring section changed from a slum of squalor and filth to a bazaar of spiritual wealth and beauty. New buildings sprang into being, old ones were rejuvenated. Tea-shops echoed to the hospitable clatter of cups and saucers, and to the chatter of throngs waiting to pay their respects to Babajan. In the streets singers entertained the crowd with their spiritual music; gay, laughing and eager people of all ranks and creeds stood by the hundreds, patiently waiting for the long-anticipated moment when they could 'take the dust' of Babajan's feet. And because this was India, where the 'shadow' side of life could never be completely disregarded or suppressed, the ubiquitous beggar slunk his way through the crowd, whining his pitiful plea for alms. Near Babajan, herself, clouds of sweet-smelling incense rose and mingled with the out-pouring of devotion from the hearts of the pilgrims; a scene to be found only in the Orient, and one which left an indelible impression on the mind and heart of the beholder.

To the town-authorities these daily demonstrations presented a serious problem. Traffic was being held up, congestion spread for miles around. They would have liked to move Babajan's 'seat' to a more outlying, less congested district, but they knew she would never consent to that. However, something had to be done; their local pride was at stake. Such a celebrity-as she had now become-should have a more suitable place to live in. It was unseemly that she should be living beneath a gunny-sack roof, under a tree. So the township built her a decent abode only a few feet from her self-chosen spot. She did not remonstrate, but when the building was finished and they invited her, with suitable ceremony, to move in, she refused point blank. The authorities were flabbergasted, but ultimately the difficulty was resolved by building an extension which connected the new structure with Babajan's old 'seat' underneath the lime tree!

Like other Perfect Masters, she slept very little, and even that little was merely withdrawal to the plane of super-

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consciousness. Unconscious sleep plays no part in the life of a Master. She ate little and irregularly, with frequent servings of strong, black Indian tea; a regime calculated to shatter even a robust constitution. But for Babajan-the Perfect Master-it was apparently the perfect diet: she lived to the ripe age of over one hundred and twenty! She used to refer to the act of eating as, “patchwork to the body.”

If anybody addressed her as ‘Mother’ her eyes would flash and she would exclaim: “I am a man; not a woman!” indication that her *consciousness* was not conditioned by her physical form and confirming a saying of prophet Mohammed, that “Lovers of God are males; lovers of paradise are eunuchs; lovers of the world are females.”

Many miracles are attributed to Babajan, among them the merciful act of healing. Her method in this was unique. She would place her hand over the diseased part or hold it between her fingers and calling upon some Celestial Being, order the troublesome entity to depart, as she jerked or moved the affected area. This technique would bring instantaneous relief and the estwhile sufferer would depart smiling and happy.

Hundreds of incidents are related about Babajan illustrating how her great love and compassion for sinful man always came to the fore whenever human derelicts came her way. Characteristic of these is the occasion when a man tried to steal a costly shawl-a gift from a devotee-which covered the sleeping Babajan. One end of the shawl happened to be caught under her body, which caused the thief considerable trouble in removing it, since he tried not to awaken her. But Babajan raised herself a little, without opening her eyes, to help the man achieve his purpose.

At another time a wealthy devotee had placed upon Babajan’s wrists two bangles of solid gold. Watching his opportunity, a thief snatched them from her wrists so roughly that they cruelly lacerated her flesh. Too late did her followers realize what had happened. They were infuriated and set up a great hue and cry to prevent the thief’s escape. When the local police brought the culprit before Babajan, to everyone’s consternation she ignored

the thief and called upon the police to arrest his accusers!

These are but a few of the many incidents which highlight for us the character of this unsurpassed God-woman who, upon seeing the boy, Merwan, recognized him instantly as her long-awaited spiritual son. After placing the kiss of divine enlightenment upon Merwan's forehead, she told her disciples that this was a soul who would startle the world with his God-power and love. She had known from the time of her own inner illumination that it was her destiny to awaken Merwan to his great mission. Even the eternal Avatar must each time be re-awakened to his divine role. On September 21, 1931--the time of Baba's first visit to the West--her work completed, she gave up her earthly body.

We of the West are so far removed from esoteric phenomena that we find it difficult to grasp such singular proceedings, let alone accept them as facts. The Eastern scriptures however, are lucid on the subject. They recount many instances of Perfect Masters conferring instantaneous spiritual grace at will upon anyone of their appointed choice, by means of sight, touch, or speech. At such moments all of the Master's completely realized God-power is focused with needle-point sharpness upon the consciousness of the predestined disciple, who in a flash becomes aware of his own Godhood.

PREFACE TO DAWN

Though Eastern lore is replete with records of similar instantaneous liberation, accounts of such grace falling upon one who had not consciously been seeking God are rare. Generally it comes to one after long years of earnest striving and complete renunciation of worldly values. But to Merwan it seemed to have come as a free gift from Heaven, unexpected and not consciously sought. He had not been seeking anything outside the boundaries of his mundane activities. He loved the poetry and literature of the West as well as the East, read avidly of both. He excelled in his studies and at sports; was a leader in his group, well-liked by his friends and teachers, in spite of an inher-

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ent mischievousness. He seemed in all respects a normal, healthy, happy boy, loving the beautiful, despising the mean and petty.

His father, a Parsee of the Zoroastrian faith, had been an ardent seeker after God ever since his young manhood. He had, in fact, decided to dedicate his life to that search, and become what in India is known as a *Sanyasin*-a spiritual wayfarer-when an inner voice commanded him to give up his asceticism, marry and bring children into the world. One of these children, the Voice declared, would bear the fruit of the father's striving, and would become known as a great spiritual leader of men. The father obeyed the inner command and shortly thereafter married a fellow Parsee woman, whose forebears had likewise migrated from Persia and settled near Bombay. Five children were the off-spring of this union, of whom Merwan was the second, born on February 25th, 1894.

One circumstance of his childhood may have contributed somewhat to the reflective side of Merwan's nature, though it is my understanding that spiritual liberation, such as Merwan experienced, is not conditioned by nor dependent upon environment or physical heredity. Spiritual readiness, in the sense of soul-maturity is the determining factor.

Merwan lived near the community Tower of Silence where those of the Zoroastrian faith take their dead and leave them to be consumed by the vultures which throng about the Tower in black clouds of waiting eagerness. Often the child Merwan chose to visit this eerie place, sometimes sitting alone for hours, with only vultures and dry bones for companions. Perhaps here began his first faint intimations of his immortal role which transcends life and death. In any case it would seem to indicate a nature instinctively reflective-introverted. But for this factor in his childhood, Merwan's environment was similar to that of thousands of other Parsee children born of refined, devout Zoroastrian parents.

He completed his preparatory school grades at St.Vincent's High School with high credit and at the age of seventeen entered Deccan College, at that time the finest educa-

tional institution in the Deccan—a province of Western India. Merwan’s main interest was in literature and he read eagerly Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Shelley, as well as many other English, Indian and Persian poets. Of Hafiz, one of the great Persian poets, he was especially fond. He felt enraptured by his deep mysticism, although at that time he had had no mystical experience himself. Under the inspiration of this poet, Merwan wrote many poems in various Indian dialects and in Persian, which were published under the *nom-de-plume* of “Homa,” in *Sanj Vartman*, one of the most popular vernacular newspapers of Bombay. He also wrote poems in English. He loved music and had a beautiful singing voice. In contrast to this more aesthetic side of his nature was his keen interest in mystery stories, and at the age of fifteen he wrote a story for his favorite ‘thriller,’ *The Union Jack*, which was accepted and printed.

In preparatory school and college Merwan was regarded as a natural leader. In quarrels, he was called upon to be arbiter, and the boys came to him for advice on all subjects. At Deccan college he formed an organization called the ‘Cosmopolitan Club.’ Anybody, regardless of caste or community, could become a member. Its rules included the prohibition of gambling, coarse language, and quarreling.

GOD-AWAKENING

Merwan was in his second year of college when this great inner transformation took place. After his initial meeting with Babajan, Merwan continued to attend his college classes, but each evening on his way home he would stop for a short visit with the venerable saint, who at that time was reputed to be well over one hundred years old. Age had left its deep imprint in furrows upon her face, but her faculties had become intensified with age. Her sight and hearing were perfect, and she walked as spritely as young girl. When I was in India I was told by many who had known her that the love which emanated from her was so great that people could hardly bear to leave her presence.

One evening in January 1914, Babajan was in a talkative mood and Merwan stayed with her longer than usual.

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He kissed her hands and stood humbly before her. Her deep eyes were intent upon him. She pointed her finger at him and declared, "This child of mine will create a great sensation in the world and do immense good to humanity." Merwan continued to stand reverently before her for a few more moments, then reluctantly made his way home. It was nearly midnight. He went immediately to bed. Within a few minutes he began to experience extraordinary thrills throughout his body, as though he were receiving high-powered electric shocks. He felt somewhat alarmed as the indescribable joy, mingled with pain, became more intense. After a few hours of this ecstasy he passed beyond all mundane consciousness.

The first person to discover Merwan in this condition was his mother, who found him the next morning lying on his bed with wide-open, vacant eyes. Thinking he was seriously ill, she made him lie down again. For three days he remained in this condition. Though his eyes were open, he saw nothing. On the fourth day, he began to move about a little, being now dimly conscious of his body. In this semi-trancelike condition he remained for some nine months. He had no knowledge of his actions and what he did was in response to no prompting of his conscious mind. He was wholly unconscious of the physical world. He neither ate food nor drank liquid; any action initiated he would continue for hours at a time. Once, during this period, he went to Kondwa, and lay behind the Parsi Tower of Silence for three days. He did not sleep and the food which was given to him he gave to the dogs or put in his pockets, intending to give it to beggars.

His parents were desperate. They naturally thought his mind was impaired, and in their efforts to restore their beloved son to normality they subjected him to every conceivable kind of medical treatment. But none was of any avail, nor was he aware of any of it. He was oblivious of the doctors, and not even the hypodermic needles made him aware of them, or caused any sensation to register in his brain.

Ten months later, in November 1914, he regained slight

physical consciousness and behaved, as he afterward said, like an automaton possessing intuition. His eyes ceased to be vacant; life returned to them, and he began again to take food regularly, although in very small quantities. A month after this partial return of physical awareness, a friend brought a poor young man named Behramji Irani to see Merwan. The newcomer became instantly devoted to Merwan and later was one of his closest disciples. Merwan offered to teach him Persian. His parents were delighted, as this was the first concrete evidence of more normal functioning. To accelerate the process they got additional pupils for him to teach but he declined to accept them. He continued, however, to teach Behramji, and with very marked results, though Merwan at that time had little more than a fraction of his normal consciousness. He taught instinctively, not intellectually.

BALANCED CONSCIOUSNESS

With this slight return of physical consciousness, Merwan became increasingly aware of the need to find someone who would help him regain perfect equilibrium. He knew intuitively that it was not the function of Babajan, his liberator from world-illusion, to effect his balance on the physical plane. For this he knew that he must find another Master.

The spiritual hierarchy, known as Perfect Masters, are a completely integrated group, functioning as one in God-consciousness, and known to each other inwardly. Each having a distinct and unique role to perform, they never overlap each other's sphere of action. Though endowed with infinite wisdom and knowledge, and therefore able to perform any work they might choose, their earthly mission is divided into highly specialized activities. It is characteristic of Perfect Masters that in everything they do, they manifest the utmost economy of effort.

The Master destined to complete the process of perfect functioning for Merwan proved to be Upasani Maharaj. His first meeting with Upasani illustrates the singular ways of such Masters. On the surface, many of their actions seem strangely incongruous-even grotesque-yet upon closer analysis, the underlying meaning becomes apparent.

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As Merwan approached Upasani Maharaj on his first visit to him, the Master picked up a pebble and hurled it at Merwan. This was for the purpose of awakening him again to the physical world. The stone grazed Merwan's forehead -on the same spot where Babajan had kissed him-and Baba relates that from that moment his equilibrium began to return, bringing him down gradually from the supra-normal level on which he had been solely functioning since Babajan's initiation, to balanced consciousness on the earth plane. The kiss of Babajan might very well have been the symbolic Breath of God that lifted Merwan into God-realization; the stone of Upasani Maharaj the symbolic fragment of earth that brought him down to the sphere where he was to function among the children of the earth.

In the beginning of his contact with Upasani, Merwan used to visit him for only a day or two at a time, spending the intervals with his family. Not yet privileged to comprehend the great spiritual transformation which was taking place within their son's consciousness, they still regarded him as mentally deranged. He would sit for hours at the Tower of Silence, accentuating the fact of physical consciousness by knocking his forehead against the stones. Then he would wrap his head in a scarf or turban to hide the bruises from his family. Baba later told his group that the physical pain provoked by knocking his head against the stones relieved somewhat the spiritual agony in which he was then immersed.

As Merwan's consciousness became more balanced, his mother's anxiety to see her son re-established in an atmosphere of normal living became more pronounced. She pleaded with him to adopt some kind of profession or trade, and to please her and ease her concern he tried his hand at various occupations. It was during this period that he became manager of a theatrical company for a short time. How Merwan reacted to these excursions into worldly life is summarized in a letter to a friend, in which he expressed his distaste for a life that compelled him to eat uncongenial food, and required him to wear confining clothes, both of which he heartily disliked.

When the owner of the theatrical troupe died, Merwan was glad to return to Poona. Here he was put in charge of his father's teashop. But the boy whose forehead had been touched by two Perfect Masters was not destined to distinguish himself as manager of a teashop. His mind was too greatly absorbed in lofty subjects to pay attention to crafty customers who took delight in cheating him.

The teashop served one useful purpose, however, and perhaps that was its function. Through it he began gathering about him a small circle of friends who, in spite of his eccentricities, felt deeply drawn to him. As a gathering place for this little group, Merwan rented a small room near the shop which he decorated with pictures of Babajan and Upasani Maharaj, and of other saints and Masters. Here the circle performed spiritual ceremonies every evening, and twice a week at four o'clock in the morning—the hour when Baba became God-realized, and when, he has told his disciples, they also will become God-conscious.

While in charge of the teashop, part of Merwan's work required him to wash bottles, dishes, and to sweep and wash the floor. Curiously enough, this aspect of the work did not disturb him. On the contrary, he seemed to take delight in doing the most menial tasks. In later years this same proclivity was evidenced when, during the first Ashram days, he helped with the household work and later, at his school for young boys, when he cleansed their latrines.

Another poignant example of the urge Merwan apparently felt, to experience symbolically the lowest level of life – even as he had experienced in reality the highest—is recounted by Behramji, who tells of the incident when Merwan obtained from a sweeper a bucket of refuse, which he took to an attic. There he stayed for thirty six hours. When he emerged, he was covered with filth from head to foot, and completely exhausted. His devoted friend took upon himself the task of cleansing Merwan of the refuse.

In July, 1921, Merwan moved to Sakori, the headquarters of the Master Upasani. Here he spent many hours daily in silence; only now and then would he break the silence with a song. At the end of December, Merwan was

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restored to fully balanced consciousness. Signaling this important event, Maharaj said to his disciples: "I have given my 'key' to Merwan. He is now the repository of my power."

And later, again in the presence of his disciples and devotees: "Merwan is the leading *Sadguru* of this age. He will move the world and all humanity will be benefited by his work."

"Merwan is a Perfect Master," he told Baba's friend, Behramji. "You must carry out his every command."

Thus Merwan became a *Sadguru* at the age of twenty-eight. He was henceforth called Meher Baba, which means Father of Compassion.

When Baba left Sakori early in the year 1922, Upasani Maharaj turned over to him a few of his own followers, whom he had been nurturing until Baba-their destined Master-should be ready to receive them. Again Upasani admonished them to obey always the word of Baba, who now had the power to help them become God-realized, even as he was.

Baba has told us that in attaining perfect control over his physical body, his superconscious state of God-realization in no wise abated. Through the ministry of Babajan he had been awakened to the realization of his Godhood. In this exalted state he became aware of his destiny in this life, as well as in former incarnations, to serve as the Divine Leader who brings about that quickening of mass consciousness which is humanity's greatest recurrent need. Babajan released in him the well-spring of his Divinity, but in order that he might use this transcendent knowledge for the benefit of humanity his consciousness must be balanced again on the physical plane-without loss of God-consciousness. Accordingly, was the second Master, Upasani Maharaj, destined to enter Baba's life, and to be the intermediary in rendering him this service.

Succinctly, Baba sums it up: "Babajan gave me God; Upasani Maharaj, knowledge."

Thus in him were fused the spiritual strains of two great religions-the Mohammedan through Babajan, the Hindu through Upasani, as were also the Mother and Father as-

pects of God. Moreover, through his physical birth he had inherited the great tradition of Zoroaster, while his Christian schooling had acquainted him with the teaching and precepts of Jesus; a universal inheritance, bestowed for vast universal work.

SIGNIFICANCE OF GODHOOD

Since this story concerns one whose state of consciousness is that of the incarnate God, and since few of us in the West know much about this supreme achievement, it seems appropriate to include in this biography Baba's own teaching on the subject. He tells us that though the Realization of God is the supreme goal of man, few in any age achieve it. Of those who do, the *Sadguru* or Perfect Master stands at the pinnacle. He is one who has passed through the six planes of illusory consciousness-all of which involve a sense of separation from God-and has entered the seventh plane where final and permanent union with God is realized. He has, moreover, balanced this supreme soul condition with his physical plane consciousness.

This ultimate goal of the spiritual journey-union with God-is achieved also by two other classes of God-realized souls-*Muktas* and *Majzoobs*. They do not, however, possess the mastery over the physical body which the Perfect Master enjoys. The *Muktas* give up the gross body at the moment of liberation, and leave the earth plane. The *Majzoobs* retain the human form and continue functioning on this plane, but without regaining *consciousness* of the body. Only a few-the Perfect Masters-regain physical awareness without yielding their uninterrupted consciousness of being God. The Perfect Master returns to the valley of earth from the mountain-top of God. Having realized his Divinity, he descends to the level of mortal man to help all those who are spiritually ripe, to make the great ascent.

There are fifty-six such Perfect Masters incarnate at all times. In our age, they live in the Orient, whose spiritually-conditioned atmosphere is more suitable for their esoteric work. Though one in consciousness, they differ in function. Of these 'fifty-six' only five attain public recognition. The

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remainder are unknown to the world. They live either as ascetics, in secluded mountain caves and forests, or as normal men doing their inner work secretly, unsuspected even by their closest associates. The five who serve as a sovereign Council determine the course which man's destiny on earth shall take. Only those decisions which are unanimous are released for action and assigned for execution. The governing head of this august body is known as the 'Emperor.'

At rare intervals-in times of acute world crises-mankind passes through Avataric cycles. Such was the time of Jesus, of Buddha, and many believe that humanity has now entered another. In Avataric periods the Supreme Master of the Council becomes known to the world as the Saviour or Avatar.

Except for this highest function, the ranks of Perfect Mastership are open to women as well as men. The Avatar incarnates always in a male body. He is the 'Ancient One' who was the first human to become fully conscious of his Godhood.

In the intervals between Avataric periods, the One Avatar continues unbroken his successions, but the positions he assumes on earth are of less *universal* spiritual significance, though always his role is one of beneficial help to struggling humanity. There are times-when world conditions demand it-that he occupies many bodies during one and the same period. As genius of the arts he quickens man's higher sense; as a master of poetry, he unfurls for man another petal of the cosmic rose; as an inspired scientist he reveals to humanity the hidden secrets of nature; as a great leader of Church or State, he lifts mankind to a broader concept of life; or as a nameless wanderer over man's earth, he cheers the disheartened and eases man's burdens. No generation is without his physical manifestation in one form or another, though often his true identity remains hidden-his presence upon earth unknown to mankind.

SAINT'S TESTIMONY

While we were in India, Ramjoo—one of Baba's pioneer disciples-recounted to us an experience of his own which

testifies to the preeminence of the position which the Master Baba occupies in the spiritual hierarchy.

Ramjoo had been sent by Baba to contact a saint in a certain town in India. When he arrived in the locality he learned that the man he sought had disappeared just that morning and no one seemed to know when he would return. But since Ramjoo had been instructed to see him, he decided to wait around for a while, hoping the saint would soon reappear. For the better part of two days Ramjoo kept vigil by the side of the main thoroughfare. As he watched the passers-by one dishevelled old woman, who muttered strangely as she passed and repassed him many times, impressed herself upon his consciousness. She appeared to be entirely oblivious of any external thing or person, and to the uninitiated would have seemed mentally distraught. Questioning another passerby, Ramjoo learned that this woman was highly regarded in the neighborhood as a God-realized soul, who functioned on a super-conscious plane.

Suddenly the old woman stopped in front of Ramjoo and turned upon him her piercing dark eyes. All traces of preoccupation and abstraction had vanished.

“What is the name of your Master?” she demanded.

When Ramjoo replied, “Shri Meher Baba,” she seemed to project the full force of her tremendous concentration into his inmost being, before exclaiming:

“Ah, he is the emperor of us all!”

Then without another word she turned from Ramjoo and disappeared into the maze of the local bazaar.

Ramjoo later came to know that true to the mysterious and often indirect ways employed by Perfect Masters in their work, it was this woman saint Baba had really intended him to contact outwardly, not the man who had so inconveniently disappeared.

PSYCHIC PITFALLS

To us in the West, the blind obedience which Baba expects from his disciples may seem strange and perhaps arbitrary. But with deeper knowledge of the pitfalls of the psychic and mental planes of illusion through which the

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disciple must pass, the Master's technique is understood to be a merciful one. The first three planes of expanded consciousness bestow upon the disciple great psychic powers in which the inner senses are awakened and utilized; while the fourth and fifth planes confer upon those who reach these levels, super-mental powers, such as raising the dead, or continuing in the body indefinitely. Unless one is wholly free from all taint of self-interest, these planes constitute a dangerous hazard for the spiritual pilgrim. It is because of this danger that the Perfect Masters take their disciples through their initiatory training blindfolded. On the sixth plane of spiritual intuition, or sainthood, the danger of egoistic functioning is passed, but there still remains a sense of separation from God; it is therefore still in the domain of illusion. Only on the seventh, the plane of Oneness, is the soul freed from all duality and sense of limiting impressions—even though they be of high order. Here, on the peak of the spiritual mountain, the individual soul is merged completely with the Infinite.

This state of complete God-consciousness which the Perfect Ones possess, Baba assures us, is possible for all human beings—is indeed, the birthright of every soul, regardless of color, caste, creed or nationality. To a questioner, he once replied: “Jesus realized God as himself; you have to realize God as *yourself*.” It is, however, so difficult a task that only real heroes of the spirit can achieve it after long and arduous struggle.

THE NATURE OF GOD

In the New Testament this great adventure of the soul has been simply and graphically described by Jesus in the story of *The Prodigal Son*. But since we are living in an age when the intellect demands to know something of the metaphysics behind such parables, Baba gives to us a profound analysis of the nature of God and man.

God—who in essence is One and indivisible—appears in the four-fold capacity of Almighty, Creator, Individual, and God-man. God, as the Almighty, is One, not in the sense of being half of two, but the One who remains forever One,

without a second. He always was infinite, is now infinite and will always remain infinite. He is the Shoreless Ocean of Truth. He is beyond time and space, cause and effect. He is beyond instinct, intellect and inspiration. But God in this state is *unconscious*. The Almighty is not *aware* that he is the Shoreless Ocean of Truth. His primeval state resembles that of sound sleep.

God as the Creator is none other than the One, Indivisible God, but he is *conscious* in one respect only—that of being the Creator. Consequently, although he *is* the Shoreless Ocean of Truth, he, as Creator, is not aware of that fact, and so is concerned only with the illusory universe, which he creates, preserves and destroys. As he is conscious only of being the Creator, and not being the Shoreless Ocean, he is limited by cause and effect, time and space. His creative decree is the cause; his Creation is the effect. His functioning as Creator is limited by the time-span of what is called one Divine Cycle; the range of his activities is bounded by the space limitations of his Creation.

God as the individual is again the same Supreme One and, like the Creator, he is both conscious and unconscious. He is unconscious of his *real* Self, and does not know that he is the Shoreless Ocean of Truth, but he is conscious of his limited existence, of being a drop of individuality in the Universal Ocean of creatures. Therefore, the individual, like the Creator, in spite of being in fact the Infinite One, is not infinite, but finite in *realization*. As such he is subject to the laws of causation, and those of time and space, and is restricted by them. His life manifests the effect of his consciousness of being a separate entity. The duration of his incarnate life as individual is equal to that of the divine cycle, or until he becomes fully conscious of his true Self—until he realizes that he is the Almighty himself.

The manifested individual, who is form plus soul, must give up his separate individuality or life, before he can become conscious of being the Almighty. But this giving up of life does not mean ordinary dying. It means the shedding of worldly desires and attachments. Man must become free from all mundane desires, both good and bad, as an impera-

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tive preliminary to God-realization. This renunciation is tantamount to losing one's individuality or separate life. This is not achieved, however, by the mere loss of physical consciousness. Desires must be transcended *consciously*, while in the body. All that separates the individual from the God-source of his life must be given up while *living*. Otherwise, the individual, minus full consciousness, remains as he always has been, conscious only of being one of many individuals. To renounce the desires of the body, of the mind, and of the world, and at the same time to retain consciousness of the *Unconscious*-of the Almighty-is the great goal; a prospect appallingly difficult for the average man to contemplate, all but impossible without the spiritual help of a Master to achieve.

In ordinary sound sleep, every human creature loses his individuality, but not consciously; when sleep stops, he has to return to conscious life. For the same reason ordinary physical death is no death at all. It is but a longer sound sleep; when that has spent its cycle, one has to incarnate again. Ordinary death does not liberate the individual from the chain of worldly desires. In order to achieve this, man must become fully conscious of the unconscious, *conscious* of the pure, infinite, sexless Self and unconscious of body, mind and universe. Only death *without giving up the body* can accomplish this.

God awakens when, as a *conscious* individual, he succeeds in penetrating through the maze of Creator and creation, and comes to know himself as the Almighty. Then does he become conscious of what he innately has always been and will ever remain-the One Infinite Ocean of Truth. For him now the imaginations of the Creator and his creation no longer exist. He has ceased being finite in consciousness. He *knows* himself as the Almighty, the One Infinite Ocean that has always existed, continuously, without any change or division, and will remain so forever. Such a One-the God-man-knows that although he was present in consciousness in stones, minerals, vegetables, trees, birds, beasts and human beings, he had through all these evolutionary

forms remained-unceasingly and without impairment-that which he now is, the One and only Reality.

The God-man then is none else but the same Almighty One, *plus* knowledge and consciousness. He is Knowledge, Knower, and the Known. He is Love, Lover and the Beloved. The God-man knows that he is in every individual and that every individual is in him. He *experiences* all this, while the *unawakened* individual does not. Both are in the same Ocean of Truth, yet with what a difference! The God-man knows that he is the All-in-All, the totality of existence; that he always was and will ever remain the same One Ocean of Truth; the unenlightened individual, though he *is*, in fact, the same all-inclusive One, does not know whence he came, nor whither he is headed.

It is the One Supreme Self who plays the different roles of Almighty, Creator, Individual and God-man. In the state of the Almighty, the Supreme Self is One, indivisible, and infinite, unconsciously possessing and sustaining infinite powers, eternal existence, unfathomable bliss and universal complete knowledge, though without becoming *aware* of them. As Creator he possesses the same unconscious attributes, but he becomes aware of being the Creator and *experiences* himself as creating, preserving and destroying Creation. As Individual, he still possesses all these potentialities, but he limits himself to earthly desires and thus experiences himself as finite-as circumscribed by his physical body. Only as God-man does he experience and realize all of his infinite and limitless capacities in *full consciousness*.

Before the individual can lose his limited personality and become God-man, it is an absolute essential that he realize Love-Divine Love-for the indivisible, infinite Supreme Self, who is beyond the realm of thought and reason. Inasmuch as the Supreme Self is beyond all man-comprehended things, including the intellect, the intellect cannot find him. Only Divine Love, free from the dross of illusion and the drag of desires, can realize him.

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WHEN THE TIME IS RIPE

To quicken this Divine Love in humanity on a mass scale is always the function of the Avatar. Being divinely conscious of man's need, and having the power to fulfill that need, he spares neither himself nor others the necessary pain to achieve the desired end. There is a price to be paid for every attainment, and the Supreme Attainment is no exception.

For the quickening of consciousness *all* the forces in the Unconscious-both 'good' and 'bad'-must be released. Old established traditions and accepted concepts which have encased man's spirit for ages must be demolished. New collective images and evaluations must be born. Living, growing, maturing, is no child's play, and in endeavoring to achieve this end, one may well find himself at war with himself or with others. This inner and outer conflict the Master deliberately fosters, but he does it in the spirit of utmost compassion, for he knows that without the complete purging of the congested tendencies and desires, deep-rooted in our inner being, no spiritual regeneration is possible. He knows that the psychological warp in the average person makes him shrink from facing the most negative and corroding tendencies in his make-up; that only through precipitation of acute inner crises can even the most earnest seeker be forced to face the pressing issues of his psyche, and thus create the opportunity of dissolving them.

For Meher Baba, in being the Perfect Master, is also the master psychologist, whose consummate skill ferrets out the well-concealed skeletons in the most hidden recesses of our being and brings them into the sunlight of our consciousness. Baba knows that only by such means can man be made so acutely, so overwhelmingly conscious of his deepest spiritual needs, that he will at last be ready to relinquish the distracting toys and trinkets of his sham existence for the greater and lasting values of immortal life.

COSMIC CATHARSIS

In the light of this teaching, such a catastrophe as the recent world-war takes on a new meaning-a spiritually purposeful one. On his first visit to America, in 1931, eight

years before the world had been plunged into its cleansing blood-bath, two years before Hitler's rise to power, Baba had foretold all the events which have since come to pass. He has also predicted that a kind of armistice or seeming victory would bring hostilities to an end, but it would be only a lull before an even greater storm breaks. When, however, man has come to the end of his own resources, to the recognition that shifting the balance of power from one nation to another will not solve the problems; when through bitter anguish *all* the nations of the world awaken to the fact that only through God's grace will man be able to accept all men as his brothers, then, Baba predicts that the consciousness of mankind will be quickened-raised to a higher level. He states that the breaking of his long self-imposed silence-now in its twenty-first year-will be the signal for this momentous cosmic happening, which will lift man's awareness from the plane of reason to that of intuition, from self-consciousness to soul-consciousness. Comparable in importance to this great step, in the evolution of consciousness, was the transition from the animal to the human kingdom, from the plane of instinct to that of reason.

For more than a quarter of a century Baba's disciples have been witnessing the fulfillment of his prophecies; it is not surprising, therefore, that they believe this supreme prediction of his will also come to pass, when, in Baba's words, "the time for man's release is ripe."

Even hard-boiled reporters, whose ultra-sophisticated attitude toward spiritual teachers is notorious, have at times found themselves unable to resist the impact of Baba's integrity. I recall an incident in India, on Christmas day, 1937, when a reporter, T.A.Raman of the Evening News of India, came to Baba's Western Ashram at Nasik to interview him. In response to the reporter's questions, Baba repeated his prediction of the global holocaust which has since engulfed the world. The reporter shot back with an undertone of sarcasm: "So that, sir, is your opinion?"

Smiling, Baba answered: "My son, I have no opinion. I know."

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And strange as it may seem to the Western reader who has had no contact with such ego-less omniscience, the effect was electric. The cynical journalist left Baba's presence in a much sobered mood. Something he had never before encountered must have punctured his hardened shell, for his full-page story in the *News* of January 7th, 1938, lacked all the flippancy of his interview. He writes, in part:

“Shorn of the trappings of mysticism and platitude, there is much in the teaching of Meher Baba which the world badly needs to be told. The peace which he himself seems to have attained is undeniable nor can one gainsay the charm and the sincerity of his personality... ‘The time to preach in the market place will come.,’ says Meher Baba ‘but only after the world has been humbled and purified by a carnage greater than any the world has yet seen.’ ”

This is the prediction which won headlines for Meher Baba the world over and which has been so terribly fulfilled, but it is important to remember that Meher Baba predicted this war for years, immediately following the last Armistice—when another such war seemed impossible.

CHAPTER III

GENESIS

AFTER Meher Baba left Sakori and Upasani Maharaj in 1922, he stayed for a fortnight with a friend in Bombay. From there he moved to the outskirts of Poona, where, at his request, a small, thatched hut-six feet by ten-had been built for him.

When asked why he subjected himself to such enforced discomfort though he was spiritually perfect and beyond all need of physical self-discipline, he explained that the physical confinement was only apparent, not real to him. "It does not inconvenience me, for walls do not bind me. For certain kinds of work which I have to do in non-physical realms, I prefer to shut myself up in a small place. It was for the same reason that Jesus, after attaining perfection, stayed for thirty continuous days on a mountain where he did not allow even his intimate disciples to approach him."

There are times, particularly when he is deeply immersed in inner work, that Baba also forbids anyone to touch him, or even to come within a distance of six feet of him. Only those who have lived in intimate proximity to the Master know that such stipulations are as much for the safety of his disciples as for any other reason-so powerful is the spiritual voltage in his body at such periods.

He lived in the circumscribed hut for about five months, with his disciples ministering to his physical needs. Very early in the morning-generally at four-his breakfast was brought to him. At nine o'clock he would receive Hindu devotees who would stay for an hour chanting ancient religious songs and playing Hindu musical instruments. At ten-thirty he left the hut for his mother's house where he had dinner; then, after a short rest he would return to his small abode. In the afternoon he glanced at the headlines

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of the newspapers—(and this is the extent of Baba’s reading of newspapers) – to see how closely outer world events were conforming to his inner direction. He then remained alone in his hut until the evening, when his disciples and friends entertained him with music and song, while Baba, following the Indian custom, would serve sweets and talk of things spiritual. At nine o’clock his supper was brought to him, after which no one was permitted to approach him or even to come near the hut, except the one disciple whose duty it was to stay on guard with him all night.

The Perfect Master does not sleep in the ordinary sense—he never becomes *unconscious*. His apparent sleep is simply the voluntary withdrawal from the conscious plane to the super-conscious. The rest he derives in this way is only relative, for even on this celestial plane he is constantly active. During this period, the Master requires the wakeful presence of a trusted companion to protect his body from the subtle onslaughts of discarnate spirits who try to draw near him, but whose disturbing intrusion is prevented by the proximity of a waking consciousness.

DIVINE MAGNET

In the early days of his Mastership, Baba’s method of gathering to him those who were destined to become his disciples was as natural as it was effective. One of those early followers was Doctor Ghani, who tells us how Baba would have tea with him at a Parsee restaurant at Poona, and in all seriousness ask his opinion on political questions, giving rapt attention to his answers. Only through subsequent experience with Baba did Doctor Ghani realize that Baba’s feigned absorption in politics derived from his deeper interest in Dr. Ghani himself. It was, of course, Baba’s way of reaching down to the level of those whom he would help, and this he did with sympathetic friendliness and loving interchange of thought, occasionally high-lighted with some profound spiritual truth, when he knew the hearer was ready to receive it .

He made no claim of being God-realized, nor sought to

bind people to him except by the naturally attracting power of Divine Love. But gradually his friends became disciples through their growing insight, which conveyed to them his true spiritual stature. Through this same power of Divine Love, Baba held these first disciples close to him during long years of severe testing and tempering. Ghani's experience of what happened when he had gradually been drawn closer into Baba's orbit, and inspired to obey his instructions implicitly, is an illuminating example of the quality of the Master's testing technique.

The doctor, who bears a striking resemblance to Socrates, as his image has come down to us from ancient Greece, had been a successful homeopathic physician, founder-head of his own dispensary in Bombay, before he became Baba's disciple. One day the Master advised him to dust and sweep out the whole clinic himself instead of hiring servants to do it, for a period of six months. Such a practice, Baba assured him, would be of great benefit to him spiritually. So the good doctor carried out Baba's instructions literally, with the result that he swept his medical establishment utterly out of existence! Through a series of complicated events the clinic had passed out of his hands by the end of the six-month period. At first he was much puzzled, but eventually the priceless benefits of this uprooting became clear to him; it freed him to give himself wholly to Baba's service, and thus attain a spiritual development which he could not otherwise have achieved.

Another amusing instance of the baffling manner in which Baba so often achieves his supra-personal ends is the saga of Ramjoo's shop.

This handsome, charming young Mohammedan had reached the point in his novitiate where he desired to surrender his life to Baba. Just one thing seemed to stand in the way of that final step-his dry-goods shop. He would have to sell it before he and his family could move to the locality of Baba's headquarters. Ramjoo asked for Baba's help.

“Do just one thing. Until the shop is sold,” Baba in-

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structed him, “say to everybody you meet, before you say anything else; ‘I have not yet sold my shop’ .”

That seemed very simple and Ramjoo promised to carry out the instruction faithfully.

Things did not, however, work out as he had anticipated. The simple formula of repeating, ‘I have not yet sold my shop,’ grew very burdensome, not only for Ramjoo, but for his family and friends. Every morning, upon first seeing his wife, or his father-in-law, he must greet them-or return their greeting-with, ‘I have not yet sold my shop,’ which of course they knew! When the days grew into weeks and he still persisted in repeating his odd greeting, they began to wonder about his sanity. His friends looked upon him with pity; they too believed he was losing his mind. He found himself crossing the street to avoid them-if they did not see him first and avoid him. He invented what he hoped would alter the monotone of his salutation, make it sound more natural: “Beautiful day-I have not yet sold my shop!”

As the weeks passed Ramjoo came to shun human contacts more and more. He, the jovial, gregarious friend of many was becoming a recluse! One morning-to top it all-word arrived that one of his uncles had died, which meant the inevitability of his attending the funeral. Ramjoo dreaded the day. The prospect of facing an army of bereaved relatives, many of whom he had not seen for months, with the salutation, “I have not yet sold my shop, ” was more than he could bear! He would not attend that funeral; he would pretend to be ill, and send his message of sympathy to the bereaved family through his wife.

So when the day arrived he remained in bed until he was quite sure that the funeral was over. Then he rose, dressed himself and, glad to have succeeded in his ruse, walked toward his shop. After proceeding leisurely for a few blocks he suddenly found himself, to his horror, in the very path of his uncle’s funeral procession; it was coming straight toward him! He could not possibly avoid it. As is the custom at Mohammedan funerals, he had to touch the coffin with his shoulder, then offer his condolences to every one of the sorrowing relatives, preceded by the wholly

irrelevant statement: "I have not yet sold my shop!" When Ramjoo told his story to Baba, the Master shook with laughter-and then revoked the order. The aftermath of this serio-comic episode was that the shop was never sold. The merchandise had finally to be auctioned off.

When I met Ramjoo in India I asked him what effect this experience had had upon him. He told me there were multiple effects. It wiped out his concern for other people's opinion of his actions. Formerly it had mattered greatly what people thought about him; now, if he knew himself in the right, he no longer cared what their reaction was. He had had many friends, had belonged to a number of societies and fraternal orders. He had been popular and loved it. But none of this was now important. The shop had been a materialistic millstone around his spiritual neck, and its loss had gained him his one great desire; to dedicate his life to the service of the Master. He was functioning from a new center-a true center-in which his ego no longer needed to be fed by the good opinion of his friends. That was the primary result. Prior to this experience Baba had said to him one day:

"I have many powers, and can help you in many ways. For example, I can prosper you in your business, harmonize your relationships, give you health and strength-and I will grant you any request of that nature which you might ask. But before you ask, let me tell you the best thing for you would be to ask nothing-to leave everything to me-and promise to obey me in whatever I command."

Ramjoo chose to obey Baba's orders. The resultant tribulations, which, when they occurred, often seemed cruel, now-many years later-give him, too, a hearty laugh and he thanks his guardian angels for having inspired him to choose so wisely.

FIRST ASHRAM

In May, 1922, Baba left Poona for Bombay, where he inaugurated his first Ashram. With him went forty-five followers, of whom twelve were Mohammedans, eleven Zoroastrians, and remainder Hindus. At night, one by one

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the party visited Babajan under her lime tree at Poona, to pay homage to the great soul before starting on this spiritually significant journey.

On arrival in Bombay they leased a spacious bungalow on Main road, Dadar-a suburb of Bombay-which was known as Manzil-E-Meem (The House of the Master). It contained fifteen rooms which were entirely devoid of furniture. Even the quilts and mattresses from the bedding rolls were-under Baba's orders-removed, leaving only blankets for covering and as slim protection against the hardness of the floor. Mosquito curtains were taped and tacked to the floor and walls of their sleeping rooms to keep out the dangerous carriers of malaria.

In the beginning Baba took pains to keep alive their devotion and enthusiasm, while at the same time he prepared them for the reaction which he knew would follow, by explaining that an aspirant of the spiritual path must pass through three mental stages: enthusiasm, indifference, despair. When disappointment or despair reach their peak then a crisis occurs. To circumvent the effects of developments which the Master knew to be inevitable, he enjoined his disciples never to leave him, no matter what the provocation might be. The poet Hafiz no doubt had this same thought in mind when he wrote:

“The path of Love seemed to be an easy and comfortable one in the beginning, but now I know better-it is surcharged with unimagined difficulties, trials and tribulations.”

The rules of the Ashram were strict and included a number of orders which radically changed the habits of many of its members. Most of them had been non-vegetarians before coming into Baba's orbit, nor had they been averse to occasional alcoholic refreshment. But now all of them were required to abstain scrupulously from all meat, fish, eggs and intoxicants of every kind. Sexual intercourse was also prohibited. They retired at nine o'clock and were up promptly at four, when the bath-rooms resounded with screams and sputtering as the disciples subjected themselves to the cold morning bath which was part of the dis

ciplinary regime laid down for them by Baba. One amongst them, who suffered with chronic asthma, was no exception to this rule. Curiously enough-and this will be no news to advanced students of health-the asthma left him! They were all required to meditate for forty-five minutes every morning, each one choosing his own posture, and mentally repeating the name of the Almighty which his particular religious upbringing sanctioned.

At seven every morning-after a substantial breakfast-they left for their various activities in the city. No one-whether within the Ashram or outside-was permitted to read or write anything without Baba's special permission. Even the chance reading of a billboard or street sign, on their way to or from work, was considered an infraction of this order.

Nor were they allowed to talk with or even recognize anyone who was not of the *Manzil-E-Meem* - family, except their business associates. This order, of course, had the effect of holding them securely within the protective range of Baba's influence during those early days of intense conditioning for channelship. The order was not without its particular complications-amusing in retrospect, but at the time often extremely embarrassing.

One of the disciples found himself, one evening, in a compartment of a railway train, face to face with an old school chum. Naturally his friend greeted him warmly, but the disciple could only turn upon him a cold, unknowing stare. For a while his friend was silenced, but continued to scrutinize the disciple, apparently wondering if he had been mistaken. No! this was certainly the friend he had known so well at school. He appealed to him:

“What's the matter with you, old chap? Why don't you speak to me? Don't you recognize your old friend Phiroz?”

Fortunately for the miserable disciple, the train was just pulling into his station; he fled from the carriage, leaving his friend with the impression that he had gone stark mad!

Baba required that all his orders be carried out promptly and without question, regardless of what the disciple was doing. If he were shaving or bathing when the call came

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from Baba, he had to respond at once, however difficult or ridiculous the situation seemed. It was obedience to such an order which Dr. Ghani describes as “a most ego-crushing ordeal”, that compelled him and another disciple—both of Mohammedan persuasion—to walk through the Mohammedan quarter of Bombay, where they had many friends, with posters hanging around their necks, advertising the biography of Upasani Maharaj, a non-Mohammedan Master; an unthinkable procedure for a Mohammedan!

Another very disconcerting practice was Baba’s habit of suddenly asking what they were thinking. The disciples would try to blank their minds, in order to avoid voicing an unsavory thought, or to concoct a fictitious one. Baba, however, knowing what was in their minds, encouraged them to be fearless and honest, regardless of the nature of their thoughts. Relating their dreams to Baba at breakfast also provided diverting, self-revealing entertainment.

Occasionally the members of the Ashram were ordered to fast for a day or two. But this did not exempt them from work. On the contrary, their work was increased. At other times they were ordered by Baba to find hundreds of blind and lame beggars and bring them to *Manzil-E-Meem* for the purpose of feeding and clothing them. Since beggars are plentiful all over India, this seemed an easy order to fulfill. But Baba did not want the able-bodied ones—only those who were disabled. This made their task more difficult. It was often further complicated by the fact that the disciples—who were restricted to eight pie (five cents) a day—would find themselves at the other end of the city without the necessary money for transportation home. To persuade the mendicants to follow them to a strange house—where, they assured them, they would be bountifully fed and newly clothed—and at the same time to borrow money from them for carfare, was another of those experiences which tested both their ingenuity and fortitude! However, the required number would always be found and transported to the Bombay Ashram, where they were bathed, fed and clothed. In this service Baba took the leading part, and as some of them departed, he garlanded them with

flowers, to the astonishment of his disciples and the bewilderment of the beggars.

But behind this puzzling performance of Baba's is deep significance. When we were in India, he told us that whenever he works with large numbers of beggars he is effecting a change in the economic structure of the world. This is but one of the many examples of the way he uses outer and visible symbols to effect needed changes in either individual or mass consciousness. His every act is in truth a sacrament.

SEX

During this Bombay period all the fundamental life-problems came into the foreground of consciousness and were used by Baba as opportunities for spiritual instruction. Sex being one of the least understood of man's problems, it quite naturally became a subject for consideration. Though the paramount enjoyment of the carnally-minded is sexual intercourse, its pleasure, as Baba points out, is evanescent and bestows no lasting satisfaction.

"Compare the fleeting gratification of earthly delights with the permanent satisfaction of spiritual bliss, and it will be readily apparent which is of the greater value."

Baba explains that neither in the gratification of sexual desire nor in its repression is to be found any lasting happiness, though a life of restraint comes closer to the ideal than a life of indulgence. True, lasting freedom is attained only through the freeing of the mind of *all* craving. To achieve this, intelligent understanding and direction of the life force is essential. The integration thus arrived at differs from both repression and indulgence in that it is motivated by a spiritual impulse, and leads to an enduring inner renunciation of sexual craving—a spontaneous redemption which is not dependent upon the fickle tyranny of the conscious mind for its constancy.

MARRIAGE

For the average person Baba advocates monogamous marriage, based on mutual love and respect. The oppor-

tunity afforded by such a marriage for the interplay of temperaments and mutual adjustment can best teach man the discipline and self-control which are indispensable for his higher development.

In this respect, as also in Baba's teaching that absolute mental control of the sexual phase of love is an essential part of any wholesome marriage relationship, the psychology of Dr. Fritz Kunkel bears a striking resemblance to Baba's precept. Dr. Kunkel points out that one's psychological maturity may be measured by one's ability to 'wait' or bear tension, during which period of 'waiting' he advocates the cultivation of the more subtle, spiritual aspects of a love relationship, thereby deeply enriching the lives of both man and woman.

This is in harmony with Baba's statement that only when sex companionship is accompanied by a sense of mutual responsibility and spiritual idealism can the lustful aspects of love be sublimated. In marriage the partners are compelled by force of their close daily association to tackle the whole complex problem of their personalities, rather than the relatively simple problem which the extra-marital relationship involves. In any kind of *temporary* relationship people inevitably play-up to a role, usually the role which the other party imposes upon them. Only when both parties are deeply committed to permanent union do they allow all facets of their characters to become evident. Only then are they likely to have the courage to 'let their hair down.' Without this commitment to permanency in their relationship, it is impossible for man and woman to *be themselves* and to assume the responsibility for the inevitable adjustments which 'being themselves' requires. For those who are thus able to face and understand themselves, marriage becomes a valuable medium through which the partners may become conscious of their latent tendencies and weaknesses. They mirror for each other the dormant personality characteristics of which, in the beginning, they may have been wholly unconscious and, as they incorporate these hidden dormancies into their conscious life, they become better balance instead of lop-sided.

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Then, too, through the mutual selfless sharing of joys and sorrows the participants in true marriage may reach ever-higher levels of love, until finally the possessive passion of the earlier days is replaced by the more profound emotion of selfless and expansive love. The partners of such a sublimated union are eventually carried so far along the spiritual path that they need only the final touch of a Perfect Master to lift their souls into the sanctuary of eternal love.

Among Baba's disciples are both married and unmarried men and women, though in the early days of the training of the Indian men strict celibacy was required of them. Toward the end of the Bombay period, however, Baba asked his men if any of them wished to be married and he assured them that whatever their decision it would not retard their spiritual development. Only one man elected to marry, but he, his wife and six children are among Baba's closest ones.

CELIBACY

To one like Baba, who knows the spiritual reasons for the physical separation of the sexes, man's preoccupation with sex is seen to be highly exaggerated and distorted. He points out that the traditional attitude of lust, ingrained and fostered in the mass consciousness, is responsible for most of the ills and aberrations that are such a sorry byproduct of modern life. For the serious spiritual aspirant he advocates a life of strict celibacy, rather than marriage, providing restraint comes to the disciple easily, without any undue sense of self-repression. The former life-experience of the disciple would, of course, determine this. Apart from its higher spiritual implications, the value of celibacy lies in the habit of restraint, with the detachment from the body and independence of persons, which it induces.

Nor does a life of spontaneous celibacy promote any impairment of health. On the contrary. If celibacy is achieved and practiced with full understanding of its creative role it not only enhances the spiritual growth of the disciple but also results in greatly improved health. However, the full benefit of celibacy is not realized until *true* detachment has

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been attained, and this is possible only when the soul has been awakened by a love so divine, so transcendent, that the spontaneous and permanent renunciation of craving becomes its natural by-product.

DIVINE LOVE

Pure love, which is the keynote and very heart of Baba's message, is always a grace from God or the Master. It has only one desire-to become united with the Divine Beloved. Such withdrawal of consciousness from all lesser cravings leads to unalloyed purity. In the flame of its intensity, all inferior thoughts and emotions are consumed; the energies are focussed upon the core of one's being, the God-center, which, to the disciple of a Perfect Master, is synonymous with the soul of the Master.

This is one of the major reasons why conscious contact with a living manifestation of Godhood-with a Perfect Master-is essential. Only full-hearted love can bring about a spontaneous re-dedication of the personal will to the Divine. Thus the Master becomes the *living* portal into the infinite life of God. For the spiritual mass-quickenings of mankind the living presence of Godhood upon earth is likewise essential. The dynamic, tangible manifestation of God in human form acts like a celestial magnet that draws mass consciousness from the mundane to the spiritual. The abstract approach to God is reserved for the very few, and even they, before they can reach the final goal, require the services of one who has made the great transition and can draw their consciousness across the borderline which divides the finite from the infinite. *Alone, no man can accomplish this ultimate surrender.*

Until the moment of liberation the mind of the individual must be used as the medium for such liberation. It must consciously focus energies, must master and direct them, if realization of God is to be achieved. Much of this process the aspirant may carry out by his own efforts, if his desire and will for union with God is strong enough, and his single-mindedness invulnerable. But eventually the moment arrives when the mind has fulfilled its function

and-together with the sense of duality-must be transcended if we would become one with God. Herein lies the difficulty. The conscious mind may be willing, even eager to 'let go', but the subconscious collective mind, in which reside the individual and racial impressions and tendencies of the past, draws us back into the world of illusion and separative existence. It is true that before being drawn back one may experience infinite powers, knowledge and bliss for days, weeks or months, but unless the mind's impressions and tendencies have been *permanently* obliterated, they sooner or later pull the pilgrim back into finite existence.

Before the soul can be free to enjoy the infinite prerogatives of Godhood, the final release from the domination of the mind must take place. Like a blinding flash this comes upon one, and in that infinite moment every thought, every feeling, every concept is blotted out. Consciousness remains-but consciousness of *nothing*. Neither consciousness of self nor consciousness of God. Simply blank, stark nothingness! It is a terrifying experience. No matter how courageous the soul may be, no matter how determined may be the will to pass through this abyss of annihilation, the instinctive mind recoils from it, and before one can muster the determination to see it through, the moment has passed and the soul finds itself back again in its comfortable, long-accustomed, finite abode.

If, however, at this point one has the good fortune to be the disciple of a Perfect Master of consciousness, one may be literally 'drawn' through this final experience, providing the love for the Master and the confidence in him is sufficiently self-consuming. With such a love, one is willing to undergo any trial, any agony of soul, in order to become one with the Beloved. Beyond this moment of terrifying nothingness lies the eternal realm of the blissfully conscious God.

Thus, the path of liberation is open to the aspirant either in marriage or in celibacy, provided that the way of life chosen is regarded as a spiritual enterprise. The road one chooses is, naturally, determined by the background of previous lives. In either case, the seeker becomes progressive-

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ly free of craving and desire, as his longing for divine Truth increases, until he achieves the final goal of life—Liberation.

MANZIL MEMORIES

Aware of the need of keeping alert the interest of his disciples in those early days of his first Ashram, Baba saw to it that their life was not monotonous or dull. He sometimes took them to the theatre and motion pictures, while at home he encouraged various indoor and outdoor games. Though religious devotions and the singing of spiritual songs also had a place in their daily routine, the Master's method of training his twentieth-century disciples to function in the world without losing contact with him, followed no traditional pattern. His technique confirms what he has often told us: that he is training us to take our place *in* the world, yet not to be *of* it.

In the close relationship that existed between disciples and Master, Baba never lost an opportunity to drive home a valuable lesson. One evening, as they were playing a new game of marbles in the compound, under specially provided electric lights, another of Baba's soul-testing dramas was staged. Ramjoo, a married disciple, had been rather concerned about the health of his only son who had been ill for sometime. He was also troubled about his wife who was pregnant. On this evening he arrived at the Ashram visibly worried because he had not heard from them. He went out to the compound where all the disciples were absorbed in the new game. Baba, as usual, was in a happy mood, until Ramjoo arrived. Instead of the cheerful word with which he always greeted every member of the Ashram family, he gave Ramjoo a grave look. Then he turned to another disciple and asked: "Shall we tell him now?"

Replying in an equally serious tone, the disciple suggested it would be more considerate to give Ramjoo the news after dinner. A few minutes later, Baba said: "I think it better we tell him about the telegram now."

Then he told Ramjoo bluntly that his son had passed away. Scarcely before Ramjoo could react to this sudden shock, Baba ordered him to join the others in their game.

For a moment he was too dazed to move, but quickly collecting himself, he obeyed Baba's command. In speaking of this experience, Ramjoo says that the electric lights were swimming before his eyes, and the players appeared like shadows in a horrible nightmare, as he mechanically joined in the sport. As soon as Ramjoo had, without hesitation, fulfilled the command, Baba called him back and handed him the telegram. The message read that Ramjoo had another son, and that all was well with his family! Thus does the Master train all his disciples to rise above personal pain or sorrow, that they may eventually realize the unconditioned life of God.

Few, particularly in the West, are able to understand this aspect of the God-man. Having achieved the ultimate in physical comfort and ease, the average religious Westerner projects upon God his own image of the indulgent father who satisfies all the desires of his children. This is particularly true of those whose religious background has inculcated in them the belief that God never inflicts pain. To them kindness is synonymous with softness and indulgence. Herein they reveal their lack of spiritual maturity. The larger kindness of freeing the soul from bondage to pleasure, or repugnance to pain is imperfectly comprehended by them.

In spite of the iron discipline which Baba exercised, freedom of speech and opinion were encouraged by him. The group had its own governing body called the *gutta* (wine-shop) which corresponds to our Western café. The *gutta* assembled periodically after dinner, when everyone expressed his viewpoint freely on the subjects under consideration. To prevent the *gutta* from becoming as noisy as the places after which it was named, they made it a strict rule that only one person could speak at a time, and only after obtaining permission of the chair. All earnings of Ashram members went into a common fund. All shared alike in its benefits. No individual owned anything for himself. Though each one was encouraged by Baba to develop his own special qualities, all were bound in brotherhood by their love for the Master, of whom many of them had heard Upasani Maharaj's advice: "Follow Merwan; do as he says;

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the time will come when all the world will follow his lead.”

One of the disciples was subjected to especially severe treatment. In his strange, symbolic way of helping to rid him of his binding karma, Baba would time and again throw the disciple's bedding out the window, and order him to clear out, reiterating that he did not want him around. Fortunately for the disciple, he let his intuition rather than his intellect or emotions govern his reaction. He held fast, and is now among those closest to the Master.

As the months progressed at the Ashram, Baba was drawing his spiritual 'net' tighter around the disciples. Less and less did he give consideration to their whims and preferences. More and more did he require them to 'give in' to each other-to relinquish a prized viewpoint or habit. In spite of the strict regulations and the severe tests and trails, however, the disciples look back upon their life at *Manzil-E-Meem* with fond and wistful memories.

During this period, Baba went on prolonged fasts of water, milk or lemon juice, with no impairment of his energy and directive power. Occasionally he would manifest sudden acute illness, during which his body would be racked with pain. Then, just as suddenly, the illness would vanish. He told his group that he had to undergo these periodical agonies for the benefit of the group that eventually he would have to suffer and die for each one of them, as he took upon himself the responsibility for their individual liberation.

HEAVEN AND HELL

To most of us, especially in the Western world, the thought of giving up the direction of our lives to another is quite unpalatable. Unless we have been brought up in the Catholic tradition, or have read lives of Western monastic saints, we do not know the great benefits to be derived from the discipline of 'obedience'. Our egos insist that such a course is childish-unworthy of mature human beings. We have been taught, and firmly believe, that we can find our way to Heaven; and so we can. By our own, unaided exertions we can create either Heaven or Hell for ourselves;

but *both* are limitations and therefore handicap the individual soul's unfoldment. Heaven is the by-product of striving to do good, while Hell is the logical result of unbridled evil. Spiritual liberation, which the Master helps the disciple to achieve, is, however, beyond the duality of good and evil-Heaven and Hell. Before the perfect balance is struck, the debit and credit entries in the soul's ledger must absolutely cancel each other, not in sum total of entries, but in the comparative quality of good and bad soul impressions. No man, however highly destined, can achieve this balance without the intervention of a Master, though an intense spirit may go far toward the goal.

How indispensable is the aid of a Master, how essential the oneness between disciple and his destined Master, how all-inclusive the responsibility of the Master in the regeneration of his chosen disciple, is strikingly illustrated by the experience of Baba's second Master, Upasani Maharaj. When Maharaj became the disciple of his *own* Master, Sai Baba, he received from him the following instructions in preparation of his four year's novitiate:

"You are not to worry about a single thing. I am fully conscious of your worth. For many years have I followed your trail. Whatever good or bad deeds you have performed during these years have in truth been enacted by me. You were not conscious of me, but I was fully aware of you. For years I have been thinking of you in my heart. Now you are at home; there is nowhere else for you to go. If you are unable to do anything, do not do anything."

Then in language symbolical of the supreme service which he was destined to render Upasani Maharaj in uniting him with God, Sai Baba said: "I will myself purchase the ticket for you and will, with my own hands, seat you in the train; and without allowing the train to stop anywhere, I will take you straight to your ultimate destination."

In other words, he would not permit his disciple to be sidetracked or lost on any of the cosmic planes, but would guide him directly to the summit of consciousness. When Upasani Maharaj finally achieved Realization through the loving guidance of his Master, Sai Baba explained:

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“I have given Maharaj everything. Whatever he is, is mine. There is no spiritual difference between him and me. Mine alone has been the responsibility for the perfection which is his today.”

SPIRITUAL PILGRIMAGE

During the Bombay period, Baba made a number of short trips with his disciples to nearby places of pilgrimage. Among these was a journey to the tomb of the Mohammedan *Sadguru*, Haji Malangshah. To reach the tomb, which stood on a high hill, was a strenuous ordeal. Upon their return, the disciples were exhausted and parched, but Baba forbade them to quench their thirst before they reached the railroad station, another fourteen hot, dusty miles.

Such apparently arbitrary measures can be understood only if one realizes that every single outer action of Baba's is fraught with inner significance; and such a pilgrimage to the tomb of a Perfect Master no doubt had deep bearing upon the spiritual unfoldment of those involved. To quench one's physical thirst before the journey was completed would, according to the Master's wise judgment, manifest in a corresponding spiritual hindrance and delay in reaching the ultimate goal of Liberation.

The severe ruling-as so many of Baba's-could have served a double purpose. On purely rational grounds, the value of such discipline is apparent. To learn to wait, to deny ourselves the satisfaction of the moment, unquestionably helps to eradicate weakness-makes for strength of character. Perhaps the Master of man has resolved this time to train a group of disciples who will not so readily fall asleep in the Gethsemanes of the world.

ASHRAM AT AHMEDNAGAR

On the last day of March, 1923, Baba told his men that the Ashram in Bombay would be disbanded, although two months tenancy was still due on the lease of the house. The matter of leases is of little importance to Baba when his work requires him to make a change, however troublesome it may be for those who have to adjust the matter; not

for him are the limitations of time-worn routine. Change is always the order of the day with Baba. No one who has been with him for any length of time expects plans to work out according to mind-made time-tables. Yet, when outer circumstances coincide with Baba's inner work, every detail works out with clock-like precision; for though the greater part of his being functions in a sphere which knows no time, on this material plane Baba manifests a split-second time sense. If he gives orders to leave at five minutes past midnight on a journey, he will, without fail, be found ready to start at precisely that moment. This, not merely out of arbitrary punctiliousness, but because Baba's timing has always a deeper significance on behalf of his disciples, or in connection with his universal work, than may appear on the surface. For that reason he will not tolerate tardiness on their part.

Ahmednagar was to be the headquarters of the next Baba Retreat. He took with him only a few of his disciples; the others were temporarily sent back to their homes. With this smaller group of followers, Baba made a number of short journeys, before finally settling at Ahmednagar. At Arangaon—about five miles from Ahmednagar, where a Hindu saint, Buaji Bua, is said to have buried himself alive—Baba decided to stay, and asked his men to clear away the debris around a dilapidated, uninhabited postoffice building. They began the work at once, but after remaining there for only four days, Baba decided to return to Ahmednagar.

Those who have experienced with Baba this life of constant change gradually realize that something in their inner consciousness is loosening—they find themselves becoming detached from places, things and even people. For examples of utter detachment, which is so essential for progress on the spiritual path, Baba points to the greatest teachers of the world—Zoroaster, Buddha, Krishna, Mohammed, Jesus—whose watchword was renunciation. But Baba takes pains to convey to his disciples that renouncing must take place in the *mind*—in the innermost man. For in the mind—conscious and sub-conscious—is found the root of all desire.

Therefore, the mind must become the *Fakir*, the

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Renouncer, if man is to become free. When this freedom is finally attained, then no matter what outer life man may live, he remains detached under all circumstances. He then works not for self, but for the One—for the advancement of others, which is the true mission of the spiritually illumined.

NO GAME FOR THE WEAK

Baba was obviously weeding out his men—testing their stoutness of heart. Early in the stay at Ahmednagar, he gave them the choice of remaining with him—in which case he would demand implicit obedience—and, he added, their life would not be a soft one. Or they could separate from him outwardly by living away from the Ashram, yet still live according to a few rules of conduct which he would lay down for them. The third choice he gave them was to leave him permanently. None wished to separate from Baba entirely; thirteen chose to remain with him, the others would return to their homes for awhile, pledged to live according to his orders. The names of the thirteen were Behramji Irani, Gustadji Hansotia, Jal Irani (Baba's brother), Adi K.Irani, Aga Baidul, 'Uncle' Rustom, Baba Ubale, Ramjoo, Pendu, Padre, Slamson, a Hindu nicknamed, by Baba 'Nervous,' and a Mohammedan nicknamed, 'Barsoap.'

Baba never fails to emphasize that the pilgrimage of the spiritual aspirant is no undertaking for the weak—and his disciples seldom have to wait long for demonstration of this truth. The morning following the segregation of his group, long before the breakfast hour, Baba led the thirteen on a journey. After walking for awhile toward Arangaon, he suddenly changed his course and told them he would take them to some other undisclosed destination. They wondered about it, but asked no questions and continued on for a couple of hours until Baba halted at an Inn that was reserved exclusively for the housing of lunatics and criminals. Here Baba elected to stay with his men for a few days! On their return journey, they stopped off at Arangaon for a brief stay. Eleven days later they found themselves back at Ahmednagar, only to prepare for a more extensive journey which took them to Agra, where they visited the Taj Mahal. From Agra they proceeded to Muttra,

where they bathed in the sacred river, Jumna. Then they departed for Karachi, by way of Delhi. After a week at Karachi they journeyed on to Quetta, the principal city of Baluchistan.

Instead of going on to Persia as had been originally planned, Baba decided to go to Calcutta by train and walk from there to Bombay, across the continent of India. During this pilgrimage every member of the group wore robes of the ascetic, and ate but sparingly. Baba maintained a liquid diet throughout this entire period. During their long trek Baba was in the lead, and like all the others, he carried his bedding roll and travelling needs on his own shoulders. Throughout the gruelling journey under the relentless sun of tropical India, all of the group, under Baba's orders, repeated incessantly in a low monotone the name of God that was revered by their respective religions. Whenever his men became exhausted Baba relaxed the walking order. Immediately after a little rest, however, they would set out on foot again, averaging usually twenty-five to thirty-five miles a day. When they arrived at Navsari they were so dishevelled and bearded that they were mistaken for a gang of bandits which the local police were hunting for carrying off little children! Baba chuckled. By the time they satisfied the authorities that they were victims of mistaken identity, there was considerably less ego in his men!

Some time after their return to Ahmednagar a trip to Persia was discussed and planned. One of the disciples, who had been sent to Bombay to obtain visas from the Persian consul, came back with a strange story. The consul had told him that he could grant no visas unless all the members of the party presented themselves at the consulate in person. Baba, of course need not come, the consul added, since he had already been at the consulate a few days before and told him that he would send in his passport for the consul's endorsement when they were ready for the journey. The disciple knew, however, that Baba had not been in or near Bombay in his physical body since their return to the Ashram. Strange and inexplicable to the rational mind are the ways of the Masters.

JOURNEY INTO TRIBULATION

Early in 1924 Baba and eight of his disciples left for the first visit to Persia, the land of Baba's ancestors, the birth place of the God-man Zoroaster, upon whose precepts and teaching the great Zoroastrian religion was founded. Though the purpose of the journey was primarily connected with Baba's inner work, it also provided ample opportunity to stir the dormant propensities of the disciples. Not the least affliction which beset the party was the tropical fever which several members of the group contracted.

Being with Baba does not necessarily insure freedom from illness or pain. On the contrary. Just as he quickens the positive side of our natures, inspiring us to deeper love, greater faith in God, so does he stir in equal measure the negative side with its 'Shadow' manifestation. Whatever negative characteristics we have repressed because they do not conform to our conscious ideal of ourselves, are surely and swiftly brought to our attention, to be faced and utilized in a constructive way. Under the tremendous impact of Baba's catalytic effect upon consciousness, the seeds in one's mind—be they seeds of so-called good or so-called evil—inevitably work their way into expression. Since Baba knows that the conflict of the opposites must ultimately be overcome, he deliberately brings the warring elements out into the open, so that the disciple may be compelled to find the way of transcendence. These 'good' and 'bad' tendencies, called *Samskaras*, are the binding effects of past thoughts, emotions and deeds. These karmic fetters, which keep us in spiritual bondage, Baba undertakes to remove, if we submit to his guidance and are accepted by him as disciples. From the moment of such surrender, the consciousness of the disciple is subject to whatever intensification of experience he needs, in Baba's judgment, for his cleansing and release.

Baba denies nothing. He accepts everything—not as Reality, but as a medium through which Reality may manifest. 'Sin'—if he ever used the word—he would define as reacting to experience egocentrically, feeding the little self upon it, instead of viewing all expressions of life with de-

tachment. In this respect the most spiritually evolved of modern depth psychologists are in accord with Baba's teaching.

He is utterly detached and impersonal in the surgical application of his spiritual technique. At a time of deep inner ferment I confessed to him the terrible hatred I felt for my companions—hatred so intense that to murder them, I thought, would be sheer joy! I was profoundly disturbed by this dark, wild emotion, and was therefore greatly astonished to see Baba smiling with apparent satisfaction, and still more amazed when he said:

“Good! And have you felt lust yet?”

“Baba!” I exclaimed, “Do I have to feel that, too?”

“In order to reach God, one has to experience everything,” he calmly replied.

It was then I began to understand that to achieve spiritual integration, the hidden tendencies and potencies of the collective unconscious have to be brought into consciousness—not to be used for personal satisfaction or self-aggrandizement, but to be faced and accepted as part of one's evolutionary heritage—and then raised to a higher dimension, where the *power* of the collection image remains for constructive use, while its poison is distilled.

On the long journey to Persia Baba found many opportunities to teach his disciples unforgettable lessons in detachment from pleasure and pain. Nor was the return trip without repeated tests of endurance for them and unfailing self-immolation for Baba. The party, as usual, travelled in the lowest class. Adjoining the section where they ate and slept, carloads of fowl, cows, goats, donkeys and horses, crowded, moored, bleated, neighed and attended freely to nature's demands. Prior to meal time, the gluttonous Arabs who were in charge of the animals, killed the smaller ones, and gorged themselves with the almost raw meat. For a group of scrupulous vegetarians to whom the physical aspect of life was not of paramount importance, this oft-repeated carnivorous orgy must have been rather trying!

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On their return to India the usual change of plans took place. A superficial estimate of this characteristic of Baba might suggest a person of extreme indecision, or one tossed about by whim and circumstance, and there has been one—Paul Brunton—who in recent years has written much about India and her teachings, who has so judged Baba. There is something to be said on the side of such critics. Baba is a complete enigma to the intellectual or rational mind. But by such a criterion he cannot be judged, because he does not function on the intellectual plane, though in his capacity for organization, for attention to detail, for large scale direction and movement—all qualities we attribute to the balanced, rational mind—he has no peer. If Baba is what many of us know him to be, he functions on the plane of pure intuition, a sphere where things and events are as utterly fluid as time itself; where, in fact, time, as we know it, does not exist—where what seems to us the round-about way to a goal is in the long run the shortest way. Anyone who has had experience in trying to live by response to inner guidance or intuition, will know how circuitously Spirit often seems to work—and in ways fantastic to the rational mind—yet how miraculously it always achieves its objective. It is, I think, largely this *seeming* to be led in just the opposite direction to which one aims to go, that makes the spiritual life such as absorbing and often such a droll adventure.

This sudden moving from place to place, the unexpected, startling changes in plans, have deep inner significance, not only for the people involved, but also for Baba's all-embracing inner work. Like all Perfect Masters, Baba always symbolizes a change or shift in the collective or individual consciousness by a parallel action or ritual on the physical plane.

I recall that when we were with Baba in Cannes, on the French Riviera, in 1937, he allotted to each of us our particular rooms which, he said we were to occupy for the duration of our year's visit there. My husband and I unpacked our things and prepared to make our room homey for our long stay. When we were comfortably settled—

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after twenty-four hours-Baba announced that we were to move to another room, in another building on the estate. Baba noticed that we were disturbed by this order, so he assured us that the move to our new quarters would be permanent. So again we dug in for a long occupancy. But again we were moved! Three movings and settlings within four days! The last time I was wholly unable to hide my annoyance. I had unpacked *everything!* We had re-arranged the furniture according to our own needs and taste, and were at last-so we thought—settled! Baba assured me he was not ‘crazy.’ “The only sane one in the bunch!” he declared, and added: “There is a reason for these moves. They mean something.”

I hoped they did, though at the time I could see no valid reason for them. Years later, however, I was able to comprehend, in a measure, Baba’s meaning, and the obscure inner significance of what then seemed a fruitless ordeal. Even at the time, one quite pronounced result of this ‘crisis’ was to show me that my personal comfort, my liking of order and a harmonious and artistic environment were not of paramount importance; that attachment to such things was in fact a hindrance to the unfoldment of the spiritual life; that it was better to be fluid than comfortable.

NEW ASHRAM

One year after the disbanding of the Ashram in Bombay, Baba called his disciples together once more, and at Arangaon, near the town of Ahmednagar, established his new Ashram, Meherabad. Here strict discipline was again imposed upon the disciples. From their rising hour at five, until they retired seventeen hours later, they were busy with gardening, building new quarters, or repairing old ones, except for the time assigned for devotional activities and meals. The hour between six and seven in the morning was dedicated by each man to meditation or prayers according to his faith, of which there were many. Religiously and with respect to nationality, Baba’s circle is distinctly universal, corresponding to Baba’s own spiritual background.

Within a year, a small town had sprung up at Meherabad—a school, a hospital and dispensary, an Ashram for lepers and the destitute. Baba placed Dr. Karkal in charge of the hospital with the disciples Padri and Pendu assisting. Baba himself bathed the lepers and gave them his most tender solicitude as, in fact, he did with all the patients who poured into Meherabad from the surrounding villages and towns. During the two years that the Ashram hospital was in operation, seven thousand out-patients were given free medical care, and five hundred in-patients.

Just as the hospital extended treatment to the sick and needy without charge, the ‘Hazrat Babajan School,’ with Vishnu Deomkhar as superintendent, provided free boarding, clothing and tuition to its 200 boys. At first, the ‘untouchables’ were segregated, but after a few months, age-old prejudices were subtly broken down and Baba ordered all castes to intermingle. He took upon himself the task of washing the thirty ‘untouchable’ boys, a symbolic ritual which he performed as part of his daily routine during the life of the school. It was a strenuous process which required nearly four hours, so unspeakably dirty were the boys. On one occasion, among the hundreds of devotees who came to Baba for *darshan*—the paying of homage—some Brahmin visitors came for the Master’s blessing. As they bowed before him, Baba pointed out that he was bathing ‘untouchables,’ and to earn his blessing the visitors would have to take a hand in washing the boys. Even to be touched by the *shadow* of an ‘untouchable’ is anathema to a Brahmin. Now, however, their hunger for Baba’s blessing proved more compelling than the pull of ancient caste taboo. To see these Brahmin pilgrims bathing the bodies of the ‘untouchable’ students with their sacrosanct hands was a sight unprecedented in India. Only a Perfect Master could make them do it—and like it.

DISPELLING IGNORANCE AND PREJUDICE

The condition of the depressed classes of India is truly deplorable. Baba says this is one of the basic *spiritual* causes of India’s inferior status in the community of nations. To

emphasize the need for removing this blight, Baba persistently works to dissolve the prejudices of the Brahmins who are responsible for this condition, and to dispel the dispirited ignorance of the 'untouchables,' which, over the centuries, has become inbred.

Though all classes in the villages bordering on the Ashram received Baba's spiritual and material help, it was to the 'untouchable' that he directed most of his compassionate activity. Food and clothing were supplied to those who needed them most. If they were being 'squeezed' by overseers for non-payment of back debts on plots of land, Baba came to their rescue. Those who showed signs of more than average ability were provided with the necessary funds to further their education or training in Bombay, and arrangements were made for their lodging with his devotees there. If quarrels of any kind arose among them or with the upper classes, Baba acted as a fair and wise arbiter. So extreme is the economic plight of the *Mahars*, as the 'untouchables' are called, that they are in a chronic state of semi-starvation. Those among them who regarded Baba as both friend and spiritual Master, were constantly exhorted by him to give up their habit of eating the flesh of dead or injured animals. Once, after having spoken to them repeatedly about the harm of such practices, he caught them in the act of secreting in their quarters, the carcass of a goat. He persuaded them to throw it away, and take oath never again to indulge in this filthy practice. Then he took them to Meherabad where he fed them bountifully on healthful, vegetarian food.

Their pledge was not, however, long honored. Shortly afterward, Baba heard from some of the *Mahar* boys in his school that they were having meat at home, as well as fish and eggs. Knowing the relation of food to consciousness, and seeking by every means to raise the life-tone of the *Mahars*, Baba had instructed both the boys and their parents never to indulge in food which injected gross animal vibrations into the body. His reason for this was that these 'untouchables' whose bodies needed drastic purification, needed also the character discipline of self-denial.

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So again Baba reprimanded the boys, and by way of emphasis, he forbade them to eat any of the tasty, nourishing meals supplied at the school. This measure brought its desired result. Post-haste, the parents and guardians of the boys appeared before Baba and craved his pardon.

When, some time later, word was brought to Baba that a few of the Arangaon *Mahars* had found a dead bullock and feasted upon it, he went to the village to hold court over the guilty persons. None of the *Mahars* who had given their recent pledge were implicated, but Baba's stern, fatherly warning made the guilty ones uneasy. So they too, promised to bury all dead animals in the future, instead of eating them. Baba realized, of course, that their decision was influenced by his offer to compensate them in coin for every animal corpse buried and the skin delivered to him.

To teach the upper castes some additional needed lessons, Baba invariably ate outside with the 'untouchables' when invited to break bread with the Arangaon villagers, though special provision was always made for him inside, with the Brahmins. By such examples and many others too numerous to relate, Baba exerted upon the neighboring villagers an influence so profound that over the years it completely changed their consciousness and their lives.

During this Meherabad period-in contrast to the Bombay Ashram, where visitors were strictly forbidden-hordes of devotees and callers paid their respects to Baba. Among the pilgrims there were a fair number of genuine spiritual aspirants, but the majority, when put to the test, were rather lukewarm in their zeal. One such was a yogi who insisted that he had come to Baba desiring divine guidance. He stayed for ten days, following Baba's instructions, then suddenly he announced his unwillingness to remain longer. On being questioned, the man declared that the food was not to his liking; to which Baba succinctly remarked to his disciples:

“Come for God, gone for bread!”

MOTION PICTURE THERAPY

On special occasions, such as the celebration of the

birthday of Hazrat Babajan or Upasani Maharaj, disciples and visitors were treated to motion picture performances, the subjects of which were usually the lives of renowned Indian saints. Baba's interest in the motion picture as a potent means of quickening mass consciousness has always been very keen and continues to this day. In fact, much of his activity during his visits to the West was focussed on contacting writers, directors and producers of films. According to Baba, in the coming new day, the motion picture will be one of the most effective means arousing in people the higher emotions, through the portrayal of *soul*-stirring dramas. Some material for these new-age films of tomorrow Baba has already had prepared by those whom he has chosen to take a leading part in this phase of his work.

Both Eastern and Western disciples have witnessed many a movie with Baba. Once in New York we went to two shows in one evening! Baba's interest in motion picture performances, however, is not as an avenue of 'escape.' He uses motion picture audiences-as he uses any large gathering of people-for his inner work. When the active conscious mind of an audience is stilled by emotional concentration on a picture, Baba is then able to work directly upon the deeper levels of the collective Unconscious with greater economy of effort. Consequently at a dull picture he would remain longer—often until the very end—for this emotional interest to be aroused. Many times, however, he would cater to the disciples' enjoyment of a good performance and use their absorption in the picture for his own purpose of stirring the forces in the Unconscious.

SILENCE BEGINS

Early in June, 1925, Baba announced that he would soon begin a period of silence. He gathered together the disciples and other members of the community and outlined for each one his or her respective duties during the silence, which, he said, would probably continue for at least a year. Then on July 9th, he summoned the parents and guardians of the school boys, and asked for their cooperation in permitting their children to remain at the school. He explained that

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his silence was being undertaken for spiritual reasons—not to develop spiritual powers in himself, since he already had such powers—but to further his universal work, of which the impending wars and disasters would be the necessary purgative phase, to be followed by an era of peace and tranquillity for mankind.

The next morning Baba left his hut at five o'clock and greeted everybody by means of signs and gestures, inquiring as to each individual's well-being; and during the day he was busy as usual supervising the affairs of the school and community. Thus began his period of silence which has continued without lapse to the present day. Simultaneously he began to abstain from touching money, a practice which he also continues to observe.

Concerning this tremendous self-imposed discipline of total silence an amusing incident happened while Baba was in Hollywood on his first visit to California. A clever young reporter was interviewing him for the Los Angeles Times. Suddenly he sprang the question: "Just how do you pronounce your name?"

Baba's eyes twinkled and he motioned one of his disciples, who stood by, to answer the man's question. The reporter flushed and a few minutes later apologetically admitted that he had come to the interview with the determination of catching Baba off-guard and exposing him as a fraud who had adopted silence as a novel publicity stunt. The next day, May 30th, 1932, the interview appeared in the paper with none of the flippancy which characterized some of the newspaper reports, but written with dignity and restraint.

During the first year of his silence, Baba spent many hours daily writing the account of his experiences during the period when he was completely in the super-conscious state. Often he would write all night while the colony was sleeping, and sometimes this work would produce in him extreme exhaustion or fever. Yet he continued it as a necessary part of his preliminary life work. So far, no one has seen this manuscript, which Baba says contains hitherto

unknown spiritual secrets. When, in his wisdom, the time is expedient for its publication he will release it.

A few months after the inception of his silence, Baba began again to observe frequent fasts which varied in duration from days to months, and in kind from partial fasting, consisting of one scant meal a day, to complete abstinence from food and liquids. The prolonged fasts—according to Baba—were for the purpose of effecting the removal of those binding karmic impressions which his disciples had acquired through yogic practices in former lives.

SYMBOLIC ACTIVITY

Throughout the fasts Baba continued his life of never-ceasing activity. In fact he now seemed to increase his physical labors. In addition to the arduous task of daily washing the *Mahar* boys, three or four times a week he now bathed *all* the boys in the school with his own hands. When the number exceeded forty he permitted the *Mandali* (circle of disciples) to give a helping hand, but he continued to assume the chief burden of the work himself. At this time, also, he made a point of washing the dirty clothes of five of the school boys.

As later, in Baba's work with the spiritually—dazed men, this washing of the boys and their clothes was, in the words of the Anglican catechism, “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace,” a ritual whereby Baba was achieving for the boys a cleansing of consciousness which would ultimately release them from all egocentric limitations. Another sacramental act was Baba's daily grinding of grain to supply the flour for the community.

While he exacted of his disciples the utmost physical activity, he never spared himself in any way. Once, when a mechanical well-lifter was being installed, Baba instructed the disciples and mason to finish it that night. When he found they were working too slowly, he joined hands with them and completed the job in the stipulated time. All outer action has spiritual significance for Baba. When, therefore, he speeds up any physical activity he is accelerating a corresponding activity on the spiritual plane.

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In the sudden break-up of the Meherabad activities in 1926 and the razing to the ground of most of the buildings, may be found another example of Baba's symbolic way of working, concerning which Baba once said: "When one has to erect a large building a temporary scaffolding is erected. When the building is completed the scaffolding is removed. The school, hospital and other buildings were but scaffoldings for my real, inner work. Now that that is finished, the scaffolding has to go."

Though this sudden upheaval uprooted many people, none were cast adrift. Due to Baba's foresight, provision was made for all those who might have been rendered homeless or destitute by the change.

NEW SCAFFOLDING ERECTED

In the early spring of 1927, Baba and his disciples were again at Meherabad and a new phase of the work was begun with the opening of another school in a bungalow on the outskirts of the village, with Chanji as principal. Coincident with this move Baba ceased writing his communications and thenceforth began using the small alphabet board which has since become so familiar to thousands of his followers in the East and West.

One might naturally suppose that Baba's silence and the use of an alphabet board in lieu of speaking would constitute a barrier between himself and others. Actually the direct opposite is true. Most of us have discovered that it is our moments of silent communion with a loved one which unite us most truly and deeply. Even more true is this with Baba; if one is attuned to him, deeper levels of consciousness, in which no words are needed to convey meaning, are quickened to their highest potential. To sit silently with a soul whose mind is wholly one with God, whose heart beats in constant rhythm with the love song of the universe, is an experience which far transcends the interchange of the spoken word.

The duties of the disciples during the second Meherabad period were varied and arduous. Not only did they minister to the destitute and the sick, including lepers, but they shared in their privations, owing to rules instituted by Baba

NEW SCAFFOLDING ERECTED

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which reduced their standards of food and living to the level of those whom they served. Thus they were able fully to appreciate the needs and viewpoint of afflicted humanity. The work was systematically organized by Baba and included such roles as nurse, watchman, cook, manger, storekeeper, accountant, teacher, reporter, writer, singer, water—carrier, barber, washerman. General duties in which all the *Mandali* shared, included the spreading of the grounds with cow—dung, bathing the hospital patients with hot water, (the heating of which under the primitive conditions of Meherabad was in itself a full—sized chore) washing the hospital and dispensary floors, and much other menial work.

FOOLS FOR GOD

Another discipline which Baba exacted of his men at times was that of begging for food when they went on short journeys. Once, the quiet villagers of Walki were astonished to see so many mendicants in decent coats, pants, shoes—none of which beggars in India ever wear—begging for food. They were abused, taunted and laughed at; but persevering, they finally returned to Baba with sundry bits of food, which he mixed into one concoction and distributed among the disciples. Soon the identity of the beggars and Baba's presence with them was discovered, to the great consternation of those who had refused food to the mendicants. For a devout Indian to refuse food to a Perfect Master or his disciples is the same as refusing to serve God.

Life at Meherabad with Baba was not a soft one for the disciples; nor was it intended to be. Baba was training his Circle to participate in the greatest spiritual quickening the human race has ever experienced. For this work, he once told us, he must have men and women who are strong and stable as mountains; he requires souls who will go through fire, if necessary, without flinching or faltering. Another Master said once of Baba that he was putting his disciples through a disciplinary regime such as never before has been known in man's history. Yet, through it all, down the long, strenuous years of preparation for the world work which is yet to begin, they have not wavered. Only in a few

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instances have close ones deserted him, and in these cases it has been less the strict, spartan life to which they were subjected that caused their deflection, than the conflict they experienced in trying to find rational explanations for Baba's super—rational, incomprehensible ways. Perhaps they had not read or understood those words of St. Augustine: "A comprehended God is no God."

Once, to a Western woman disciple who was going through a period of rationalistic doubt and questioning, Baba said: "Don't try to *understand* me. My depth is unfathomable. Just love me."

For those of us who have been privileged to be close to Baba, this is not a difficult order to obey! Though we have all, I suspect, been through the vale of puzzled wonder, we have come out of it loving him the more, because in some measure we have been permitted to glimpse a little more of his divine magnitude.

AN OUTSTANDING DISCIPLE

The story of Pleader, one of Baba's Indian disciples, illustrates the attitude of one who goes all the way with the Master, in spite of severe tests, and reveals another illumined soul's estimate of Baba.

Before becoming Baba's disciple, Pleader heard him discoursing one day on spiritual liberation. At the close of the talk he asked Baba if he could give him the 'liberation' about which he had spoken. Baba replied by asking him if he would be willing to do exactly as he instructed. Pleader said that he would. Baba then assured him that if he carried out his orders he would give him the liberation which he sought. After a short stay in the Ashram at Meherabad, Baba ordered him locked in a small room in Bombay, which Baba himself spiritually prepared by occupying it for a few hours. Pleader was then instructed to eat or drink nothing but milk, to observe complete silence, to see no one (except the man who would attend to his daily requirements) to read nothing, nor to write. The locality of his lodging was changed every year or so, but he saw no one save the disciples who attended to his needs and Baba, who came once a year.

At the expiration of five years of this discipline, Baba sent him to Rishikesh to contact one of his 'agents,' a sixth plane saint, well-known in that section. On finding the saint Pleader showed him Baba's picture by way of spiritual introduction, whereupon the saint immediately took him into his cave—much to the consternation of the holy man's disciples, who had never been permitted to set foot inside their master's abode. Then the saint proceeded to ridicule Pleader's silence and his milk diet.

"How can you help humanity," he questioned, "if you do not speak? And just how do you expect to get milk in this rugged section of the world?"

To this Pleader replied with his board that in observing silence and partaking only of milk, he was obeying his Master's orders. The saint then asked if he had had any great spiritual experience at the hands of his Master, to which Pleader replied that he had not. But now the saint's attitude changed. He smiled and declared:

"Ah, but your Master has perfectly prepared the ground. At a touch from him you will become perfect even as he is. You do well to serve faithfully such a Master. You can have no idea of the infinite scope of his activity. Even I, with my spiritual knowledge, can fathom only a fraction of his depth."

Shortly after his return to Meherabad, Pleader was permitted to enter again into the normal life of the Ashram. While in India, I had the opportunity of talking with him. He was at that time in charge of the God-intoxicated men in Baba's Rahuri Retreat. I asked him if he had not found those years of such severe discipline very difficult. He replied with a depth of tranquillity which could only arise from a mind at peace with itself and the world: "I could never have done it without Baba's grace."

HOW THE MASTER WORKS

The saint's question to Pleader concerning his spiritual experiences while undergoing the rigors of fasting, silence and seclusion is one which many people ask the followers of Baba. It is somehow thought that a Master parcels out

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states of higher consciousness or psychic powers much as an indulgent father might give sweets to a favorite child. But such is not the case. A Master such as Baba trains his disciples for universal work, not for their personal enjoyment. His first objective, therefore, is to free them from the bondage of the ego which they have acquired in their present and former lives, so that they may be unobstructed channels for his work.

In order that he may avoid the pitfalls of the psychic and higher mental states, the Master takes the disciple through the cosmic planes blindfolded, his purpose being to liberate him from all lesser phases of consciousness than the ultimate and supreme one—that of becoming aware of his union with God. To accomplish this, the roots of the ego must be destroyed and prevented from forming new tentacles, such as psychic experiences and powers inevitably generate. Once he is permanently free from the snares of the ego, then all power may be entrusted to the disciple. Until then, the ‘Dark Night’ of which the Christian mystics speak is the safest and quickest route to the mountain-top of God-consciousness.

Much of the criticism which has been levelled against Baba is on the grounds that he does not conform to the accepted standards of how people think a Master should function. Particularly in India, where there is so much tradition about saints and Masters, many find it difficult to fit Baba into the usual category of the holy man who spends most of his time wrapt in meditation or unconscious *Samadhi*. A Master who plays games skillfully, supervises the building of a house, or the choreography of a dance, is to them a fantastic figure. They expect his mastery to exercise itself only in the realms of mystical experience. Only if he sits for days lost in trance are they likely to be convinced that he is a God-man. They do not understand that the supreme achievement of consciousness is to maintain the ecstasy of the trance condition in the midst of all mundane affairs.

Perhaps it is because our own human nature is still so unredeemed that some of us deny a God who dares to be

human. Yet, logically, a Perfect One, whose work is the redemption of mankind, must be perfect in his humanity. He should function with all the powers of the human being raised to the nth degree. Whatever the human mind may conceive as comprising the fulfilled personality, he should have: that inner beauty which expresses itself as grace, charm and compassion; that inner poise which gives detachment and a sense of humour; that inner joy which expresses itself in work and in play. He should be human as well as god-like; and he should at all times express the ecstasy and peace of God. Otherwise, the 'Word made flesh' is a contradiction in terms. God, to be God the incarnate Avatar, should be master of all masters and masteries. Such a Master, Baba is.

His purpose for his disciples is so to train them that they too shall make the whole of life an unbroken meditation, such as Kabir describes:

“He is the real Sadguru, who can reveal the form of the Formless to the vision of these eyes:

Who teaches the simple way of attaining to Him that is other than rites or ceremonies:

Who does not make you close the doors, and hold the breath, and renounce the world:

Who makes you perceive the Supreme Spirit wherever the mind attaches itself:

Who teaches you to be still in the midst of all your activities.

Ever immersed in bliss, having no fear in his mind, he keeps the spirit of union in the midst of all enjoyments.

The infinite dwelling of the Infinite Being is everywhere: in earth, water, sky and air:

Firm as the thunderbolt, the seat of the seeker is established above the void:

He who is within is without: I see Him and none else.”

One of Baba's Western devotees once asked him why he held such a high transcendent goal before people, and suggested that some of the lesser steps along the way seemed

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more possible of attainment for the average person: to which Baba replied that there is only *one goal*-union with God. It is that which all life is consciously or unconsciously seeking. Anything else is merely illusion.

To aid those who have arrived at the place of consciously seeking this goal, Baba uses the simple ordinary events of life. He works *with* natural laws; he does not supervene them. He helps the aspirant to make the whole of life a spiritual exercise- to live as St. Paul describes: "For me to live is Christ;" or as the Chinese Sage replied to one who asked: "What is Tao?" "Usual life is the very Tao."

GEMS IN THE MAKING

Just as there is nothing of the ascetic in the make-up of Baba's men, so is there nothing of the sacrosanct atmosphere in his Ashrams. Normality and loving kindness characterize both. Though all of his Indian men have been subjected to the strictest of disciplines, its effect has not been to remove them from the world, nor to foster in them any illusions of being set apart from other men. The 'renunciation' in which Baba has trained them is an inner thing, and manifests itself in their detachment from possessions and people; from both the luxury and poverty of this world. When they are in the West, they adjust themselves with ease to our modern gadgets and trappings, without being unduly impressed by our boasted civilization; and when they return to India, where modern conveniences are only for Maharajas and high-ranking Britishers, they again adapt themselves happily to that life. They seem to have achieved that state of mind of which Baba speaks, when he says: "Make use of modern civilization, when and where necessary. But do not let it dominate you. Neither despise it, nor be driven by it."

As living examples of selfless workers, it would be difficult to find their equals; to find gathered together so many strong, stalwart men so astonishingly free from ego-centric speech and action. Doubtless when they first became associated with Baba, they were just as raw, just as unintegrated as the majority of us. Undoubtedly in the early days their

personal desires and weaknesses were vocally apparent, since Baba's technique of training is not one of repression. But having lived among them for some time, I can testify to the high degree of maturity which they now possess.

MIRACLES

Another criticism directed at Baba is that he does not perform the miracles which the average man expects from a Master. Because he does not stun people's reason with miraculous clap-trap, little minds fail to recognize his power and wisdom.

Illustrating this, and also Baba's attitude towards miracle seekers, is the story of one of Baba's boyhood school friends who came to see him one day. The young man had heard of the role of Master which Baba now occupied, but was puzzled as to how a boy with whom a few years ago he had played pranks and cricket could now be in such an exalted position. He told Baba that he would like to believe that he was God-realized, but the old familiarity between them seemed to block the way. If only Baba would do something unusual, something miraculous, he said, then he was sure he could believe in him. So Baba told him to go over to a table and write down certain things. As the man did this, the ink-well started to lift from the table, then the pen began to move in his hand. The young man was terrified and ran over to Baba and prostrated himself at his feet, crying: "Forgive me, Master, now I believe!"

Baba looked at him with pity: "If you are impressed with this gaudy show, you'd better go and serve X --," mentioning the name of a famous juggler in India.

At another time, when a new disciple suggested to Baba that he demonstrate his miraculous powers by causing a large building to be erected within a few minutes, Baba replied that no God-realized person would consider performing such a miracle. "It would be childish, and its effect would be just the reverse of what you would expect it to be. You think that hundreds of thousands of people would come to me and live spiritual lives. Certainly there would be no limit to the scores of people who would be at-

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tracted to me! But almost all of them would be worldly-minded and would ask me to gratify their materialistic desires. Those in need of money would say: 'You erected this building in a few minutes, why can't you miraculously produce a few thousand dollars for me?' And even those with the potentialities for a life of renunciation, on hearing of such a miracle would ask me to relieve them from all their troubles, and effect their spiritual salvation at once...This world is an illusion. Therefore, as a rule God-realized persons do not perform great public miracles—which are displays of the Master's power to create further illusion—except during an Avataric period, when the one who plays the role of Avatar has to perform such miracles as raising the dead and restoring sight to the blind, in order to stimulate the apathetic masses—to quicken their *wonder*."

The miracle of helping those in sorrow and sickness has, however, often been performed by Baba, whose love goes forth continually to those in need. Many of his devotees, both in the East and the West have experienced this.

Once, while the Master was in Persia, the child of a Parsi couple in Bombay—loyal devotees of Baba—was suddenly stricken ill. The child's condition grew worse from day to day. Night and day the parents implored Baba inwardly to save their child. Then one night, when the child's condition was so critical that they had about given up hope for its recovery, Baba appeared, apparently in his physical body, passed his hands over the body of the child, and instantly disappeared. From that moment the child began to improve and was shortly restored to perfect health.

A few months later, when the Master returned to India, one of the disciples asked him how such a thing could occur. Since Baba seldom reveals his hand by explaining any occult technique which he may have occasion to use, all the disciple learned was that it is quite a simple matter for a Master to be in one place and appear at another, thousands of miles away. Jesus, Baba told the disciple, once appeared at twelve different places at one and the same time in what seemed to be his physical body, but was in reality a subtle body.

There is also the widely known story of the *Comte de St. Germain* appearing simultaneously at the six gates of Paris, at the time of the French Revolution, in a form which appeared to be physical.

However, the only miracle with which the God-realized Master is really concerned is that of releasing the individual soul from its binding karmic impressions through divine love. These imprints upon the soul of thought, emotion, or action, are not merely those which we are *conscious* of having acquired. Many of these conscious effects of ego-experience can be wiped out through such an upheaval as religious conversion; but for the hidden, unconscious limitations, the individual requires the help of a Master of consciousness such as Baba is. The best of modern psychotherapists can do much in this respect, but unless they are themselves free from ego-centricity and can function as unobstructed pipelines to the reservoir of God, they cannot effect for the individual any complete and permanent release. Moreover, the individual must also be freed from his virtuous impressions. Here again a spiritual Master is needed to lead man through and beyond his hard-earned virtues.

FREEING THE SOUL

It is at this point that many people balk. We are, for the most part, willing to have wiped out the cause and effect of what we call sin or evil; but to have our virtues eliminated is quite a different matter! Yet, since all ego-centric impressions must eventually be balanced so that they automatically cancel each other, the Perfect Master leads the soul which surrenders itself to his guidance to the recognition that *all earth experience is illusory*. We must lose our sense of the separate 'I' or ego as the experiencer, for as long as the little 'I' remains, there inevitably creep in subtle forms of pride which often mask themselves as virtue or spiritual attainment. It is this condition of which Jesus said we must beware, when he told the story of the seven other devils, more vicious than the first, who would try to gain entrance into the newly-garnished house; that is, after the *conscious* sins have been swept out.

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The only certain method of release from these millions of binding impressions (*samskaras*) is through the activity of divine love in the soul, which the Master awakens or intensifies; a love which is forgetful of self and thinks only of the Beloved. To be sure, the longing for the Divine Union which this love induces, makes an impression upon the mind too. It also binds; but it binds the soul to God, who eventually frees it.

ELIMINATING THE EGO

Baba explains that these imprints upon the mind of man originated at the moment when the individual 'drop'—in order to gain self—consciousness—emerged from the 'Creator Point' of the infinite ocean of Truth. With that 'drop's' unfolding evolution, the *samskaras* necessarily increased, until in man, the soul is literally encased by them. Whether in a physical body or out of it, the individual soul is enveloped by these mental and emotional barnacles; and not until they are dissolved by the grace of an incarnate Master can the soul become conscious of its divine essence. God-realization, therefore, is the balancing or mutual cancellation of all impressions and tendencies—good and bad; a condition in which the mind is as calm as a still lake. Only when there is something for the mind to focus its attention upon, does an intuitive knowing replace the thinking process. Aurobindo Ghose, a contemporary saint of India, well describes this state of mind: "When we have passed beyond thinkings, then we shall have knowledge; reason was the helper; reason is the bar.... Transform reason into ordered intuition; let all thyself be Light. This is thy goal."

Such a condition is naturally very difficult to achieve. If the mind tries to stop thinking, it tends towards the sound sleep state—that is, the unconscious. Even the greatest Yogis are unable to attain this quiescent state of mind permanently. At best, they induce in themselves periods of Samadhi, during which the mind activity is in abeyance, but when they return to normal consciousness their mental processes begin again and the egoistic store of binding impressions is increased.

To go in and out of *Samadhi*, Baba says, is like yielding to the drug habit. It only makes the soul crave for it more and more, and effects nothing stable in the sum total of consciousness. It is an evidence that one is still bound by the activity of the mind, even though on a high level. Not to *lose* consciousness, but to become conscious of the Unconscious, is the goal.

Egoism, in the sense which Baba uses it, means not merely to be selfish and self-opinionated. To be conscious of our separate existence in any way, is egoism. Such a slight thing as recalling that we did not sleep well last night is egoism; so, too, is any feeling of *self* concern. Hydra-headed though the ego is, its main branches are four: the *craving* which arises from the gratification of passion or desire, *fear*, *anger* and *greed*.

Of the various techniques suitable for the Western man or woman which can be used to weaken the ego, the more spiritual of the psycho--therapeutic methods are among the best. The self--facing and subsequent self--knowledge which psychological analysis engenders does much to clear the ground for deeper soul experience. Any genuine clarification of consciousness, whether through analysis or through religious conversion, helps to liberate the individual from the more blatant forms of egoism. However, the confession of consciously recognized sins takes care only of the more obvious shortcomings. The roots, which are the real source of our egoism, lie deeply embedded in the Unconscious, cleverly intertwined with that part of ourselves which we value most. If creative thought is our highest value, the roots of the ego may be found buried in the intellect. If feeling is our dominant characteristic, then we may expect to find the strangling roots in the emotional nature. To disentangle these roots of egoism from the real Self is a major operation, demanding the utmost skill and insight into the deepest caverns of consciousness; an operation to be performed by a spiritual Master who knows not only how to disintegrate the false personality, but at the same time how to release the true Self.

Perhaps there are only a few in any age whose intensity

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of spirit compels them to seek that final annihilation of the ego which shall make them conscious of their own God-hood. But for these few, we have the Master's word that when a soul is ready for such a step, wherever the individual may be, whatever his circumstances, the means are provided for him to make contact with a Perfect Master in the flesh. So definite is Baba on this point, that He says God himself would take on temporary embodiment in order to give Liberation to the soul which has earned it. Whenever the yearning of the soul for God reaches its climax, God finds a way to satisfy its need.

One outstanding example of this, known to many Western devotees of the spiritual life, is the story of St. Francis of Assisi. According to Baba the vision of the Seraph and the conferring of the Stigmata was St. Francis' initiation into the final phase of the spiritual path--God-realization; and, because no Master was in flesh in that part of the world at that time, Christ himself took form of the Seraph and drew his beloved servant across the great divide which separates the finite from the infinite; the human from the divine.

CHAPTER IV

DEATH

In FEBRUARY 1926, Baba received word of the sudden death of his elder brother Jamshed. Baba immediately called the *Mandali* together and had the telegram read to them. Only a few days before, Jamshed had been moving among them normally and cheerfully. He was a favorite with all the disciples and his sudden passing distressed them. Baba, however, undisturbed by the news, spoke of it in a most matter of fact way. When he asked the disciples if they felt grief, they all replied in the affirmative. Baba then used the occasion to point out the falsity of their attitude.

“But,” persisted one of them, “was he not your brother? And is he not dead?”

“He was indeed my brother, but only his body is dead. *He* is resting within myself.”

“How,” asked another of the group, “are we to know that?”

“By believing one who knows the secrets of life and death,” Baba admonished.

In reply to other questions from the disciples, the Master pointed out that death is common to all. “It is a necessary step in the progression of the soul, which merely changes into a new abode. Thus death means nothing more than changing your coat. Death may be compared to sleep, but the difference between death and sleep is that after death one wakes up again in a new body. People do not go into hysterics because a loved one goes to sleep, for the simple reason that they know the sleeping one will awaken again. The same attitude should prevail in regard to death. Death is but a longer sleep, with the so-called dead one waking up sooner or later in a new body.

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“Yet, what are the expressions we hear from the friends and relatives after a soul gives up its earth body, ‘My beloved father is dead!’ ‘Where is *my* sweetheart?’ ‘My provider has been taken!’ In spite of a great display of grief and pain in the house of death, is not the uppermost thought the ‘my’ and ‘mine’, rather than the welfare of the one who has gone?”

“Every day I see hundreds of thousands of my brothers dying, without feeling distressed by it. Why should my brother in the flesh be an exception? Death is an unavoidable fact of life, and to weep over it is either madness or selfishness. Unfortunately Jamshed is not really dead! If he were dead in the *true* sense--dead to all consciousness of *separate* existence--then you should rejoice, since that would mean he *truly lives*, because he would then be conscious of being one with God. Though I move about among you, playing with you, eating with you, doing all that a so-called living man does, I am really dead! I am living in the true sense, because in the true sense I am dead. Die, all of you, in that real sense, so that you may live eternally!”

The Master would have his disciples ‘die daily’ like St. Paul, so that with him they might say: “For me to *live* is Christ! Nevertheless, not *I* live, but Christ liveth in me.”

That Baba lifts the whole of life--and death--into the realm of spiritual beauty has been brought to my attention through an account just received from India of a ceremony commemorating the passing of some Indian men disciples. At the bottom of the Hill at Meherabad a small grave was dug and in it was placed the remains of Massa--Baba’s beloved old uncle, who had just died. Chanji’s death and burial having occurred in Kashmir, his bedding roll was lowered into the grave. Then, as the disciple Adi read a message from Baba, the Master, looking particularly radiant and beautiful, dropped rose after rose into the grave, as the names of Chanji, Massa and other deceased disciples were read aloud. My correspondent writes that it was the only funeral ceremony which she had ever attended in which death was robbed of all its sting. Sadness was replaced by joy which they all felt as they remembered those who had lived and died in the Master’s service.

For many of the disciples, in the early days, Jamshed's passing was their first experience of the death of a loved one and it accordingly stimulated in them many questions which Baba elucidated for them:

“In sound sleep there is consciousness but no ego, while in the state of death there is consciousness plus ego. After the death of the physical body, the soul remains, together with the limited ego, the mind and the subtle body. Only the outer garment has been left behind. From one to three days the subtle retains its connection with the gross body in a threadlike link, but never longer than that.” Baba further explained:

There are four main conditions of existence after the final severance with the gross body: 1. Upwards—2. Immediate reincarnation-3. Heaven or Hell— 4. Downwards.

1. *Upwards:*

Only the spiritually advanced beings go upwards-- that is, beyond and above the lunar sphere. There they stay until such time as they can reincarnate upon earth, since *perfection can only be realized in the gross human form*. During the interim, however, such advanced beings can and do utilize the bodies of earth beings to work out a certain type of *samskaras*.

2. *Immediate reincarnation:*

Those whose good and bad *samskaras* almost balance each other, but are not exactly equal—because if they were, such souls would at once attain to God-realization—reincarnate immediately on earth in human form.

3. (a) *Heaven:*

The person who has accumulated a large portion of good *samskaras*, and few bad ones, experiences through the subtle body the state called Paradise or Heaven. Here the capacity for enjoyment is increased tenfold,

and the sensitivity to suffering as the result of the few bad *Samskaras* is proportionately diminished. In other words, in this condition there is practically no suffering at all, but only enjoyment until all good *samskaras* are spent. However, the *impressions* of these *samskaras* remain and ultimately impel the soul to take another body on earth.

3. (b) *Hell*:

One who has contracted many bad *samskaras* during his earth life, experiences after death the state called Hell, wherein the susceptibility to suffering is increased tenfold and the capacity for enjoyment is proportionately diminished. In the hell state there is only suffering, until all those *samskaras* which induced this state are exhausted. The impressions remaining compel the soul to re-birth in a body.

4. *Downwards*:

Those who have acquired extremely bad *samskaras*, resulting from deeds like murder for lust, or greed, after death go downwards, into the region of animal spirits, to await a suitable gross form for earthly life.

The condition of one who arrives at death through suicide requires special explanation. Such a one goes neither upwards or downwards, neither does he immediately reincarnate, nor pass into Heaven or Hell. Such spirits remain suspended, closer to the earth plane, inasmuch as no entry is possible for them in any of the aforementioned states. Their condition is pitiable in the extreme, because they too feel the pull of their *samskaras*, but unlike those on earth, they have no gross body in which to fulfill their desires. These are the ones which in common parlance we call ghosts or disembodied spirits. It is these spirits whom mediums sometimes contact, and they prove a source of harm as well as good. Sometimes such a spirit tries to possess a human body with which it feels an affinity due to similarity of *samskaras*.

If, for example, a person who is otherwise eligible

for the Heaven state, commits suicide, he remains suspended near the earth plane, and if he comes in contact with a human being does him no harm. But if one who, through his bad *samskaras*, was eligible for Hell, dies before time, then he may become a source of harm and pain to those whom he contacts. The relatively good spirits, however, usually seek redress through Yogis, or they seek to serve a Perfect Master in the darkness of night. Yet, owing to the karmic law, it takes many cycles for such suspended spirits to have the chance of reincarnating again in human form, through the aid of the Master. The evil spirits run as far away as possible from a Perfect One. Both good and bad suspended spirits can sometimes work out their *samskaras* through a human being, if they can find one with similar *samskaras*, and suitable past karmic connections. However, the ignorant victims of such 'possession' by a suspended spirit may suffer physically and materially, though spiritually they are benefited to the extent of dispensing with three or four incarnations.

TRAINING-SCHOOL FOR SAINTS

By April, 1927, the recently opened School at Meherabad, with ten Indian boys of various castes, was under way, and in July, with the advent of fourteen boys from Persia, a special Persian section was added. The usual secular education was given to the boys by accredited teachers, who served without pay, while Baba instilled into their minds great spiritual truths. This instruction, which to an outsider might have seemed far beyond the boys' depth, was evidently understood intuitively by them, because by the end of November the divine spark which Baba had been implanting in their hearts, burst into a flame of supernal love which spread throughout the school.

In January, 1928, one Mohammedan boy of fifteen, now known as *Chota* (little) Baba, entered into the super-conscious state and remained unconscious of his body for four days. Concerning his experience, he writes:

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“One night, after delivering a spiritual--scientific discourse, the Master said to me, ‘Child, have faith and try your best; I will make gold out of you.’ These words of my beloved Master produced a great impression on my mind, quite out of proportion to what one might expect. They were surcharged with spiritual force and they made me very restless. A great spiritual longing took possession of me, and every waking moment I said to myself, ‘When will this dust of myself turn into gold?’ A great revolution was effected in me. Both boys and disciples wondered at my changed condition. I myself wondered at it. I could not sleep soundly, all relish for any kind of food vanished. Then, one day in the month of December, while partaking of dinner, I felt a great sensation in my body, from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet. Tears rolled down my cheeks and I could not refrain from crying out loud. Everything around me seemed to whirl and vanish. My blood became extremely hot and heat pierced my body from the inside. Then I swooned. When I regained consciousness, I saw my beloved Master sitting near me. I could not help crying. He calmed me and gave me a cup of milk. I could not think of anything or anybody but him. I meditated upon him continuously. Even in school hours, when I was apparently reading, my heart was with my Beloved. Separation from him made me suffer intensely. I was contented only when I was with him. This feeling was divine love, a gift from the Master—the love of which Shams-e-Tabriz, the Sufi poet and mystic speaks: ‘When Shamsul Hake Tabriz opened the wings of Love, it made the Angel Gabriel run after Him.’

“One day, in January 1928, when the holy Master was imparting spiritual instruction to the boys and disciples, I began to feel that I was losing consciousness, and after blurting out, ‘Oh, Baba,’ I actually lost it. I became unconscious of everything but the divine form of the Master. On the fifth day my gross consciousness was restored to me, but with its restoration the Master’s divine form—which, it should be remembered, is not his *physical* body—did not vanish. Since then I see it in everything, in everybody, and

now enjoy ineffable bliss. Before I attained to my present sublime state I had often read and heard that this gross world is nothing but *Maya* (illusion). Now I see for myself that this is really true. God alone is Real. All else is unreal.”

MAGIC OF DIVINE LOVE

Other boys in lesser degrees experienced something of this same expansion of consciousness. One particularly arresting story is that of Ali, another Persian boy of fourteen. From the outset, Ali was deeply drawn to Baba and under his benign influence became one of the most ardent of the youthful devotees. But Ali’s father and uncle were not men of spiritual understanding. They easily succumbed to the rumors which were now rife concerning the school. It was whispered that the boys were being forced to adopt the Zoroastrian faith; that they were being detained at the school against their will; that the food was meager, and other equally groundless accusations.

Man is so prone to judge others in terms of his own limitations and to see only the surface circumstances or action. To look beneath appearances to the underlying *motive* requires a degree of spiritual maturity which few seem to possess. Man, in condemning a Christ because he associates with harlots and wine-bibbers, reveals his own impure state of mind. He cannot imagine how one might choose to make friends with such people and yet remain untainted by their shortcomings. Only when we are, in a measure, approaching closer to the Christ stature can we comprehend the infinite compassion and pure love which inspires such a One to fulfill his mission to humanity in the way he deems best, regardless of man’s petty-mindedness.

But Ali’s father quite evidently had not reached that status, for when he saw the profound influence which Baba had upon his son, he immediately suspected something sinister, and feared he would lose him to this strange and unpredictable Master, who, some of his friends assured him, was a black magician! So, he withdrew Ali from the school and returned with him to Bombay, a three-hour train journey from Meherabad. But the magic of divine love was more

potent than a father's fear. Ali escaped from his home where he had been kept under strict guard, and made his way back to his beloved Master. But only for a few hours was he permitted to enjoy his re-union with Baba. The father again appeared and Ali was once more made a prisoner in his own home. But again he escaped, undergoing severe hardship and trial as he worked his way back to Meherabad. Four times he escaped and four times was he forced to return to his home, until finally the father became convinced that Baba's influence was not only potent but beneficent.

This boy, Ali, was one of the disciples who came with Baba on his first visit to America. By that time he was about eighteen, a dynamic spirit full of spontaneous humor and play, yet with fine dignity and poise, and utterly devoted to his Master. In more recent years Baba has pushed Ali far away from any outer dependence upon him or contact with him; showing how, in the process of spiritual training, he requires his disciples to rely solely upon their inner contact with him.

ANOTHER SAGA OF A CHILD'S LOVE

Ahmed Muhammed, a little boy of ten, was another whose love for Baba manifested itself in a most dramatic way. He was removed from the school at the same time as Ali. Though by every means his parents and relatives tried to reconcile him to the separation from Baba, the little chap continued to yearn for his beloved Master to such a degree that after four months of living at home he suddenly determined to make his way back to Meherabad. Without bedding roll, food or money he started on foot for his destination. He managed to sell three silver buttons in his shirt for three *annas* (about eight cents), a few of which he paid out for a short train journey, which would take him quickly out of range of his family or friends. Then he proceeded to tramp across the country in the scorching Indian sun. By the time he had walked about fourteen miles, it was night fall and he found himself out in the open country. Muscle-weary, he climbed up into a large tree, which he thought would be safer than the ground; there he tried to rest

stretched out on some broad limbs. But since the Indian nights are cool in winter, and he was without covering, his sleep was very fitful. At dawn, he resumed his journey.

Having only two *annas* left, he knew his breakfast must be slim, so he satisfied himself with a few cold biscuits and a handful of water. At a village, an inn-keeper took pity on the bedraggled little boy and offered to secure transportation for him in on of the passing motor buses. But Ahmed feared he might encounter someone who knew him and who would report having seen him to his family; so he refused the offer and continued his way on foot. At noon he spent another few coins for some sweets, and rested a little while under the shade of a tree.

As he was hiking along the road, a European motorist gave him a lift to Poona, which considerably shortened his journey. His evening meal consisted of a handful of nuts for which he spent his last money. That night he tried first to sleep on a bench beside the public road, but the cold winds sent shivers through his poorly protected body. Later he curled up in the corner of a building and managed to doze a little.

The next morning, being in the neighborhood of Babajan, his Master's Master, Ahmed stopped off to pay his respects to her. She appeared to be sleeping with her head under a shawl when the boy reached her; so he tiptoed softly and when within a few feet from her, he bowed reverently before her prostrate form. At that moment Babajan's beautiful snow-white head emerged from its covering, and peering directly at Ahmed, gave him a look of melting love, which sent a thrill of delight through the little fellow's being.

Feeling recharged by the contact with her loving presence, he proceeded on his journey. At noon an old man offered him some bread and chutney which the boy gladly accepted, as this was the first substantial food he had eaten in forty eight hours. That night, upon the old man's advice, Ahmed took shelter in the village mosque, but since it was cold, he slept but little.

The next day he subsisted on the fruit and leaves of the tamarind trees which grew along the road. After walking

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sixteen miles he felt exhausted from both fatigue and hunger, so he rested a short while. Then with sheer force of will he hiked for another six miles, until he reached a railway station. Here he tried again to rest, but the fire of hunger now raged within him so fiercely that he was driven to beg for food. He approached a Mohammedan who led him to the railway station restaurant and ordered rice and curry for him. But the boy, thinking the curry would contain meat—the eating of which would have violated Baba's order—said he preferred only tea and bread. Later, his hunger somewhat appeased and his body relaxed, he fell into a sound sleep on the station bench, until an officious policeman awakened him and drove him away from the station. The remainder of the night he passed under a staircase. Here he was comforted by his Master's presence in a dream.

The following day he walked from dawn to sundown without food and little rest. At another railway station an old lady on the platform shared with him an unsolicited meal. That night he ventured again to take refuge in a railway station and this time was undisturbed.

On the sixth day he started his journey at daybreak. This time he fed himself on *jawari* plants in the passing fields, eating as he walked, for now he knew himself to be within a short distance from his goal—Meherabad. Once more he begged, not for food, but for flowers to be given as an offering to his Master. This was Baba's neighborhood, where he is held in great reverence by the country-folk. In response to the boy's request, a gardener eagerly presented him with an armful of roses. Sitting by the road, the child used some of the flowers to weave a crown for the King of his heart. A little while later a haggard and hollow-eyed little fellow was placing his offerings upon his Master's head.

Thus was a completed another saga of a child's love for Baba, the Master. We in the West, who know so pitifully little of higher states of consciousness, may think we have disposed of such a phenomenon as the magnetic drawing of these children to Baba, when we apply to it the psycho-logical term of 'fixation.' Even if we granted this, what have

we explained? What do we actually know of the tremendous motivation which must inspire a child to undergo such severe hardships and suffering? Certainly no merely human desire, however intense, would induce small boy to forego sleep and food for six days, while compelling his body to undergo the rigorous ordeal of walking fourteen to twenty miles a day. In spite of any possible prejudices such incidents compel the admission that Baba is certainly no ordinary man, to be measured by the usual intellectual yardstick.

While in India, I met a number of these 'school' boys, now grown into manhood and wholly dedicated to their Master's service. For the sake of those who quite sincerely may think that such spiritual upheaval as Baba caused in these young lives might be disastrous in the later effect, I can say with equal sincerity that I have never met men more normal or finely balanced, mentally and emotionally.

The impressions of a European disciple, Mr. C. Leik, who lived at Meherashram during these days, illumine this phase of Baba's work:

"The Master's love knows no bounds. One must see him among his Ashram boys to understand the tie of affinity which exists between Baba and his pupils. How touching it is to watch these urchins crowd around him when he is in their dormitory! They rush from their beds to embrace him, placing their tiny arms around his waist, while Baba, playing with them, teasing them gently, fills their hearts with childish glee."

TURNING WESTWARD

In March, 1928, Baba laid his first cable to the West, when he sent his disciple, Rustom Irani, to England, for the ostensible purpose of bringing back some English boys for his school. But Rustom found little response in England to the idea of English boys attending a school in India, conducted by a 'native.' Even less were the authorities interested in the spiritual aspect of the school which Rustom described to them. He did his best, but this phase of his mission was destined for failure. A cable from Baba ordered

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him to return. It was a dismal six weeks' visit, made additionally trying by the fact that Rustom had been directed by Baba to eat only bread, butter and tea while in the West. This diet in a cold, wet spring in England, especially for one accustomed to the tropics, must have been anything but heart-warming!

But the darkest hour of Rustom's disappointment was high-lighted for him by one experience of singular significance. He received one day a peculiar letter, postmarked Portsmouth, in which the writer, Mr. X* acknowledged the receipt of Rustom's message requesting an interview. Not only had Rustom not sent him a message; he had never heard of the man. He concluded that it was a mistake in delivery and got in touch with all the Iranis in London, but none of them claimed the message as theirs. Curious, Rustom felt impelled to travel to Portsmouth to the given address. Mrs. X met him at the door and said that her husband was expecting him.

When the formalities of introduction were over the man dimmed the light in the room and began to talk as though he were receiving messages on a wireless set, although nothing of the sort was visible. In a low and impressive voice he informed his astonished visitor:

"I see the Master. It is two o'clock in the morning in India." Then he described exactly the Master's hut near the Ashram. "Other Eastern Masters of his plane," he concluded, "are not easily accessible. They don't care to be disturbed at such an hour. But he is of a very loving nature. I have just told him that the authorities will not allow the boys to be taken to India. But the Master replies that there is no power on earth that can stand in the way of his work. He does not, however, really want these boys. He wanted to lay the first spiritual cable between the East and the West. Up to now, the East has been under the supervision of Eastern Masters; and the West by Western Masters. He now wants to merge these divisions; and that is the real reason why he sent you here. You are carrying, without

* (Mr. X requested that his identity remain undisclosed)

your being aware of it, a sort of wireless connection, and it affects all those whom you meet.”

RETIREMENT AT TIGER VALLEY

In January, 1929, about a year and a half after its inception, the first steps were taken for the disbanding of the school phase of Meherashram, and in April of that year Baba journeyed with a few of his *Mandali* to Panchgani – a hill resort about 200 miles from Bombay. While there Baba decided to go into retirement and directed some of the disciples, together with paid laborers, to dig a cave fifteen feet deep, on a hilltop in Tiger Valley, near Panchgani.

This valley, as the name suggests, is infested with tigers and leopards. The latter may often be seen crossing fields and public roads, even in Panchgani itself. One evening some people saw a leopard following the same track which one of Baba’s men had taken but a few minutes before. No mishap occurred however; the disciple only heard of it later from the townspeople. The only protection which the *Mandali* had against these marauders at night was a bamboo stick, which Baba told them all to keep near by, and a hurricane lamp which they kept outside their huts. The door of the hut occupied by the disciple on duty, was kept slightly open a few inches, in order to enable him to see any person or animal approaching their locality. In such a circumstance, anyone on duty was instructed to alarm the others by striking the kerosene lamp with bamboo stick. The disciples relate that this did not seem to them a very adequate safeguard from fierce, nocturnal prowlers!

Thus passed an anxious fortnight for the *Mandali*, when suddenly, one night at eight o’clock, Baba called his men together and told them he must leave immediately, because his particular work had been accomplished.

The fasting and seclusion which Baba had been observing at Tiger Valley continued for three months at Meherabad. Concerning this periodic fasting, Baba said that when a Perfect Master fasts, it is tantamount to all peo-

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ple of the world fasting, because he is in them all; and it effects spiritual benefits for the whole of mankind.

WESTERN DISCIPLES AT TIGER VALLEY

To this cave, which he had blest with his presence, Baba sent two of his Indian men--Behramji, for twenty-one days on a severe fast of water only, and Pleader, who had for some time been fasting and observing silence. Then, some years later, when the Western group were with Baba in Nasik, he sent Garrett Fort--our dear friend from Hollywood--to stay in the cave for two nights. This episode was not without its humorous side. Chanji, Baba's secretary at that time, was appointed to accompany Garry to the cave and lock him in for the night. Garrett heard soft padding of feet all around the cave and sometimes from the distance, other sounds which he was sure must have emanated from striped and spotted throats! However, he felt fairly secure locked within the cave from which Chanji would release him in the morning. So he settled himself down for a night of repose. Then he heard strange scrapings and patterings in his nice secure cave!

He lighted his lantern and looked around. The place was infested with every specie of small animal life! Mice scampered merrily about; lizards played hide and seek; beetles crackled and buzzed; ants of all varieties, hues and magnitudes built their miniature worlds just at his feet; mosquitoes reminded him of his boyhood days in New Jersey, and roaches came closer to his fastidious person than they had ever before been permitted. He spent most of the night making a mental list of the sprays and powders which he would purchase the next day when he descended to the village below.

True to his resolution, he returned to the cave the next night armed with everything which the town afforded as a protection against the pests--powder guns, liquid sprays, citronella and incense. Again he was locked in the cave for the night. He lit his lantern and undid the packages. Then he looked around. There was no sign of even the tiniest ant! He sat on the roughly constructed cot and

watched as he quietly waited for the onslaught which he expected would shortly begin. But not a moving thing appeared. After meditating for a while, he inspected the cave again, and finding it as free from vermin as his immaculate home in Beverly Hills, he fell asleep. He was awakened in the morning by Chanji banging the door. Together they returned to Nasik. When told of this experience, Baba laughed heartily.

In contrast to this was the experience of the one Western woman, Elizabeth Patterson, who a few years later, while staying at Panchgani with Baba and his group, spent a night in the same cave. Earnestly, she had asked Baba if she might spend a night in the cave and he had promised her that she might, but that he would set the time. Some weeks elapsed, with no further mention of it by Baba, so Elizabeth reminded him of his promise. Smilingly he asked: "Do you wish to go now, or wait until the time is right?" A few days later Baba told her that the time had come for her to go to the cave, and he instructed her to remain for precisely twelve hours. Baba and the women disciples accompanied her to the cave and, at 6 p.m., exactly, Baba locked her in, handing her the key through the iron grating. She says that the last thing she remembered, before being left alone for the night, was Baba's hand extended through the iron bars, resting upon her head for a moment, as if in blessing. As the group disappeared around the bend of the road, profound stillness surrounded her. The fleeting thoughts which passed through her mind she controlled by applying instructions which Baba had given her. She was to concentrate throughout the night. Exactly at ten minutes before seven she lit her lantern, as Baba had ordered.

As she prepared to concentrate she heard heavy thuds, like steps approaching on the path, and she waited anxiously for something to appear. But the sound, though close, gradually diminished and she concluded that it was perhaps a cow or buffalo which had been grazing on the mountainside. Through the cave opening she could see four

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stars in the shape of a kite, resembling the Southern Cross, which stood out more brilliantly than the others.

Suddenly, a shock, like electricity, passed through her body from head to foot. It continued in waves of undulating currents and became so strong that two or three times it seemed to lift her, as though it were a 'rushing wind.' Then she felt herself swinging into space with a blanket swaying unevenly beneath her. She thought if only she could remain on it--as if on a magic carpet--she would be carried along safely, but she rocked so violently that she was impelled to call Baba's name. Immediately the rocking subsided. Later, when the projection into space ceased, she found herself with hands and arms crossed upon her chest. They were so numb that it was some time before she could move them.

Considerable time had seemingly elapsed when she heard the sound of voices which she recognized as those of her friends. They appeared inside the cave and called her that it was five o'clock, and that they had been sent to summon her. But she recalled Baba telling her not to leave the cave until six a.m. sharp. Wondering what she should do she decided to do what Baba himself had told her. At that moment he appeared gleaming in the entrance; brilliant light flooded the cave. Seemingly he answered her mental query: "Do as I said. Do not leave until six."

When she looked at her watch it was almost six o'clock. As she rose, preparing to leave the cave, daylight was faintly penetrating the iron bars. She felt refreshed and invigorated. On her return to their bungalow, she asked Baba if she had dreamed these experiences, to which he explained that she had been neither asleep nor awake but in a borderline state of consciousness. "You actually experienced those things physically. Later you would understand their full meaning."

In the succeeding months, following Baba's return to Meherabad from Tiger Valley, he visited a dozen or more places, fasting at times and occasionally in seclusion.

A child's dream highlights a trip which Baba and his disciples made at this time to Srinagar in Kashmir. The day of Baba's arrival in this beautiful city, the four-year old child of a boat--house keeper had told his father of an impressive dream he had had the night before. A man, whom the child thought to be God, had come to him and told him that he was coming to rent his father's boat--house. "Go find this God and bring him to our house," the little fellow implored his father. The man, however, went on about his business, paying no attention to the child's importuning.

Later in the day Baba and his party arrived in Srinagar and after looking over a number of boat--houses, he selected the one belonging to the father of this child. At that moment the little boy appeared and with unmistakable joy declared loudly to his astonished parent: "Father, this is the very God I saw in my dream!"

From Srinagar Baba took his group to Harwan at the foothills of the Himalayas. Here, in a hut especially built for him, he retired into seclusion for four days. This particular hill is of special interest, for it was here, Baba tells us, that the body of Jesus was buried, after having been brought from Palestine by his disciples Thaddeus and Bartholomew. Jesus, before the crucifixion, had given specific instructions to these disciples concerning the disposition of his physical body after he had given it up. Corroborating part of this story is the tradition that these two disciples were known to have been in India shortly after crucifixion.

Baba had told us that the body in which Jesus was seen after the Resurrection was his spiritual body and not the gross form as many people are inclined to believe. The spiritual body--Baba relates-- is not a ghostly, ephemeral form, but partakes of all the physical characteristics and whatever degree of density the Master chooses to give it.

THIRD TRIP TO PERSIA

In September of this year, Baba left with a group of twelve of his disciples on the third trip to Persia. As

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usual he travelled third class, sleeping on deck. Among the stewards, who were Goanese (Roman Catholics of Portuguese descent) was one who attended to Baba's going and coming from bath in second class, which had been arranged for him by a devotee. One day he asked the disciple who accompanied Baba: 'Who is this saintly person? Is he your living Christ?'

On board Baba's identity was not disclosed, and he saw no one outside of his own party, except a Mohammedan member of the engine room crew, who used to go daily to Baba and stand silently in worship before him for a few moments. On the last day of the voyage Baba gave him his handkerchief, which brought tears of joy to the man's eyes.

BABA PROCLAIMED IN PERSIA

This trip to Persia differed from the others in that Baba and his party received a very cordial welcome from rich and poor alike. Though his visit had not been advertised in advance, the news of his arrival spread like brush fire; with the result that all their shopping places he was greeted by throngs of worshippers which included some of the highest ranking government officials and military officers. These men declared themselves as believing that Baba's presence in their country was a symbol of its redemption, which could only be achieved through the agency of the Masters of Perfection. In their zeal, they wanted to arrange for their king, Reza Shah, to meet Baba and publicly proclaim him as their country's spiritual benefactor. This, however, Baba did not wish. One private reception was given in Yezd by a leading merchant of the city, but the townspeople soon got news of Baba's presence and crowded into the grounds by the thousands. A number of people narrowly escaped serious injury as the eager throng pushed their way toward Baba, that they might see and if possible touch him.

One significant incident occurred when an important leader of the Bahai sect arrived by airplane from Shiraz. His purpose in coming was to question Baba; but when he

saw the Master and felt his divine radiation, he prostrated himself at Baba's feet, crying, 'You are God!' As he rushed out through the crowd, he proclaimed: 'I have seen God!' In this recognition of Baba's spiritual status, he was revealing his own high development, since God can only be recognized by one in whom God is awakened. He was also exemplifying the teaching of the great Bahai Founders--to acknowledge God wherever one finds him.

Another evidence of the understanding with which Baba was greeted on this trip was given at Bam, where the Master and his disciples were resting for a few days. A man in military uniform, with several stripes on his chest asked permission to see the Master. At first he was told by one of Baba's men that no private interviews were being given. But the officer insisted that the 'Holy One' be informed that a beggar was outside, asking alms of him. When told this, Baba consented to see him. The officer marched in, but with his hands folded reverently across his chest. He first saluted the Master in military fashion, then he removed his sword and fell upon his knees, kissing Baba's proffered hand with reverence. When Baba asked who he was, he replied, "Your humble slave!" To Baba's repeated query he answered, "I am nothing in the presence of your Holiness." Then Baba explained that he wished to know his military rank. "A general," the man replied humbly. "To die in the service of one's country is great indeed, but to die in the service of God is greater," Baba told him. "Indeed, Holy Master, I understand," the man agreed, and implored Baba's grace in his search for God. Baba assured him of his help. The general then declared that though he belonged to Persian army, he believed that the salvation of his country lay not in its military strength, but in spiritual rebirth. He besought Baba's help on behalf of his unfortunate country and its ignorant people. "That is why you see me here," Baba assured him.

One more incident illumines his trip for us. In the street opposite to the house where Baba stayed while in Bam, was the 'seat' or headquarters of a Saint, or *Buzoorg*, as such a one is known in Persia. He was held in great

reverence by the local people and had a large following. The first evening when Baba appeared for a walk with his disciples, the Saint arose from his seat and paid his respects to Baba whom he seemed to know. Later, he told all those who approached him that there was in their midst the "Emperor of all Saints."

TESTING AND TEMPERING

The Persian trip was not, however, without the difficulties and trials usually attendant upon Baba's work. The negative forces of illusion, which many good people think it well to deny, Baba uses, even as he does the positive forces, to teach necessary lessons to his followers. To be *comfortable* is certainly not an objective which Baba fosters in his close associates. In fact, as one looks back over the years of contact with him, and hears and reads of the experience of his other devotees and disciples, one must admit that one object of training is to develop in us the capacity to endure hardship or pain cheerfully; to accept the dark side of life as *complementary* to the light, not as opposing it; to integrate it into one's conscious life and to raise it to a higher potential; to cultivate a kind of divine patience in bearing of tension, and in the overcoming of disappointment and unfulfilled desires. He sees and experiences life as a *whole*, and it is what he trains his disciples also to do. But it should not be thought that this is merely stoical training for grim endurance. The most severe hardships are shot through with shafts of redeeming light and compensating love. As the pilgrim advances, the opposites tend more and more to merge into a Whole, so that joy is seen to be but the other side of pain, and is only realized in its fullness as one's capacity to endure suffering deepens. No, following such a Master as Baba is not a comfortable experience! Of necessity the desire for comfort must be relinquished. This journey is an adventure for hardy souls who are fully prepared to endure the hardships of the pilgrimage with hearts courageous and true, because they know that the goal toward which they are being skillfully led by their Master is fair country of perfected consciousness in

which the individual becomes permanently aware of his true God-Self.

PERILS OF THE DESERT

Such hearts were those of Baba's group who accompanied him on the return trip through the Persian desert. The main outlets from Persia are by sea, but for a reason which later becomes apparent, Baba chose the land route and the frontier station of Duzdab, which involved great dangers and risks.

A private bus was chartered for the party and an expert mechanic engaged as the driver. Baba particularly stipulated that, for spiritual reasons, not a single package or piece of luggage other than theirs was to be carried on the bus. To this the driver agreed. But just before starting from Bam, when Baba sent one of his men to see that his instructions had been carried out, he discovered that the driver had tucked in underneath, two bags of almond shells. The driver made the excuse that they were very light. But Baba was displeased. The man had broken his promise. Baba said nothing to the man, however, and insisted that they start at once on their long journey. The disciples, knowing from long past experience that when an order of Baba's is disobeyed trouble ensues, were prepared for anything; and, true to form, difficulties were not long in developing.

The bus was practically new as were also the tires, but within an hour they had two punctures, to the utter amazement of the driver. Then suddenly something went askew with the radiator. Steam poured out through the cap, though water had just been poured in. Upon inspection there seemed to be no visible reason for the radiator to steam, and the driver became even more puzzled. Again he poured in water and off they started, but within a few minutes steam again seeped out through the cap. Completely baffled, the driver stopped and examined the motor. This time he discovered a crack at the bottom of the radiator through which the water was trickling out. Creeping along at a tortoise-pace, they reached the next oasis in

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safety. Here the driver worked all night trying to repair the damage, but in such an isolated desert village it was impossible to get the necessary materials for the job. For two more days he continued trying and finally with ingenuity he made a paste of powder and white of egg, which he spread over the crack. Repeatedly, as he worked, he was heard to mutter: “*Ya Allah* (Oh my God) I never had such an experience before!” But now, he was sure he had found the solution to the problem. He started the engine and all went well for a few minutes. Then the water began to ooze through the crack. In this moment of despair a sudden realization dawned upon him and he fled to the room of one of the disciples, crying: “Brother, I see now why all this has happened. I broke my promise to your Master, and this mishap is the result of my ignorance and folly! I feel ashamed to face him. Won’t you plead for me, please?”

The disciple understood and sympathized. The man was taken to Baba who forgave him with this admonition: “Never disregard the instruction of a Master. And never break your word to anyone.”

Baba then told him to return to Bam, to drive slowly, and to bring back another bus, immediately. With the leaking radiator, the trip seemed impossible to the driver, but Baba told him not to worry and assured him he would see that he reached his destination safely. It seemed like a hopeless undertaking to the man, but he accepted Baba’s encouragement and started back on the four-hour journey, which he made without further mishap. True to his promise he secured another bus, but he sent it back with another driver. He had evidently had enough discipline for the time being.

Through this experience of marking time in the scorching heat of a desert village, the *Mandali* learned to what length Baba would go, or subject his disciples, in order to teach one soul a necessary lesson.

With the new bus and driver they resumed their trip across the burning sands. Two of them were so ill they had to lie prone on the seats, while others were crammed in like sardines, unable to move for hours at a time. About

a hundred pieces of luggage of all sizes and shapes filled every corner. There were *kujas* (earthen water-pots) filled with water, which must be kept in upright positions. Upon these jars depended their water supply for the remainder of the trip. When the wheels of the bus stuck in the sand, they had to untie the heavy planks resting on the top of the bus and force them under the wheels of the truck. Sweating, tired and thirsty, after this strenuous work, they would squeeze themselves into the bus again. Their throats would be parched with thirst, yet, because their water supply was so limited, they could only moisten their lips. They had no idea when the ordeal would be over. But trusting in Baba, and knowing he was sharing this painful and hazardous adventure with them, they were confident he would bring them through in safety.

The driver warned them that it would be at least six days before they would reach their destination. He was tired and nervous, and complained of pains all over his body. He vowed he would not continue. But Baba, with loving encouragement pushed him on, and when it seemed he had missed the track in the sand, Baba would advise him which direction to take.

Much to the driver's amazement, they arrived at their destination in three days instead of the six he had predicted. He had been crossing this desert for years and even under the best conditions, with the lightest load, had never completed the journey in less than five days. Under adverse conditions-such as he considered the present trip to be- it often took ten to twelve days.

Six months later, when one these disciples was in the British Consulate in Bombay, arranging for the passport of another of Baba's Circle, he learned from the official there that Duzbad, the frontier station, was the only one through which Baba could possibly have passed without signing his signature to the visa. (it will be remembered that he had stopped writing some years before.) Through the main seaports he could never have passed without all the required red-tape. Now the disciples knew why he had

chosen out-of-the-way Duzbad and the difficult desert route, instead of the ocean route.

THE MASTER AND THE MAGDALENES

Upon his return from Persia Baba made Nasik his headquarters, radiating from there on continued journeys which included a trip to the Himalayas and another to Persia. While in that country he visited one of the sacred places of pilgrimage to which people from all parts of Persia journey to pay tribute to Imam-one of the twelve disciples of the prophet Mohammed. One day while there, Baba and three of his disciples were followed by two women. When they arrived at their quarters Baba asked the women to come in. He then removed the covering which he wore over his head as a disguise, and bade the women-whom he recognized to be prostitutes-to sit near him while he talked lovingly to them of spiritual things and advised them to give up their way of life. He gently touched their faces with his hand, as he poured upon them the radiance of his divine love. The women, feeling deeply stirred by the profound purity of The Master's presence, wept bitterly and promised they would never again pollute the bodies which his redeeming hand had blessed.

Baba, even as Jesus was, is beyond sex-as he is beyond all opposites-though he uses the principle underlying it for his cosmic game. His teaching states that the whole created universe is the product of the law of magnetism-attraction and repulsion. If his skill in using this law is as great in cosmic spheres as it is in the field of training disciples-and I have no doubt that it is-it must be vast indeed.

Once, when asked by a London reporter if he were married, he smiled and replied that for him sex did not exist. Perhaps this accounts in part for his freedom from complications with the sex-ridden women who hound the footsteps of most spiritual teachers. Though I have seen many of this type approach Baba, it seems as though in his presence a transmutation of lower desires instantly takes place.

He explained to us once in India: "My mind is like the ocean-all the good and bad in the universe are drowned

in it. If you think good thoughts I absorb them; if you think bad ones, I absorb them too. If filth gets into the water of a small pool, it pollutes it, but if the filth flows into the ocean it is absorbed by it and is no longer filth. Your limited minds become stagnant with a few bad thoughts, but even universal bad thoughts cannot affect my ocean-like mind.

DIVINE DETACHMENT

Just as Baba is unaffected by the evil in the world which expresses itself in lustful thoughts or actions, so is he unperturbed by it when it takes the form of slander against himself. He knows that all spiritual work is strengthened by opposition. “The fun of the game lies in meeting resistance-facing and transcending it.”

Baba’s attitude toward the spoken or written defamations directed against him is one of bored indifference. “I consider all who are not God-realized as mad and pay no attention to what they do or say about me or my work, favorable or otherwise,” he once told us when we were discussing a book which had just been published, in which the author had displayed his negative projection against Baba.

“People who speak ill of me should not be condemned. They, too, are *unconsciously* serving my work, because they often think of me.” From Baba’s detached viewpoint this resistance intensifies the spiritual current of his work.

That Baba is an enigma which puzzles the rational mind is a fact substantiated by all of his closest associates. It is not, therefore, surprising that those who judge others in terms of their limited perceptions should project upon Baba their own limitations. All of us who are close to the Master have confessed our inability to understand many of his methods. But it seems wholly immature to *condemn* what one does not understand. The ill-founded criticisms which have sometimes been leveled against Baba serve as boomerangs against the critics. In the words of Frank LaFarge, the celebrated painter: “No man judges a work of art. It judges him.”

It is Baba’s function to stir up the unconscious forces

in man-dark as well as light-and if for a time the negative forces seem to predominate in an individual, he will inevitably project them upon the Master. Some people-particularly his own countrymen-are outraged because he does not fit their preconceived pattern of a Master. They forget that a Master does not follow patterns: he breaks them.

TRUE SEEKER OF GOD

In contrast to such critics was the reaction of Mr. C. Leik, upon whom Baba made a quite a different impression, no doubt due to the fact that he came as a humble devotee seeking God, not as one over-burdened by prejudice and opinion. He had left Europe with Swami Vivekananda's famous *Song of the Sannyasin* ringing in his heart and inspiring him with the high ideals of discipleship which it proclaimed. But after an year in the modern Ashram in the Himalayas, he discovered how great is often the discrepancy between the ideals of the Master and the practice of those who follow after him. Orthodox external observances were strictly adhered to, but the *spirit* of the true renunciation was missing.

He had been a spiritual disciple of the late Shri Ramakrishna, another Perfect Master of the last century, and was inwardly directed by him to leave the Himalayan Retreat and go to the Master Baba. When his companions heard of his decision they tried their utmost to dissuade him. He would, they assured him, be hypnotized by Baba and paraded by him as a European convert to further his 'propaganda.' At first he would be full of enthusiasm, but soon this would dwindle. Consequently, he was somewhat bewildered when he arrived at Meherabad in October, 1928.

"But how utterly different I found Meher Baba and his Ashram to be!" he wrote. "The Master is a personification of the highest spirituality and love; and the atmosphere of Meherashram reflects the deep peace and radiance of my beloved Master, Baba, as he is affectionately called by the devotees. There is nothing about him of the awe-inspiring solemnity that is attributed to the occult hierarchy. That

love, which all my life I have craved, here I experience more and more as the days pass. One day Baba said he would help me by awakening in my heart the realization of his divine Presence, and later this happened. I became aware of the Self as the Self of all beings-and I know also that the One we call Baba has always been with me and will ever be, for all Eternity.” Then he added: “Truly it has been said that it takes a saint to recognize a saint, a Christ to recognize a Christ. Only those fortunate ones who have this grace given to them by the Master can know his true greatness and realize *who* he really is.”

CONTRARY TO REASON

To average Westerners-even to those somewhat spiritually conditioned-the irrational methods which a Perfect Master uses often constitute a stumbling block to their acceptance of him. In the record of the life of Jesus as it has come down to us the daily intimate details of that perfect life are denied us. We have only the main facts of his activities and the essentials of his teachings which was, moreover, largely for the masses. How the disciples themselves were trained, what they were intimately taught, has been given to us only in fragments. For this reason we apt to think of Jesus as conforming more to a rational standard of perfection. But in this, I believe, we are in error. Like Baba, like other Perfect Masters of whom I have heard or read, he, too, must often have bewildered the rational minds of his followers, even as today the deeper aspects of his spiritual teachings bewilder the average Christian; for instance, when he tells them to take no thought for morrow as to what they shall wear or eat. Do not most of the interpreters of his words try to explain that way? For the average man of body consciousness, bound hand and foot to the material world, this is an impossible command. “Lovely poetry, but wholly impractical,” we say and relegate it to a realm of fantasy.

To illustrate the fact that a Master functions on a plane far beyond three-dimensional consciousness, even beyond man-made ethics or morals-though in the highest sense vir-

tuous, because he is never motivated by self-interest-Baba once related to his Western group the following story:

“If you read the life of Krishna (a Perfect Master of ancient days) you will find that he often said, did, and ordered things to be done which seemed wholly contrary to common sense. He used to tell one thing to one person and contradictory things to another person; sometimes he would give conflicting orders to different people at the same time. Krishna used to bluff, lie and do all sorts of queer things, but solely for the upliftment of humanity. He was perfect and one in consciousness with God; so he found himself in everything and in everyone. Knowing the many diversified needs of man, he used different methods for different people.

“Similarly, I use illusion to draw my disciples out of illusion. The West does not properly understand this as the East does. When there is no self-interest and no selfish motive, but only the intention of liberating others, whatever one may do, will not bind him with egoistic chains, or the others whom he would help. I have to use infinite means for my infinite work. So whenever I tell you to do something, however unusual, you may be sure it is always for your highest good.”

Later, illustrating the importance of obedience on the part of the disciple, as well as the supra-rational way the Master often functions, Baba recounted a startling example of it:

“Once, the Master of Hafiz-the great Persian mystic-ordered one of his disciples to go home and kill the child. Hafiz was present and heard the order and began to wonder about it. But the man to whom the order was given simply thought that there must be some good reason for the Master’s order, so he went home at once and killed the child, and brought the body to his Master. All the while Hafiz was thinking and wondering about this strange order, as were also other disciples, but no one said anything. Then the Master told Hafiz to bury the child, and bury it deep. Hafiz did as he was ordered, and after burying it deep, in accordance with the Persian custom he lit a candle and placed it over the grave. As he looked at the flame of the

candle he heard saying: 'I have been benefited;' then to his astonishment he saw the form of a child rise out of the candle flame. As Hafiz in amazement he then saw millions of child forms rising out of the candle flame. He was greatly puzzled. As he returned to his Master, wherever he looked he saw the forms of children. When Hafiz returned to the waiting group, the Master now told the child's father to go and bring back the child whom he would find at *home*. The man, again without hesitation, without even wondering how the child could be home when he knew that he had killed it and that Hafiz had buried it, went off at once, in compliance with the Master's order. When he reached his home, there he found his child walking around the house, quite well and happy and he brought him to the Master, as instructed."

Though an extreme example of the methods a Master may use in order to show his disciples the illusory nature of this phenomenal world, it illustrates the unquestioning faith which a disciple should have for his Master, and how utterly detached and obedient he is expected to be.

A comparable story of this same kind of implicit obedience is, of course, the Old Testament account of God's command to Abraham to offer his favorite son Issac to him in sacrifice.

In less drastic but none the less effective ways we have seen how the Master, Baba, exacted from these early disciples the same quality of unquestioning obedience; and we have also seen how he used the circumstances of daily life to teach them to rise above egoistic tendencies into lives of selfless, loving usefulness. Life, he had told them in the early days, would not be a summer holiday; nor has it been. Yet, great have been the compensations for the trials they have had to undergo; and today-after many years-we find the great majority of the early ones still loving and serving the Master with all their hearts, minds and souls; completely dedicated to his will and work.

We are told by one of the early Indian disciples, Dr. Ghani, that Baba proved to be an uncompromising task-master and strict disciplinarian, and that his methods follow-

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no spiritual pattern previously known to man. Yet, to his super-human tact and forbearance, his compassion and unfailing love, Dr. Ghani pays full-hearted tribute. He also records that, though impossible to describe in detail, the inner transformation-the colossal reclamation of which the disciples are now subjectively aware-is an acknowledged fact with all of them.

CHAPTER V

JOURNEY TO THE WEST

IN THE EARLY DAYS of the Bombay Ashram, in 1922, Baba had foretold many of the world happenings in which we have been engulfed, as well as his own particular destiny in relation to them.

“War will break out again,” he predicted, “and it will be the worst holocaust the world has ever seen. Almost all the nations of the world will be drawn into it either militarily or economically.” Later he added: “My public manifestation will synchronize with the fag-end of this war which is coming. Both of my Masters will give up their bodies before my outer work begins. I shall travel extensively and my spiritual work will necessitate my going to the Western world.

This prediction-his journey to the Western world-was now about to be fulfilled. On September first, 1931, Baba sailed for England with three disciples. Another prophecy of Baba’s made nine years before, had been that he and Gandhi would meet on the board on his first trip to the West. Accordingly, when Baba’s party had been aboard but a short time, they discovered that Gandhi was also a passenger. Later, one of the Gandhi’s disciples relayed the message that his Master would like very much to meet Baba. So it was arranged that he should go to Baba’s cabin, where they talked of spiritual matters. During the voyage they met three or four times.

While in London, many people came to see Baba and many reporters wrote sensational copy for their papers. But the important meetings were with those men and women who were destined to become his first Western disciples. Margaret Craske, who had danced with the Diaghileff Ballet and later had her own dancing school in London,

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gives her first impression of Baba, who, she writes, was to become the center of her life:

“He was standing at the foot of the steps leading to the front door, dressed in a thin white gown, a short furry coat and a pink turban; and he was looking at the house very quietly. He passed in through the door and gave me a smile in passing.... A little later I went in to see him. I was very nervous and did not know how to address him, but as soon as I entered the room I was completely won over by the love which seemed to permeate his whole personality. He spelt out on the alphabet board: ‘It was your love that brought me,’ meaning, I suppose, that he came to the West in response to the longing of those like myself who had heard of him and greatly desired to meet him. Of the four days which I spent in Devonshire with him and the group, it is difficult to write. The whole time was invested with a dream-like quality of pure love, timelessness and great beauty. It was as if the curtain had been drawn aside and we were privileged to know and feel from our hearts who Baba is. I have not experienced anything quite like it since. We have passed through trials and tests which have deepened our faith in Baba and our love for him, but nothing since has quite equalled the exquisite beauty of those four days.”

One of the first Englishman to become devoted to Baba was Quentin Tod, a gifted actor-comedian, whose spontaneous humor is ever a delight to the Master. He says that prior to his meeting with Baba he felt most unworthy, utterly unprepared and rather shaken, as though he were about to undergo a major operation. But at last the awaited moment came and he found himself in the same room with Baba who was seated, cross-legged, on a bed near the window. There were several other people in the room including one woman who was sitting opposite to Baba, crying softly.

“I only vaguely noticed them,” Quentin admitted. “I was so engrossed in looking at this wonderful man for the first time that everything else faded away. What impressed

me most was his rather wild quality, as of something untamed, and his truly remarkable eyes. He smiled, and motioned me to sit beside him. He took my hand and from time to time patted my shoulder. We sat for several minutes in silence and I was aware of a great feeling of love and peace emanating from him; also a curious feeling of recognition came to me, as if I had found a long lost friend.

“Then Baba took my left hand and some sort of wave of strength passed to me to from him. It was as if an electric current of pure love were turned on, which filled me with ecstasy. I began to breath deeply as if taking an anesthetic. Looking back on this experience, I am convinced that Baba meant me to feel his power. It was as if I had been baptized by him for his future work. The feeling in me was that I must serve him in some way. There were many things I should have liked to ask him, but all questions seemed irrelevant and inadequate. Later I felt that many of them were answered without words. My reaction to Baba was instantaneous and I recognized him for what he is -a great Prophet and Teacher.”

Another who met Baba at this time was Delia De Leon, an actress who gives her first impressions upon meeting Baba:

“I was stunned with the wonder and beauty of him. I had seen his face before in my dreams; the eyes were startling in their beauty; the face seemed of luminous honey color, framed by a halo of long dark hair. His hands were most noticeable; they were strong, slim and sensitive....During the week of his stay in London I saw him every day. Time and place seemed not to exist. Everyone and everything faded from my mind except Baba. He alone seemed real-the Perfect Human Being. Compared to him everyone seemed like a shadow. He drew me irresistibly; his love melted me, and his humor and charm attracted me. His silence was more potent than words....When I looked at the people passing me in the street, I thought, ‘Baba is in the world and they do not it. How strange that this should be happening to me.’ From that moment I gave my

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life into his keeping and I knew that my spiritual search was at an end.”

Also among the early English disciples were Will and Mary Backett who were later to go to India to be with Baba. Of her first meeting with him, Mary says that she felt a great upliftment of consciousness such as she had never experienced with anyone before. “He gave me more, far more, in the space of three minutes, than I had gained in thirty years of earnest seeking, because I actually experienced that definite gift of grace and divine love that he bestowed, whereas others could only talk about it.”

These are but a few impressions of the many people who felt the wonder and beauty of Baba’s presence during those crowded weeks in England.

LIKE THE BUDDHA

Questions propounded by new comers Baba will sometimes consent to answer, but like the Buddha he dislikes his disciples to ply him with questions. The reason for this is easy to understand. It is Baba’s function to help the disciple to *still* the conscious mind, not to stimulate it by intellectual cogitations. Also, like Buddha, Baba rarely replies with a direct affirmative or negative to a question. Factual knowledge, so dear to the intellectual mind, must give place to the higher wisdom, which can seldom reply ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to a fundamental life question. But when Baba does consent to reply to questions his answers are penetrating and concise. The following questions were asked him by James Douglas of the Sunday Express of London, and appeared in that paper on April 10, 1932. Mr. Douglas states that he had prepared a questionnaire with the help of Sir Denison Ross, the Oriental scholar.

“It was designed to trap the teacher, but he smilingly threaded his way through it without stumbling. His mastery of dialectic is consummate. It was quite Socratic in its ease. He frequently put questions to me which startled me by their penetration. But he never evaded a direct question.” The following are a few of the questions which were asked during the interview:

- Q. Are you divine?
 A. I am one with God. I live in Him, like Buddha, like Jesus, like Krishna. They knew Him as I know Him. All men can know Him.
 Q. Have you solved the problem of evil?
 A. There is no evil. There are only degrees of good.
 Q. What is your secret?
 A. The elimination of the ego.
 Q. Do you believe in Buddha and the eight-fold path?
 A. All religion is an ascent by stages to perfect union with God.
 Q. What religion is nearest to yours?
 A. All religions are revelations of one God.
 Q. Is God a person or Power?
 A. God is both personal and impersonal. He is in art, in literature, in science, in everything.

Of the scores of interviews which Baba gave while he was in London, the following are but a few examples of his spiritual technique with new comers:

One woman-the daughter of a clergyman-confessed to Baba her lack of belief in him. She wished she might share the belief which others had regarding him.

“But why?” Baba asked. “Since what you really want is *within* yourself, you will find it only there. My part is to help you find it, whether you believe in me or not. I will help you even if don’t want my help. When the sun is high in the heavens you feel its warmth, whether you wish to or not.” (In regard to his intimate disciples, belief in him is, of course, essential, inasmuch as a perfect rapport must exist between Master and disciple, in order to facilitate the training for channelship.)

Another woman asked him how she could develop the realization of the divine within her soul.

“True spirituality can be attained,” Baba explained, “not by the intellect, but by heart and feeling-by *inner* experience. I might explain for hours, but that would be as nothing compared to one second of my internal help. Do one thing. Every night, just before retiring, think for a

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moment: 'The infinite God is within me, and I am part of the infinite.' This will strengthen your inner contact with me."

To a man-a psychologist-who came to see him, Baba said: "Wonderful soul! You do not need an explanation in words. You understand that it is *feeling* that matters, not words. You will do great work for humanity."

Another man asked Baba if certain person, who claimed to be a leading Master, had the right to such a claim, to which Baba replied that everyone has apparently the right to call himself whatever he likes. "It is for others to accept or challenge it. The real test is not what he teaches, but what he lives."

Someone asked him why, if he were the Christ, did everyone not accept him. To this Baba replied:

"It is the human form which I must take that stands in the way of their recognition. Jesus was not acknowledged in his time, even by some of his own intimate and immediate companions, such as Judas. Though none of you understand me externally in my physical form, I am *within* you-within everybody-as the Real, Infinite Christ."

At the expiration of his stay in England, Baba made a flying visit to Constantinople and Milan. Then he sailed for America, on his first visit, where he blessed the lives of many of us, as related at the beginning of this story.

THE FUN BEGINS

The months in between Baba's first and second visits to America were, on the whole, happy and busy ones, preparing for his anticipated return visit in the spring. Before leaving in December, 1931, he had made certain stipulations which necessitated our raising a specific sum of money to further the establishment of Retreats in Persia and India. Our difficulty in raising this sum was due to not solely to the apathy of most people toward Ashrams in the Orient. The members of the small committee which was formed for the purpose found it extraordinarily difficult to co-ordinate their ideas and work them out harmoniously.

The divine coordinator, now being removed, the old egoistic desires began to re-manifest themselves. We had

been given a foretaste of the heavenly Kingdom, but now we had to begin the work of integrating the higher consciousness into our daily lives; and being far removed from sainthood we encountered many snags in ourselves and in others. Malcolm had been given the task of preparing the American public for Baba's return visit and imminent public manifestation; while I was placed in charge of the house, which our friend was continuing to lend us as a spiritual Retreat. No doubt to provide the 'tension' which Baba uses so dramatically and effectively, he had privately told Malcolm and me that we were his 'chief agents' in America, and therefore in charge of his work. What he had told the others we never knew! But now, with more experience of Baba's unique methods, I would allow for the possibility that he might have told others the same tale—that *they* were 'in charge.' Certainly the difficulty we encountered when we tried to take any initiative on the committee would suggest such a probability! So we left the work of the 'committee' to those in the city, while we concentrated on our particular roles at the suburban Retreat.

Before leaving, Baba had outlined for me the schedule for our daily life there, stipulating certain times for meditation and specifying rules, by which all those who lived in the house were to abide. Living with us were a mother and her daughter. The mother, according to Baba's instructions, was to help me with household duties, while the daughter was to assist Malcolm with his work of preparing the American public for Baba's return visit. It all seemed so simple and clear, with nothing arduous for any—so I thought! But on returning home from saying farewell to Baba I ran right into my first snag! My helper greeted me practically at the front door with an impressive note book in which she had written out her objections to all the duties which Baba had outlined for her, and to which she had agreed. After listening in bewilderment while she 'objected' herself out of all her household tasks, I turned inwardly to Baba, imploring his help. Like a flash came the thought: 'ask her what she really wants of life.' This I did, with the most astonishing result. She ceased at once her muddled

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thinking, gathered together her inner forces of concentration, and replied that she really wanted to serve her highest Self. So on that basis we finally arrived at a harmonious and cooperative agreement in which she carried out Baba's directions. The first hurdle had been won! There were many others, not always so easily scaled, and in many of them my part was very imperfectly fulfilled.

It was an invaluable experience, though, and from it I learned at least one priceless lesson. If one has a leading part to play in any group activity and things for which one is responsible are not working out as well as they should, it is wise to ask oneself wherein one has failed before placing blame on others, however obviously they may seem at fault.

Finally the great day of Baba's second arrival in America neared. We had been told that on this trip he would stay a long time-perhaps a year or more. We were elated! Also word had been relayed to us that accommodation would have to be provided for hundreds of visitors, many of whom would be from out-of-town and would require sleeping accommodation. So my ever-active mind got busy with its planning! Since we had plenty of unoccupied land all about us I envisioned a tent-colony which we would erect. The purchase of the tents we postponed until Baba's arrival, but I set immediately to work to improvise some tent furniture-dressing tables, shelves, seats-out of wooden fruit boxes. Painted and decorated, they looked very gay and attractive; but to my knowledge they were never used! When Baba arrived, he stayed three days in New York at a friend's house, and exactly two nights at the Harmon Retreat, before leaving for the West Coast! Thus are his disciples trained in fluidity.

WE JOURNEY TO HOLLYWOOD

Fortunately for us Malcolm and I were included in the party that traveled to California. Baba said at that time that wherever he went in America we were to go with him. Malcolm had done well his job of preparing the American public for Baba's return. His arrival in New York made

splashy headlines in all the important news papers throughout the country. Not yet inured to Baba's shock technique, we secretly deplored, with many others, I am sure, the methods which a modern world teacher must employ if he wishes to stir the imagination and wonder-yes, even the opposition-of the masses. Ever since then we have been hearing repercussions of this fan-fare by really sincere people who assure us that true teachers from the Orient don't do such things! And generally speaking, they are right. Baba just happens to be the notable exception, who cuts through all precedents and prejudices. From the day he landed-when dozens of reporters interviewed and photographed him and his party-throughout the five-day journey across the country, at every stop, he sacrificed himself graciously for the press. All the papers in the country proclaimed the Silent Messiah. On the whole the accounts were remarkably favorable to him-as if in spite of themselves the reporters had felt something of his spiritual radiation. But knowing so little of the nature of a God-realized Master, we in the Western world are very prone to laugh at such a claim; and of course some of the news-reports did just this.

Many of us who winced at what seemed to us to be very vulgar publicity-wholly out of keeping with the sublime character of the Master we loved and revered-thought wistfully of how different it must have been in Jesus' day: a gathering under the shade of an olive tree, hearts awakened, souls quickened and then the glad news spread by word of mouth, with the gatherings growing gradually larger, until one day the five thousand were fed spiritual food on a verdant hillside in Judea-a different rhythm, of course, for a different age. Yet, if we had lived in those days, might we not have heard the same criticism leveled against Jesus, as now we encounter with Baba? Was he not stepping out the usual sedate character of the Jewish Rabbi? Was he not stirring up the rabble and defying on all sides the traditional concept of how a religious teacher should behave? I do not see how it could be otherwise. Such a One always comes to free man from his antiquated notions and tribal values. Of necessity he must especially uproot man's reli-

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gious prejudices, shatter his crystallized viewpoints, even if it means making himself appear ridiculous or a trifle mad.

THE FUN CONTINUES

Since Baba wastes no opportunity for eliminating his disciples' egos, it was quite in order that the long train trip should provide him with many occasions for a rendering this not always appreciated service! Playing one person against another is one of Baba's favorite and most effective techniques for compelling the parties concerned to face their shortcomings and 'Shadows.' On this journey he pitted Malcolm against the Englishman, Meredith Starr. Both would be asked to put into literary form Baba's message to Hollywood. Then Baba would accept Malcolm's version, praising it highly, while the other man, who prided himself on his writing ability and priority of place in Baba's group, would writhe and squirm! The result was that by the time we arrived in Hollywood both Malcolm and I were *persona non grata* with Meredith Starr and his wife. Yet, it was assigned to share a room with her at a hotel! Her husband had told us all that she was a Saint. In certain respects, I think she was!

All of us who have had the privilege of being close to Baba have found that his treatment of us falls into two distinct phases. In the beginning, in varying degrees, we are courted and some are even pampered, until he knows the moment has come to turn on the reverse current. Then starts in earnest the real work of uprooting those egoistic tendencies which obscure the true Self. In this period-according to individual need-he often says and does things which puzzle and perhaps outrage us. Like a master surgeon, once he begins the operation he keeps resolutely at it, regardless of how the patient rebels, until all the cankerous ego-growth is eliminated.

This particular man, Starr, should have had enough experience of Baba's methods-he had been with him in India for almost a year-to realize the nature of the therapeutic treatment to which Baba was subjecting him. But unfortunately his self-interest blinded him. The result was that

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in subsequent months he turned against the Master whom he had formerly lauded from the house-tops. No doubt his vociferous praise of Baba contained in it the seed of his denial. When Baba returned to India he was greeted with a cable from Meredith Starr in which he demanded from Baba five hundred pounds and God-realization! Starr's alternative was to declare Baba a fraud, which later he did. When Baba received this unique ultimatum he laughed heartily.

AT HOME AMONG THE STARS

In Hollywood Baba met hundreds of people in private interviews and a thousand or more at a public reception which was held at the Hoolywood-Knickerbocker Hotel. It was my privilege to stand at his right side and introduce the guests as they came down the receiving line to his position in the center. I say 'privilege' advisedly, because though few of the hundreds who passed before him that night seemed even dimly to apprehend anything of his spiritual magnitude, the act of speaking his name over and over again for an hour or more produced in me a great feeling of ecstasy. I felt as though I were somehow sharing in the Master's work of sowing divine seeds. Some of them, no doubt, fell on barren soil, but others must have taken root, some day to blossom and bear fruit, for the spiritual feeding of the world.

Much of Baba's important work while in Hollywood was with motion-picture luminaries. He was laying his first cables in that sphere of life which, he assures us, will some day produce a wholly new type of motion picture. On all of his succeeding visits to the West, much of his time was given to this same kind of activity, until he finally found those with whom he knew he could trust the motion-picture phase of his work.

One evening, while we were in Hollywood, we went with Baba to Pickfair, where a large dinner party had been in progress. Here Baba—whose choice of abode is a tiny hut on a barren hillside in India—sat in the midst of Pickfair's luxurious appointments as though he had been born

and bred in such an atmosphere. Amidst the tinsel stars he shone like a resplendent planet, completely at ease—wholly unconcerned with the curious stares of the dinner guests, seated against a background of flowers this Bright Messenger, whose x-ray eyes penetrate the most skillfully conceived mask, poured forth his radiance upon this cross-section of ultra-modern and ultra-complex humanity. On a couch opposite sat Cary Grant, receiving with utmost boredom the sincere homage of Baba's handsome young brother, Adi; an interesting contrast between worldly sophistication and child-like simplicity; between ennui and joy.

TESTED AND TRIED

Before going to California, Baba had told us he would break his silence there in July, and that this event would be the signal for the spiritual quickening which he had been predicting for so many years. We were naturally anticipating this moment keenly, because we—as among those close to him—would share in this quickening in a very profound way. This, Baba had told us at the time of his first visit. Yet Malcolm and I had confessed to each other privately how utterly inadequate we felt to participate in such a momentous upheaval in consciousness. We knew how ill prepared we were to take our places as co-workers with a living Christ. Of course we also knew that in a 'twinkling of an eye' one could be changed completely. Yet we were deeply aware that the spiritual basis of our lives needed to be greatly intensified before the 'eye' might 'twinkle.'

Nevertheless Baba had definitely declared that he would speak in July and that humanity would experience a great expansion of consciousness. We gladly believed him—perhaps because we wanted to be relieved of the necessity of further conscious growth—but we were not greatly surprised when he told us there would be a slight postponement. He must first make a hurried trip to China, he told us, and would then return to break his silence in Hollywood Bowl, with Mary Pickford to introduce him! How any of us could have given credence to this fantastic story I cannot now imagine! Certainly it revealed what babes in consciou-

ness we then were. Only too willing were we to be lifted up to Heaven by the boot-straps without further delay! One day, in India, years later, Baba laughed as he recalled the picture to us: “Fancy your believing that story—that I would break my silence over the radio in Hollywood Bowl!”

But believe it then we did, and ardently anticipated his return from China. Before leaving with his party Baba had instructed Malcolm and me to go to San Francisco and prepare the ground for his return. Through contacts which we had from our bookshop days we got in touch with various ‘key’ people, who arranged for us to speak about Baba and tell of his imminent return and the breaking of his silence.

On precisely the evening when we were to attend the largest of these gatherings in Piedmont word arrived from Baba that he was not returning to America, but was proceeding to India and Europe; nor would he break his silence at that time. This, frankly, was a very dark moment for us. Within a few hours we were expected to tell these new friends of Baba’s expected return to America; to describe the quickening effects upon consciousness which his speaking would initiate for mankind; to proclaim him as a supreme example of God-hood, worthy of the deepest trust and faith. But in our hearts dark doubts were refusing to be silenced. We did not then know, of course, that for many years he had been predicting the breaking of his silence, and for as many years postponing it. We felt like trustful children who had been cruelly deceived. Either he did not have the God-knowledge with which we had credited him, or he was another of the imposters who pose as advanced spiritual teachers. Either he was deluded or deluding, the rational mind argued and for a few hours held sway.

Now, in retrospect, it is difficult to recapture the agony of soul I went through. But, at that time, being a neophyte among Baba’s followers, I had not become accustomed to his sudden changes of plan when his inner work demanded it. Even today, after fifteen years of close association, I would not attempt to explain why he does and says certain things. Once, in Cannes, in discussing a letter which

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He had recently received, and in which the writer was bewailing the fact that Baba's promises were not materializing according to schedule, he indicated to me that everything he had promised would come true, "but in own time and in my own way."

I accept that, though it explains nothing to the rational mind. However, the demands of the reasoning mind matter less and less as the years pass, whereas the intuitions of the heart matter more and more. But during those dark hours in San Francisco the claims of reason were very strong. I felt myself insecure in a world where one's given word was so lightly regarded. Surely the word of a God-man must be sacred. So I reasoned. But as the hours passed I gained better perspective. I realized that though I could not understand his motive, I knew in my heart that nothing he did was ever prompted by the slightest shadow of self-interest; and that his consciousness so far transcended men-made ethics or conduct that his words or actions could not be judged by our conventional concepts of right or wrong. I recalled my 'mountain-top' experience of illumined consciousness; the God which had spoken to me then had a totally different set of values from man's—some of them strange indeed to the rational mind—yet I could not doubt the innate integrity of that Infinite Mind. In Baba I had found that same quality of transcendental purity and wisdom. Finally, I realized that though I could not comprehend his methods, my heart loved him for what I knew him essentially to *be*.

Out of deference to our hostess and the plans she had mad, we went to the party that night, but only the following day did we send out word of Baba's change of plans. Overnight, practically all of the newly-made friends became ardent enemies! The next day another cable arrived showing the inner contact which Baba had been maintaining with us:

"I knew you two would not fail me. Love, Baba."

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This unexpected change of plans placed us in an awkward position. The rebate on our return tickets to New

York, which was later sent to us by Quentin Tod, courier of our party, was delayed for many weeks. We had no income of our own and no close friends in California. Those former friends of Malcolm's with whom Baba had stayed in Hollywood had turned violently against us because of our association with a Master who didn't keep his word! The baggage we had left with them they forwarded to us with the message that they never wanted to see us again. This caused us more inconvenience than surprise or heart-break. One or two evenings after Baba's departure, while we were still in Hollywood, our host had manifested his spiritual astigmatism concerning Perfect Masters in general by declaring that Jesus had failed sadly in his mission, first by choosing such an unreliable band of disciples, and secondly by permitting himself to be crucified! Quite evidently he missed completely the significance of losing one's temporal life in order to save it for eternity; apparently he failed to understand in any degree the psychological as well as the spiritual implications of what obedience to God, 'even unto the death of the cross' means. Without his agony upon the Cross wherein would lie the redeeming momentum of his resurrection? How, but for his sublime example as the cosmic 'Way-Shower,' would we have the human blueprint whereby man can reach that same transcendent goal of union with the Father? Of course to accept the value of the Cross is to recognize the need and application of it in one's own life. To surrender all human ambitions, to admit one's spiritual poverty, to give up all self-will, is a large order for one who had set himself up as a teacher of the soul, which was our former friend's position at the time he met the Master.

Baba's cable was followed by a letter in which he asked us to hold ourselves in readiness to go wherever he might direct us, at a moment's notice. The prospect of being called-perhaps to join him-was certainly a most welcome one; but to find work which would also leave us free to pick up and leave, without notice, was another matter. Also, this was the year 1932, when America was feeling the peak of the financial depression. Jobs were not lying about on

street corners waiting to be picked up by strangers without reference or credentials. Had we known that it would be two and a half years before we would see Baba again, and four and a half years before the call would come to join him, we might have felt more free to map out a stable living program for ourselves. It is, however, just this not-knowing-in-advance—this living from day to day—which constitutes one of Baba's most effective techniques in training one in the Life of the Spirit.

We soon discovered that we were not as stranded as at first we thought. One or two of the new acquaintances proved to be real friends. One of these, Margaret Ledson, in whose boarding house we had been billeted when we first arrived in Oakland, had become deeply interested in Baba. Though we told her nothing of our private difficulties, she sensed our need and offered to let us remain in her house, rent free, for the summer, while her permanent boarders—school teachers—were away for their vacations. Her offer we gratefully accepted.

Our eating during these days was infrequent and ultra-natural—a couple of raw carrots apiece often constituted our dinner. Invariably, when we did not have even these, our friend would ask us to share her dinner. Toward the end of the summer, when our refund on our tickets was paid us, we were able to reimburse her a little, because by that time she too was under financial strain.

In September, when the teachers returned to claim their room, another new friend came to our rescue by offering us the use of her beautiful ranch in the Santa Cruz mountains. To help us with our food problem she left a standing order with her grocer to supply us with whatever we needed. For a month we revelled in the peace and beauty our mountain home. Malcolm helped the caretaker clear away the brush, while I kept the house in order. The week-ends usually brought to us our benefactor and other house-guests. But again we had to find new quarters. Winter was approaching and the house would have to be closed. We tried to find employment as caretakers at some of the

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neighboring ranches, but on inquiry learned that they too would be closed for the winter months.

On our walks about the country-side we had come across an Inn near our friend's ranch, so we offered our services to the proprietor for board and lodging. But she, too, needed no help in the cold months. She offered us, however, the use of one of her redwood cabins, which we gladly accepted. A few days later we moved in, with no other resources than the will to make of the experience a glad adventure.

We had been told by various neighbors that we were welcome to any of the fruits which lay on the ground, because none but hand-picked fruit, direct from the tree, is ever shipped to market. So for the next four months we literally lived on the 'fruits of the earth.' Malcolm would start out in the morning with a gunny-sack over his shoulder and return at noon, with apples, pears and prunes-the latter encrusted with a quarter inch of dirt which required many washings to remove, very symbolic, I used to think! Sometimes Malcolm would find nuts and luscious Malaga grapes, which we occasionally made into juice. If it became wine, we did not disdain it!

In the beginning we were very content with our simple life. The days were brilliant with early autumn sunshine, and nights were velvety and still. From the veranda of our bungalow we looked up through massive redwoods, fragrant eucalyptus and colorful madrone trees which shed so joyously their barks, to a jewelled or moonlit sky, wondering if 'tomorrow' would bring us the longed-for message from Baba to join him at once! The red-letter days were those in which the mail-box contained a letter with Indian stamp and post-mark, even though the hoped-for summons did not come. We learned to understand better the ideals of St. Francis, whose followers, in the early California days, had perhaps traversed many of the footpaths we took, feeling in their hearts the same love of Christ, living the same life of faith in a Divine Providence.

The Franciscan legend had long ago endeared itself to us, but now we read and re-read all that the Los Gatos

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public library could supply on this subject. Like the early Franciscans we had agreed between ourselves to ask no one for anything, but to accept with thanksgiving whatever the 'good God' provided.

Sometimes a friend would enclose a five-dollar bill in a letter. Then we would buy such luxuries as toilet paper, soap and matches, with an occasional bag of potatoes, our old standby the reliable carrot, and butter substitute, for we found that the exclusive diet of sweet fruits palled on us after awhile, particularly since it consisted largely of prunes! We had mashed prunes, stewed prunes, baked prunes, raw prunes—too many prunes for one who would never have chosen them for her mono-diet! Until cold weather overtook us, and with it, the rain, we managed very well in our primitive life. To be sure, poison oak attacked us virulently and somewhat disturbed our inner peace, while it made bathing an achievement worthy of a vaudeville contract!

With the winter weather arrived various complications—frozen pipes, a toilet long since grown discouraged, chilblains which almost drove us mad when we sat near our wood fire, but if we didn't we almost froze to death. The cabin, which had been built by Japanese architects, was just about as artistic and impractical in winter as their own cardboard houses in Japan are reputed to be. Large gaps between the logs permitted both cold and rain to seep in; and when the rains descended in torrents, and our large solid wooden front door had to be closed, we were in almost total darkness, the small casement windows up near the ceiling affording only the minimum of light.

Then, just about this time, I became ill and lay for weeks in a cold, damp, dark room, while outside the deluge raged ceaselessly. Malcolm, who had been born and bred in a New York City apartment, always with servants and family to wait upon him, had now to prepare the food, clean the house, wash our clothes and linens—by the awkward method of kneeling beside the bath-tub—and keep us supplied with firewood by the strenuous expedient of felling trees and cutting logs by hand. Because of his unfamiliarity with this type of work and his compulsion to be thorough, he worked

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slowly and often did not get to bed until one-thirty or two in the morning; at six he was up again.

Some of the bright spots of this particular period were the acts of kindness on the part of our neighbors. Apparently they sensed our financial predicament, for occasionally a knock would come at our door, and there would be a visitor with a basket of food—a delicious barley broth for the sick lady, waldorf salad, grape jelly and hot biscuits. Never did food taste so good!

CHALLENGE

Willing as we were to meet life on its own terms I realized after a few months that our unbalanced diet was playing havoc with my health. I was therefore relieved when word came from Baba to move down to Hollywood where Malcolm was to help Rustom - an Indian disciple who would shortly arrive there – to make contacts with some of the motion – picture people.

How to fulfill Baba's order was our problem , because we were still literally in a penniless condition. Some books of ours—stored in New York – listed at \$ 1400 we now agreed to sell to a bookshop owner for \$ 100. When her check arrived we left at once for the South. Owing to my weakened condition I was able to go only as far as Ojai, where I stayed for a month with friends. There in the sunshine and healing peace of that beautiful valley, strength returned.

Before going on to Hollywood the idea came to me that I could make neckties which Malcolm might sell. This kind of business possessed the double advantage of requiring almost no capital to initiate and it left us free to move about as Baba might direct. After finding two inexpensive rooms with a lovely view in the Hollywood hills, we bought a few yards of material and I proceeded to make up two dozen ties. Filling his brief case with them Malcolm set out valiantly to canvas office buildings. This was another new experience for him. Selling books in his own distinguished bookshop was quite a different matter from peddling ties in office buildings. He was sworn at and abused, even threatened with arrest! On the first day, up to five o'clock, he had not

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sold a single tie, though he had canvassed many office buildings and been thrown out of several. He stood on the corner of Hollywood Boulevard and Vine Street, and sent out a silent plea for help. He knew how the making of ties had taxed my small store of strength, and he could not bear to return that evening with none sold. Then he tried again, and at six-thirty he appeared home with two dollars and a half, the price of five ties. Such was the humble beginning of a business which a few years later supplied us with a yearly income fully adequate to all our needs.

In those early weeks, when the experience of being sworn at and ejected from buildings was new, Malcolm remarked that “only a Perfect Master could make the business of selling neckties a spiritual exercise!” -for, as he admitted, he knew of no better way to deflate the ego than the business of peddling.

I have related some of our experiences in more or less detail to show how, after meeting a Master like Baba, the forces of life contrive to temper and strengthen one in every conceivable way. Though our outer circumstances differed widely from those of the early Indian disciples, the same basic principles seem to have been at work. Our faith was tested and severely tried; our ingenuity in the face of apparently overwhelming difficulties was given opportunity for expression; resilience and fortitude were demanded of us; again and again disappointment has to be surmounted, particularly when some of our New York friends – who had met Baba through us – were called many times to join him and the English group in Europe! We did not begrudge them the joy of these visits, but to say that we did not yearn to be with him too, would be a vain pretense. Finally, when they all sailed for India without us, my heart almost broke! This longing to be with Baba can only be properly understood if one realizes the exquisite joy which his presence imparts.

ITALIAN HOLIDAY

When Baba left us in Hollywood in 1932, he stopped in Honolulu for three days, in China for five, and touched

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India only enroute to Europe again, where he arrived on July 28th for his third visit in less than a year. He was met at Marseilles by some of the English group. Later they travelled with him to Santa Margherita, where, under sunny Italian skies, they enjoyed a delightful holiday, bathing in the blue waters, lazing in the sun, and tramping through fragrant vineyards and forests. As always, Baba took advantage of the care-free holiday to achieve deep inner work with his Western disciples.

These days in Italy with Baba were especially happy ones. As the group set out for their morning swim before breakfast, they would see Baba's white-clad figure watching them from the balcony upon which his room opened. Often at night they would sit with him as they listened to records. Baba's favorites were Indian and Persian songs, the spiritual meaning of which he would explain to them. Spanish dance records and Paul Robeson's negro spirituals he also loved. Sometimes, on the terrace, they would act out charades or give dramatic entertainments, to which Baba always responded with loving appreciation, particularly to the comedy situations. Thus, in innumerable ways, would Baba enter into their lives as playmate, friend, child and father. Actually, he worked hard inwardly with them while playing outwardly. The tranquillity of the holiday was interspersed with sudden conflicts of temperament, of jealousies, or other dark moods. Many lessons were quietly and unobtrusively taught; many 'Shadows' were brought into the light of consciousness.

SPIRITUAL MEETING AT ASSISI

On the second day of their visit to Italy, Baba said that he had important spiritual work to perform at Assisi. A special cave connected with St. Francis would have to be found, and there he would fast for twenty-four hours. One of the Englishmen, Herbert, was asked to make the arrangements. Baba instructed him to find a cave which had been used by the Saint, but which was not accessible to tourists. This necessitated considerable searching on Herbert's part. He learned that the slope of Mt. Subasio had been the most

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avored by St. Francis and his companions for their meditations. The famous Carceri Cave was, of course, now enclosed and converted into a Shrine, but there were other caves off the beaten track of tourists in which Francis had no doubt meditated seven hundred years ago.

In exploring the locality, Herbert found a ruined shelter-an overhanging cave of rock on the side of a stone wall, but the roof timbers and tiles had long ago fallen down. Above, the gnarled roots of a tree clung to the rock, but there was no protection from the rain. Tall trees growing at a lower level hid it from passers-by. It was dirty, full of broken tiles, damp rubbish and leaves. Herbert had to excavate it, tear down branches to hide its entrance, and finally make a new path down the hillside so that no one could see Baba enter it.

Baba had directed him to meditate in the selected cave for four hours each day, to fast partially, and on the day preceding Baba's arrival to meditate for eight hours. He felt that the cave was far from ideal, but it was the best he could find.

On August the fifth, before his departure by car for Assisi, Baba called the group to sit silently in the room with him. He was not due to leave until midnight. He lay down for an hour, not asleep, because his hands continually made signs and motions in the air, as he does when he is communicating with his spiritual agents who are invisible to the ordinary eye. There was a potent stillness in the room. Baba had said previously that before he could do his work at Assisi one of two things would happen: either there would be a storm or he would be ill. He asked one of the group to draw nearer to him, as signs of his being in great pain increased. His sudden illness was so severe that he was unable to start at the time arranged. Two hours later, at two thirty in the morning, the party started. During the long drive Baba's pains decreased, but at La Spezia, Quentin Tod became ill, and at Pisa, Kaka an Indian disciple, was stricken. Apparently Baba's illness was being shared by them.

In the meantime at Assisi, Herbert, too, was feeling ill

and depressed. He stood at his hotel window, wondering and waiting. Finally Baba arrived three hours late. After the party refreshed themselves with baths and food, Baba outlined their program. They motored part of the way up the hill to save time. Herbert then led them down by the hidden path to the cave which they reached at seven thirty in the evening. Baba had told them he would stay there during the entire fast and no one was to go near him or to look inside the cave. At all costs the disciples were to keep intruders away. If Baba required anything to drink he would signal them and they would place it just outside the entrance. Chanji and Herbert were to sit outside and guard the cave all night until nine in the morning. Then Kaka and Quentin would relieve them. At four-thirty in the afternoon Chanji and Herbert were to return and at five-thirty, when Baba's fast and retirement were concluded, they were all to eat together.

Accordingly, at eight-forty Kaka and Quentin left the others and walked back to the hotel. Chanji and Herbert shivered in the cool of the night as they sat a short distance from the cave. Chanji related to how Eastern disciples had watched years before at the cave at Panchgani in India. Strange thoughts and questions passed through their minds : how little they "really understood the nature and extent of Baba's work. His body was there in the cave a few feet away but where was he ?" Sleep weighed heavily on their eyelids. Could they not "keep watch for this little while ?". They wondered if St.Francis were sharing in this vigil; no doubt his meditations ages ago had prepared this holy spot. They were so sleepy, so cold. About midnight they made a cup of tea on an alcohol stove and put it beside the cave in case Baba should want it. Gradually light filtered through the trees. At nine in the morning they were relieved by the other two and Chanji and Herbert walked back to the hotel to sleep.

At four-thirty in the afternoon they returned, carrying food with them. Baba came out when they arrived, his work having been accomplished sooner than expected. At five-thirty they all had a very happy meal, seated around

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a wooden plank on the ground. After the meal, Baba called them into the cave and explained some future plans. They felt awe-struck by the atmosphere of solemnity in the cave.

Baba, though happy that his work had been accomplished, was in great pain. The men had to support him during their descent from the mountain. With one on either side of him, they would run – all three together – down the steep path. It seemed as if the jolting and pressure against the earth helped to bring his consciousness back to his physical body. He looked somewhat dazed, as if he were suffering from a severe headache. Often he had to stop and rest. They passed by most of the places connected with the St. Francis legend. At the side of a road Baba pointed to a huge rock where, he said, St. Francis had once sat and wept the whole night through for love of Christ.

One of the day-time watchers recounts how they began their day in the village below by attending Mass in the crypt of the San Francesco. Afterwards they shouldered their rucksacks and toiled up the hill toward the cave. The woods were alive with birds, whose song was almost deafening, as though they were paying their tribute to the Saint who loved them so dearly. At mid-day, as they sat near the cave, one of the men heard sounds coming from inside, and, forgetting he was not to look, saw Baba through the leaves of the saplings which protected the entrance, standing with his eyes shut, facing the sun and making strange humming sounds.

Among the many things which Baba told his men about this ‘inner meeting,’ in which they had taken part, was that all the saints and Masters from the sixth and seventh planes of consciousness had met with him that night and mapped out the spiritual destiny of the world for the next two thousand years.

How such a thing is possible may be understood only if we recognize that the higher states of consciousness are not subject to the limitations of the physical body. The saint or Master knows the created universe to be the illusory product of mind, and therefore dissolvable by mind. He also knows that the physical body is but *one* of man’s bodies, the

densest and most confining, though essential for the Realization God; only in a physical body can we become aware of our union with God. This body is, however, unsuitable for the swift means of communication which saints and Masters often require for their work. For their frequent 'inner meetings' they use either the mental or spiritual body, and temporarily leave behind the physical body, as Baba did during our journey to Boston. There is a descriptive corroboration of these things in R.A.Nicholson's *Mystics of Islam*, in which he refers to a similar spiritual technique among the Mohammedan mystics – the Sufis:

“The saints form an invisible hierarchy, on which the order of the world is thought to depend. Its supreme head is entitled the *Qutb* (hub). He is the most eminent Sufi of his age, and presides over the meetings regularly held by this august parliament, whose members are not hampered in their attendance by the inconvenient fictions of time and space, but come together from all parts of the earth in the twinkling of an eye, traversing seas and mountains as easily as common mortals step across a road. . . The *Qutb* becomes the center of the spiritual universe, so that every point and limit reached by individual human beings is equally distant from his 'station,' whether they be near or far ; since all 'stations' revolve around him – and in relation to him – there is no difference between nearness and farness. To one who has gained this supreme position, knowledge – gnosis – and 'passing-away' (liberation) are as rivers of his ocean, where-by he replenishes whomsoever he will. He has the right to guide others to God, and seeks permission to do so from none but himself.”

A first-hand example of leaving the physical body at will, by consciously projecting the subtle body into space, is the experience which I had on the very night of Baba's 'meeting' in the cave at Assisi. Some months after this red-letter journey, I heard through a message from Chanji of Baba's meeting in the cave, and upon checking the date in my diary, found it coincided with my own initial excursion into space. Fully conscious, I shot out over the Pacific with the speed of light, and then over the continents of Asia and

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Europe, finally arriving at a hotel in Italy--though at the time I did not know outwardly of Baba's being there. My inner order was simply to go to the Master. Passing through walls and ceilings, I went directly to the rooms which I somehow knew were his. Familiar pieces of Indian luggage lay about the room, but Baba was not there. Then, obeying another inner impulsion, I left the Inn and traveled out through the ether to a beautiful countryside where instinctively I knew him to be. At this moment I lost consciousness and fell into deep sleep. But on awakening in the morning I recalled vividly the experience and felt the ecstasy of having been with Baba.

Toward the end of August Baba sailed with his Indian disciples for Egypt where he spent five days visiting the Pyramids and the Coptic church at Cairo. The latter was of particular interest to him because of a cave which it contained where, he informed the group, Joseph and Mary had stayed with the infant Jesus on their flight from Herod. They encountered difficulty with the custodian of the church, who at first refused to open the cave to them, but as this was the sole purpose of Baba's visit to Egypt, he persisted until he finally overcame the man's objections.

During the winter of 1932 and 1933 Baba sent some of his Eastern and Western disciples to travel through Germany, Austria, Italy and Hungary, while others were sent to China and America, Australia and New Zealand. He was apparently laying new 'cables' – new lines of spiritual force – throughout the world. He himself sailed for his fourth visit to Europe on November 21st, 1932.

MESSAGE TO INDIA

Shortly after embarking upon this voyage, he sent back to India the following message :

“It does not matter how much India suffers physically so long as its spiritual power and value are sustained. Moreover, the result of its present suffering will be freedom and great happiness, because it is only after experiencing bondage and misery that the true value of freedom and happiness is really appreciated.

“However, to shorten this suffering, there must be love for friend and foe alike. There must be goodwill, patience and forbearance toward all. Also, India should try to remedy its own defects instead of being concerned with the faults of others. The hatred between leading communities – their petty yet disastrous quarrels – must cease. Only then will the happiness and freedom of India be ensured.

“The whole world will soon realize, that neither cults, creeds, dogmas, religious ceremonies, nor material prosperity and physical pleasure will ever bring to man the happiness he craves. Only selfless love and universal brotherhood can do that.”

WHIRLWIND VISIT

Baba arrived in Venice for the second time on December 2nd, 1932, and after paying a flying visit to Milan and Paris, he reached London on December 6th. Here, as usual, he granted interviews to large numbers of people. On December 14th he left for Switzerland with a few of the English group and on the 17th he sailed from Genoa for Egypt again, where he remained until January 3rd, 1933. On this fourth Western trip he had stayed but one month, but much territory had been covered, many new contacts had been made.

On his way back to India he stopped off at Ceylon for eighteen days. While there he retired to the seclusion of a room in a Buddhist temple for twenty-four hours. Baba's men had difficulty at first with the novice of the temple, who insisted that they could not enter. With Baba leading them, they descended, however, into a small courtyard which adjoined the temple. At this moment a door opened and an old man, who looked as though he were at least a hundred, came out. He apparently recognized Baba instantly, and communicated with him by the strange sign language which Baba used with his spiritual agents. In a few minutes the reluctant novice was ordered to show Baba to a room in the temple where he remained undisturbed for twenty-four hours. On the 6th of February, 1933, he arrived at Nasik, India.

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The last week of March, 1933, a group of nine women – three of whom were from America – and one man boarded a liner at Genoa for India. Baba had given them the impression that they would remain with him for six months but suddenly his plans changed and after three weeks they found themselves on their way back to Europe.

Not for long, however, was this group to be separated from Baba. Two months after their departure, he sailed again for Europe where he arrived on June 24th, 1933. A lovely villa at Porto Fino, Italy, had been leased by the English group. Here amidst surroundings of great earthly beauty, Baba resumed his subtle but effective work of stirring up and eliminating the egocentric tendencies of his Western disciples. One incident particularly is characteristic of how Baba uses the happenings of daily life to draw out latent qualities – both good and bad.

HAZARDOUS ADVENTURE

After tea one afternoon, fifteen or sixteen of the group went with Baba for a walk along the cliffs. He took them down a rather dangerous ravine to the sea. A number lagged behind, despite Baba's repeated admonition to keep together. Several fell out by the wayside – their shoes, their clothing, or their nerves proving inadequate to slide down a steep incline on the last descent to the sea. By the time they reached the sea-washed shore only two men and two girls had kept pace with Baba.

Instead of returning the way they came, Baba elected to climb back another way. Nimble and light-footed as a deer, he made his way up the smooth rocky surface while behind the four tried to keep up with him. At particularly difficult places Baba would stop to help the women with his gentle but strong hands. By this time they all sensed that the dangerous adventure might have symbolic significance so they went forward with renewed confidence in Baba as their guide.

But suddenly they found themselves stuck! Above them was a sheer surface of rock and thin trees while to their right was a precipice that fell almost perpendicularly from

a great height into the sea. They searched for the main path, which they had hoped to rejoin, not realizing that it was more than one hundred and fifty feet above them. One of the men, Herbert, crept around corners, climbed up stone cliffs, hung on to the roots of bushes, his heart pounding like a piston. He half expected that a miracle would happen or that Baba would suddenly find a simple way out. Thirty minutes or more passed as he tried futilely to find the main path. He spied a very steep cleft that seemed to have been used as a rubbish dump. But it proved very insecure footing for him and fifteen feet up it was blocked by a very large boulder, too smooth to provide either foothold or gripping for the hand. Yet it was apparently the only possible way out.

Baba, wiry and sure-footed, climbed ahead, scattering a little earth behind him. He clapped his hands as a signal for them to follow and then disappeared from view. Herbert followed, but got stranded on the smooth boulder for some anxious minutes, while the two women and the other man were waiting tensely below. Above was a very steep gully, perhaps forty feet deep, filled with loose earth, rusty bits of metal, and broken glass; a foot moved meant the descent, on the women below, of stones, possibly a small avalanche of rubbish. With a final wriggle Herbert got past the boulder. By hanging on to the roots of bushes he could crouch on the loose earth but could not move up the remaining forty feet. Baba had completely disappeared. The youth who weighed but one hundred pounds or less, came next. With a slight hand-grip from Herbert, he was safely past the boulder.

Baba's last signal had been "Come up." Herbert called to Vivian to follow on, but she too foundered on the boulder, with her strength slowly ebbing away. The others shouted to Baba for help, but they received no evident response. Had he left them in the lurch? Was it a symbolic test? Or had he relied on Herbert to see that the girls got through the difficult places safely? Herbert thought of all the heroic things he should but could not do. He himself was gradually slipping downwards. Any desperate move meant a

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torrent of earth in Vivian's face, just below him. She hung suspended there for ten to fifteen minutes, possibly longer. It seemed ages to her. Two fingers of her right hand clung to a small hole in the rock, her body rested against the boulder and her left knee was wedged in the rock at the side. She was no doubt fortunate in having trained her body in poise and balance through years of aesthetic dancing.

The majority of the group had by this time returned to the house. They were surprised that after two hours the others had not yet returned. Meanwhile Baba, who had left the gully, was mounting still higher up the cliff and clapping his hands to attract attention. But being a mile or more from the house no one there could hear him. Tino, however, an Italian boy who worked on the estate, had met a priest – or, so he seemed – who told him that someone was signaling for help. Tino then ran to Baba, who gave him signs to fetch a rope. He rushed back to the house kitchen. The three Indian men who were busy cooking the evening meal instantly left their pots and ran to Baba.

A loosening of Vivian's hold would have meant a fall of twenty feet on top of Anita, and then a roll or three hundred feet down into the sea. Herbert could just touch Vivian's hand, but was unable to exercise sufficient force, or to increase his reach, to draw her up, since his right hand had to cling to a bush. Strange thoughts passed through his mind as he pretended to Vivian that he was sure help was coming. She was very plucky, but nearly exhausted, and called every now and then, "Baba, Baba!" At length shouts were heard from the top.

Pendu -one of the Indians – appeared with long ropes and a rescue party. Baba, quite evidently pleased at the scent of danger, came down the gully. Even he found it extremely difficult to keep his footing on this loose earth. Herbert bent down a long-stemmed bush and held its root-end firmly with his right hand, while Baba's right hand held the other end of the stem. Then Herbert leaned down to pull Vivian up over the boulder with his left hand.

Pendu, who was very muscular and agile, took the rope down to Anita, who was still standing below. By means of

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the rope they all climbed to safety, and their exciting adventure was over. Baba was as happy as a schoolboy at the outcome of the afternoon's crisis!

To celebrate the safe ending to the adventure Baba called the group together in the library, re-told the story for the benefit of those who had not participated in it, pointing out the dangers which had been successfully surmounted, and evidencing his happy satisfaction in their safe return. He said that he had done important work through this experience; that the energies released, the feelings aroused, and the courage displayed had been utilized by him for his spiritual work. The Italian servants who were present, knowing well the danger that had been involved in the adventure, wept with joy that no mishap had occurred.

In psychological terminology this adventure suggests an important step taken in consciousness perhaps by the four who participated in it, perhaps by four types or sections of humanity whom these men and women represented. With the help of the spiritual Guide, they made their descent to the realm of the Unconscious – the sea – in safety; but their return journey to balanced, integrated consciousness was fraught with hazards and danger spots. The Guide, being sure-footed and nimble – as the awakened higher consciousness always is – ascended quickly and easily to the safety of mother earth – the feminine principle of instinctive feeling and awareness. The others would doubtless have perished had their spiritual intuition – the Guide – not come to their rescue.

WAYFARING IN SPAIN

After a month at Porto Fino, Baba sailed for India, but within two months he was enroute again to Europe. During this trip most of his attention was concentrated upon Spain, where he visited Avila, the birthplace of St. Theresa and St. John of the Cross. During the twenty-four hours spent there the group fasted with Baba as an expression of love for the great souls who had made the town renowned. No one was permitted to touch Baba during this period, so swift was the spiritual current with which he was then charged.

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In Spain, as in all the countries he visits, Baba wished to contact the masses. In Madrid, where he went from Avila, he and the group tramped the streets all day until their aching feet rebelled. Baba chose particularly to stand in the central square *Puerta del sol* among the crowds. Sometimes as they walked through the thoroughfare – despite the fact that Baba wore European clothes and a Spanish beret which concealed his long hair and made him look quite normal – people would turn and stare at him as if drawn by something beyond their conscious mind. This, Baba explained to the group, was due to the powerful nature of the internal work he was then performing. Instinctively, the crowd must have felt it, because at other times he would attract no special attention. When we realize that this tour was made shortly before the outbreak of the Spanish war, it seems probable that the Master was stirring up the karmic forces in the unconscious of the Spanish people, which, with them as with all nations, must be expiated through suffering before the beneficial effects of redemption can be experienced.

One afternoon they climbed a high hill opposite Madrid. Here they sat around Baba beneath the shade of a large olive tree, while he spoke to them of the future and of the part they would play in his coming world-work. On this beautiful sunlit hill, as they sat circled about the Master, time seemed to roll away; the scene might have been in Palestine with Jesus, or in Brindaban with Krishna, or in the race's childhood, before man had learned to record for posterity the manifestation of Godhood in human form. The world all about them, so intent in its pursuit of false values, seemed unreal and dreamlike. Only this moment out of time, in the presence of one who dwells continually in eternity, was real – had meaning. Always, in fact, the rest of the phenomenal universe seems lost – and *well* lost – when one is in Baba's transcendent presence.

The day they arrived in Barcelona a special delegate from Madrid was being greeted by the city officials. Baba was delighted to be among the vast throngs of people who gathered to watch the great procession of all the notables

of the district. This circumstance, which marked the seal of the new federal state, was highly important politically, and provided essential stage --setting for the subsequent upheaval in the Spanish government. This was but one of the many 'coincidences' which high-lighted their journeys through Europe with Baba. Frequently, at the moment of his arrival in a place, a parade or an important festival would be in full swing, giving him additional opportunity to achieve his magnetic contact-work with the masses. When man has lost his spiritual contact with the *Impersonal* God – as in this present day – then the Personal Aspect must not only take human form but use human contacts to re-charge the spiritual consciousness of mankind.

Another shrine, sanctified by the living devotion of a Christian saint, which Baba visited, was Montserrat, associated with the legend of the Holy Grail and St. Ignatius. While there he predicted that at a later time – whether in this life or another, only Baba knows – the group would return and live there with him for a while.

It must be apparent to any unbiased student of religious history that the Avatar – whose mission is universal – works not only for the benefit of the generation in which he takes form, but of necessity for the many generations to follow. The new momentum which he gives to the race consciousness cannot possibly find full expression until, in the course of time, the power and wisdom of that primary impulsion is thoroughly assimilated by man and integrated into its conscious life. Though we may not comprehend the full significance of Baba's visits to these shrines of outstanding Christian saints, we can see how a continuity of transcendent consciousness is maintained by recalling the spiritual attainments of these great souls and linking them to the new realizations which the Master brings. Seeds planted by Jesus may only *now* be coming to fruition; and a Theresa, St. Francis or Ignatius may have been the precursors of large groups of sainted human beings.

Saying farewell to Baba was especially poignant after the happy weeks the group had had with him. Two de-

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votes from Zurich were waiting for them when they arrived at Marseilles. So exceptional was the flow of love and power from Baba at this time that the new comers felt the ecstatic uplift of it for days afterward. At noon, just before sailing, the group gathered around Baba in his cabin. As always, at such moments, the atmosphere was pregnant with silence and heart-ache. The Divine Presence was withdrawing his physical body from them again, preparing them gradually for the ultimate withdrawal which would someday initiate the inner realization of union with his *Universal Self*. In contrast to their heavy hearts, outside on the dock, a light-hearted youth played a gay tune on a concertina. Even in the depths of sadness the sound of joy was heard.

LIGHTNING VISITS WESTWARD

Upon returning to India Baba moved his headquarters from Nasik to Meherabad. Here he remained practically in seclusion, seeing visitors for a few hours only one day a week. On the ninth of June, 1934, he sailed again for Europe on his seventh visit. After stopping in Paris for three days and in London for six, he traveled to Zurich. He spent one of his ten days here in seclusion on a mountaintop, with his group watching from a nearby peak. Suddenly a heavy rain-storm descended upon them, drenching them to the skin. As they looked over toward the mountain where Baba sat they were amazed to see him encircled in golden light, with no sign of rain touching his person.

He arrived in Bombay on August second, and in November of that year he left for his eighth visit to Europe. His arrival in London coincided with the wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Kent. The streets, of course, were crowded with light-hearted spectators and afforded Baba another opportunity to work with the masses as he drove past Buckingham Palace and through Hyde Park to the West End. On the fifth of December, 1934, he sailed for New York, his first visit to America since that memorable parting in the spring of 1932.

In the meantime, while our friends were being quickened by periodic contacts with the Master, Malcolm and I were struggling with the problem of physical existence – he, trying to build up a clientele for his tie-business; I, trying to achieve physical health. Dependence upon medicine and surgery I had long ago abandoned, but I was still trying the newer forms of electro-therapy and physical manipulation as well as every conceivable kind of diet. For a while I would experience some improvement, then would follow a relapse, which would lead me to a new method, a new doctor, a new ray of hope.

One of these diets necessitated my having freshly pressed vegetable juices every two hours from seven in the morning until nine at night. I was unable to prepare them, so Malcolm would arise at day-break, squeeze out my quota of juices for the day, get his own breakfast, wash himself and the dishes, and then start out with his bag of ties ! At night, on his return, he would prepare his dinner, clean the dishes and the rooms, and retire about midnight. It was not exactly a `holiday' for either of us !

I was well aware of the technique of spiritual healing, having at numerous times in my past life experienced the release of God-power by this means. But now I felt intuitively that my bodily pain and disorder were the by-product of a deeper spiritual cleansing. Having karmically incurred the violence of surgery, I had now to expiate in my body the results of that karma. For many years I had epitomized my spiritual life-ideal in the phrase “resurrection of the body.” In fact, one of the glimpses of Reality which had been vouchsafed me had revealed how the inner forces were even then at work, draining off the old life-blood to make way for the new, in order that the ideal of resurrection might some day be realized.

Then Baba came into my life, and for a number of years it seemed as though the `draining' part of the process would never cease. I finally understood, however – and it was corroborated later by Baba – that these years of illness

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and depletion were simply evidences in the physical body of the prophylactic measures which the spiritual forces were using to effect a true resurrection of the entire being – because freedom from pain does not necessarily betoken spiritual health. It may, on the contrary, signify spiritual stagnation.

It is entirely possible to use the `Law' to impress upon the Universal Mind whatever we may conceive to be right and proper for us; and certainly physical health would seem to be the birthright of every man. I still believe it is, but if we have come to the place in our evolution where we desire something *more* than mere physical well-being; if we really desire that the God-self should become the controlling center of our lives, then we must be willing to give up our mental concept of *how* our life-ideal shall be attained. The higher Law-the Law of Love-seems to require that we enter into the mind of Christ and with him say : “Father, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not *my* will, but *Thine* be done.”

This realization came to me most forcibly about a year after we arrived in Hollywood. I had reached what seemed to be the abyss of physical pain and weakness. My case was diagnosed as a complication of various things, which included cancer, tuberculosis and Brights' disease. We had no money for the expensive treatments which were recommended, nor did I feel inclined to give much credence either to the diagnosis or to the suggested remedies. I made the decision to give up all treatments except the one of contacting Baba inwardly and feeling his presence permeating me, through every nerve and cell. This brought me moments of great joy and peace, but I continued to grow weaker. Only with great effort could I raise my hand. I seemed to be losing hold of the body rapidly. Finally, in the midst of constant pain, I dropped off to sleep one night from sheer exhaustion. About four in the morning I awakened to the sense of pain again. I thought of Baba and inwardly talked to him about the situation. I told him I was content to stay in the body or give it up, as he might decree. Having completely abandoned myself to his will – the God – will in

me—I felt a deep sense of peace, in spite of the continual pain. Gradually dawn came, and with the first stirring of wind in the tree-tops a Holy Breath seemed to stir within me. I had the impression of great weight having been lifted from me; a valve of new life had opened within.

As the sun poured its first rays through the tree foliage, ecstasy poured through me, and for a couple of hours I basked in the radiance of this inner sunrise. I had not been able to move about the room for a month or more, but now I arose and walked into Malcolm's room. Sitting on the window-sill in the sun, I told him what had happened.

The healing brought not only physical strength and release from pain, but for many days I experienced that stillness of mind which I had known some years before, at a time of inner quickening. That it was the activity of Divine Love I had no doubt. This was verified some months later in a letter from Baba in which he said – referring to the healing:

“Every thing else may fail – Love never fails.”

This healing was not, however, the final one. There were still deeper layers of the unconscious to be activated and cleansed; a more complete abandonment of self-will and self-desire to be experienced. I was still far from that ultimate capitulation which must precede the resurrection into the life of Eternity. In proportion to the degree of my surrender, I had been released from the effects of my past actions and thoughts. A block of these age-old impressions had been wiped away through the grace of the Master. But there was still more house-cleaning to be done – more bonds to be broken. Like St. Paul, I had to continue to ‘die daily’ – without rebellion, without concern for the outcome.

The metaphysical viewpoint, which insists that physical health, material well-being and prosperity are the legitimate prerogatives of man, may be true if we consider the physical body and its desires as the paramount issue in life. If, however, we think of the body merely as an important *instrument* to be properly cared for, but not pampered; and the inner non-physical entity as the real Self, the true Life, then our focus of attention is turned away from preoccupa-

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tion with the body's desires to the yearnings of that inner Self. It *may* be God's will that the perfection of the inner Life manifests itself in a perfected body, but this becomes of secondary importance to the soul that seeks the supreme goal – union with God. Body – consciousness has no place in such Realization.

REUNION

Finally, after two and a half years of being ready to join Baba at a moment's notice, he came to us again in Hollywood and for three wonderful weeks we were recharged by his radiant presence. At this time I verified many of my intuitions concerning the experiences we had undergone. The constant disappointments, the broken promises, the long periods of his apparent unconcern with our problems were all for the purpose of testing our resilience; of developing in us the capacity to endure tension. Baba is the great destroyer of illusion, and if our illusions include erroneous ideas about himself, these, too, he relentlessly destroys.

If a disciple is to be of use to a Master, he must of course be firm as a rock, and at the same time be fluid as water. In Baba's words: "You must be able to face disappointment, criticism, negative forces, with perfect calm and inner poise. And you must submit yourself at all times to the will of God."

All that we had gone through, and had yet to experience, was part of the process which linked us closer to Him, the Divine Personality. Just as Jesus said: 'I am the Way,' and 'No man cometh to the Father except through me,' so today the Perfect Master Baba offers himself as the divine intermediary who shall unite our consciousness with the Soul of the universe.

CHAPTER VI

PASSAGE TO INDIA

ON JANUARY 18th, 1935, after a month's visit, Baba left Hollywood for India, to remain there this time for about two years. He was in seclusion during this period and fasted most of the time; first in the Abu mountains and later at Meherabad. A new cabin erected for him on the Hill signified the inception of a new phase of his work. The ground-work was being laid to unite the Eastern and Western groups.

In the spring of 1936 we heard the first faint whispers of some new plans of Baba's which would include many of the Westerners; and in the autumn of that year we were called to India. At last the long-awaited summons had come! Our joy knew no bounds. Then we began to wonder how we would get there. We found we would be required to have round – trip `tickets, or a substantial letter of credit, to ensure our entry into India; and though the tie business was now quite flourishing, it would not provide for such an extensive outlay. Once in India, Baba would take care of Malcolm's and my living expenses.

Again, however, we were to learn that when the Master wishes something accomplished, the ways and means are always forthcoming. This time the `manna from heaven' descended upon us through the loving generosity of our friend Garrett Fort, who had met Baba when he came to Hollywood the second time, and since then had been anticipating the moment when he, too, might join the Master in India. Happily for all of us he was among those included in the Indian trip and when he heard about it he immediately offered to take care of our tickets. A week or so later word came from Baba asking Garrett if he would do what already

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he had volunteered to do of his own accord. We were all very happy about it.

On the twenty-second of October Malcolm and I were on our way to New York, and a few days later a party of eight of us sailed on the *Ile de France* for England. Garrett, having some business to wind up, followed a few weeks later with Countess Nadia Tolstoy.

In London we experienced the great joy of seeing Baba again. He had arrived there just two days in advance of our party and two days later he was on his way back to India with his Eastern disciples. This trip was the shortest yet of his journeys to the West. Every moment of his four days in London teemed with activity; dozens of interviews with loving devotees, heart-hungry for another glimpse of Baba; and a few momentous meetings with newcomers, one of whom was Alexander Markey, writer, stage and film-director, who has since dedicated his life to the service of the Master.

On one of the two evenings which we had with Baba we went with him to see Gary Cooper in "Mr. Deeds Goes to Town." Baba was greatly pleased with the picture and cited it as an outstanding example of how motion – pictures may be used for the uplifting of mankind, while providing the utmost in enjoyable entertainment.

One afternoon we had a delightful tea with Baba at the apartment of one of the English group. Suddenly, in the midst of the laughter and joy, we noticed Baba's face drawn as if in great pain. Instantly the group became silent, as we shared in sympathy the unknown burden which we sensed he had assumed. Later, he explained: "If you knew the agony which thousands are undergoing this moment in Spain, you would understand my pain."

Another memory of this trip – one redolent with beauty – concerns an episode at Victoria station in London as we were bidding Baba farewell. Wishing to soften the pain of parting which Baba always shares with his loved ones, two of his English group, in buying flowers for him, had selected about two dozen small bunches of violets, in order that he might have some tangible evidence of his love

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to leave with his sorrowful devotees. I shall never forget the look of tender appreciation which he turned upon Kitty and Margaret when he saw what they had done and recognized the selfless love which had prompted their act. Their thoughtfulness transmuted the pain of parting into a sacrament of joy. Gently, slowly, Baba's sensitive fingers would pick out the fragrant symbols of his compassionate love and hand them to the devotees as they approached for a farewell embrace. One could see that a particular blessing accompanied each individual bouquet. Such gracious acts on the part of his disciples are deeply cherished by Baba.

Baba had instructed the American group to sail for India a week after his departure and the English group to follow a few weeks later. Malcolm and I accordingly boarded the *Elysia* at Liverpool the following week and at Marseilles were joined by Norina Matchabelli, Elizabeth Patterson, Estelle Gayley and her daughter Rano.

EAST MEETS WEST

Except for the landing at Marseilles—where we spent an enjoyable day wandering through the side-walk markets and the old town—and later at Port Said where we had our first contact with the mysterious East, the journey seemed long and wearisome, intensified, no doubt, by our eagerness to be with Baba. Finally, when the long-awaited day arrived, I felt as though everything of my past had been washed clean by the many waters through which we had sailed. We docked at Bombay on the 8th of December, just as the sun was setting behind the domed skyline of the city. Rustom, whom we had met in Hollywood some years before, found us in the lounge of the ship, and we embraced, as is the custom among Baba's people, while the stiff British army families looked on in utter astonishment! Rustom placed beautiful garlands of jasmine and red roses around our necks. Later, below deck, in Norina's cabin, we met some of Baba's other Indian men and a few of the women, who were gayly attired in their colorful native *saris*. As we were greeted by these gracious and gentle women I felt I was meeting very dear sisters whom I had known long ago.

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Few of them could speak English, nor we, of course, their language, but the deep love for our Master which had drawn us to India, also drew us to them and dissolved any superficial barriers.

Later, on the dock as we waited our turn at the customs, we met other members of Baba's spiritual family, all of whom extended to us the same warm, loving welcome. It was truly a heart-feast, as many must have thought who watched this meeting of East and West. The customs were cleared with amazing rapidity and our sixty or seventy pieces of group luggage were loaded onto trucks. Rustom saw to it that everything was executed with speed and precision. Then we were on our way in his car to the Majestic Hotel, where we spent the night.

The next morning, as our escort drove us around the city, we passed through Malabar Hill, the beautiful residential section which overlooks the bay. We visited the Parsee Tower of Silence, where vultures consume the dead bodies within a few moments of their being placed in the Tower. We stopped at the leading motion-picture studio, where Rustom – whose family own motion-picture theatres – was greeted like an old friend. Then we made our way through the bazaars, where dirt, heat, color, music, odors of savory herbs, spicy perfumes and hot bodies all blended into an unforgettable exotic atmosphere which both attracted and repelled. Women in flower-colored *saris* carried gleaming brass and copper bowls on their heads in stately grace. Men strolled lazily about in *dhotis* and loincloths; beggars, in many stages of filth and human misery, whined; half-naked children with nose rings and silver anklets scampered about under foot-much human noise, much languid movement. By now the sun was high in the heavens, and languor poured through our veins too.

The morning papers had carried news of our arrival and our photographs, with the result that as we attended to our shopping, crowds gathered around our car or waited for us outside the shops, curious no doubt to see the Westerners who had traveled across the world to sit at the feet of an Eastern Master.

In the last afternoon we motored to Igatpuri, arriving there about nine at night. Here a bungalow had been lovingly prepared for us by Kaka and Adi, Baba's brother. We turned in early, grateful for a night's rest in the cool and quiet of hilly country after the oppressive heat of Bombay.

The next morning, just as we had finished breakfast, Baba arrived by car and then we knew that we were really in India! He explained that an unavoidable delay in finishing the new quarters which he was having erected for us at Nasik would require us to stay for awhile in some temporary abode. He selected Bhandardara as a cooler and more comfortable place for us. Two days later we moved to this beautiful mountain paradise.

ASHRAM DELUXE

While visiting us at Igatpuri, Baba had sensed our inability to adjust quickly to the lack of modern conveniences prevalent in India. It was largely to reassure us, that he arranged for us to see our new home at Nasik before going on to Bhandardara. Though he had described to us in London some of the outstanding features of the Ashram, we were none the less deeply touched by his consideration for our needs which was manifest everywhere in this most modern of modern Indian Ashrams. A septic system of drainage had been installed of which not even the richest of the thirty thousand Nasik inhabitants could boast. Running hot and cold water had been piped to all the rooms and neat little water coolers stood in the corner of our individual back porches. The rooms were furnished with modern maple wardrobes and bureaus of simple design. The boxed-spring beds were upholstered with delf-blue rep-each equipped with its canopied mosquito netting. A writing table and chair sat beneath the window of each room. The walls were painted white with cream colored woodwork and blue trim. This new building, which was just being completed, comprised twelve moderate-sized rooms, all opening out onto one long veranda. Between each two was a shower and toilet, and at the rear, connecting each pair of rooms, was a private porch with comfortable chairs.

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The older buildings on the estate were built around a charming garden and were painted a lively blue. The main house contained a large general living room attractively furnished with easy chairs and couches, covered in blue, a piano and radio. The dining-room had a long refectory table seating twenty people. Several kitchens were well equipped. A suite of two rooms and bath was allotted to two of our Western group, and a large double room and bath for two others; the remainder of us living in the new quarters. Adjoining the older bungalow was Baba's little room, bare except for an iron bed and chair. Next to it was a room for the 'boys' as he terms the Indian men. Beyond the house were the servants' quarters. Near the main house was a smaller one in which lived Rustom's wife, Freni, with her children and servants.

I recall one particular instance of Baba's unparalleled thoughtfulness. The doorway to Norina's room was a little low, so Baba, thinking that she might bump her head against it, had ordered it to be carefully padded. His love seemed to have anticipated every need, every contingency.

The tea-table had been laid in the garden; There we sat with Baba as the sun was sinking in brilliant glory behind the distant hills. Freni was a gracious hostess, her lovely face radiant with the adoration for the Master which poured from her expressive eyes. Her youngest child – at that time a boy of five – was as beautiful a spark of God as one would ever find. His enormous dark eyes, gleaming with mischief one moment, almost hypnotized one the next with their deep, serious intensity. During most of the tea-hour, he stood beside Baba's chair stroking his hair and running his soft little hand across Baba's cheek and neck. Every now and then the Master would turn toward the little fellow with a look of great tenderness, and for a moment the child would nestle closely in Baba's arms. At length Baba gave us the signal to depart. Reluctantly, we bade him good-bye, but this time the separation would be only a brief one. In three days he would be with us at Bhandardara.

During our two week's stay at Bhandardara Baba visited us every few days, staying for two days at a time and then returning to Nasik or Meherabad for a couple of days. On one of these visits Baba spoke of one of his Indian women disciples who had been confined to one room for over three years, in a state of trance. One of the Western women exclaimed: "How awful!" Baba looked up and smiled: "Not awful. Wonderful! She enjoys perpetual bliss, but is at present unaware of the outer world. All of you will have the same bliss, but none of you will lose consciousness of the outer world, for you will experience bliss with *knowledge*. To the individual experiencing bliss, one state is as good as another, but the state you will enjoy will not impair your usefulness in the world. Some of you have had brief periods of bliss, but they were mixed with pain of ignorance."

The next day Baba instructed us to meditate with the idea of making our minds a 'blank.' When later we reported what little success we had had, he explained how difficult – how practically impossible – it is to still the mind by conscious effort. Yet only when the lower mind is permanently stilled can the state of God-consciousness be permanently realized. When the limited mind disappears in the final union with the Infinite, then the limited individuality is replaced by unlimited individuality. The soul not only is God-conscious, but *knows* it, and in knowing it, preserves its individuality, which is not extinguished but extended to an all-comprehensive form.

The last week of our stay at Bhandardara Nadia Tolstoy and our friend Garrett arrived. Knowing how Garry's mind was seething with questions, Baba consented to answer a few of the more important ones concerning the spiritual life as exemplified and taught by the Master:

"Divinity is not devoid of humanity – it lifts the manhood and womanhood into God; nor does spirituality necessarily imply the renunciation of worldly activities. True spirituality signifies the *internal* renunciation of mundane desires. Mere external renunciation – asceticism – does not lead to

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spirituality. Perfection is a misnomer if it tries to escape from entanglement by shrinking from the dual expressions of nature. The perfect man must assert his dominion over all illusion, however attractive and however powerful. A Perfect Being functions with complete detachment in the midst of the most intense activity and in contact with all forms of life.”

Later, when Garrett expressed surprise at Baba’s keen sense of humor, the Master reminded him that “Divinity includes all that is beautiful and gracious,” and asked: “How, then, could you expect a Perfect Being to be devoid of a sense of humor?”

Before we left for Nasik, Baba called us to him and indicated briefly how he would train us for participation in his future work. “Every one of you has to help in my work according to your individual capacity; and the extent to which you will remain in the world will be determined by the kind of work which you are destined to perform. I will teach you how to move in the world yet to be at all times in inward communication with me as the Infinite Being . . . As part of your training you will have to experience both the comforts of Nasik and the discomforts of Meherabad.”

We left Bhandardara on December twenty-second, in one sense reluctant to go, in another eager to get settled in the quarters which Baba had told us would be ours for the next five years. This temporary sojourn had been a gracious introduction to our life in India. The physical beauty of the place was impregnated with a quality of timelessness to be found only in India. Surrounding the extensive lake which lay before us were towering mountain peaks rising majestically into the clouds. This region, Baba informed us, had been the abode of great Rishis of the past, and it was easy to visualize those Masters of Wisdom rapt in the silence which these mountains safe-guarded. Untroubled by the illusion of time, they stood like sentinels of eternity, displaying in their outlines the archetypal forms from which man had derived his inspiration for a Great Pyramid, a Cave Temple of the Mayas, a Parthenon, or an Angkor Vat.

At last the Nasik Ashram was completed and we moved in. With the arrival of the English group a week or so later, which included Kitty Davy, Margaret Craske, Delia DeLeon, Tom Sharpley, Will and Mary Backett, and another week later, Ruano Bogislav, or number was increased to fifteen.

Baba assigned our rooms to us, showing, as always, his wisdom in placing those people near together who could best further each other's development. He stood at the doorway of the storage-room which had been erected for our luggage, and personally supervised our unpacking, watching carefully that none of the women overtaxed their strength in the lifting of heavy baggage. On this very first day at Nasik began my particular *via crucis*, which was to continue throughout my stay in India. What I did not then realize, but now know to be true, is that the moment one becomes the recipient of a Master's special attention – such as Baba gave to our group at Nasik – karmic forces converge with singular intensity upon the disciple. Whatever good or bad effects the individual soul has accumulated during its journey through time are brought to one's conscious attention in an unmistakable and perhaps painful way. Particularly is one compelled by force of circumstance to rise above all negative reactions, by developing those spiritual qualities of courage and resilience, which subsequently are converted into power to be used in the service of the Master.

Here, in India, was a group of men and women, drawn from many avenues, of life; all were *individuals* with divergent and fully vocal opinions, highly charged with energy. All had egos which were yet far from having been eliminated, and since it is Baba's therapy to bring into the open whatever egoistic tendencies are hindering the free flow of God-force in the soul, what a potential store of dynamite our Ashram turned out to be!

Since much of my karmic debris was working itself out through bodily illness and pain, it was inevitable that I should experience an intensification of physical disability. The one part of my body which had heretofore been exempt

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from discord was now afflicted with almost continuous pain. The extreme tropical heat which produces in most people lethargy or weakness, effected in me violent headaches which would last for days at a time, with few intervals of relief.

As I was trying to transcend the initial one, word came that we were all to meet in Baba's room. Of all the pains to which I had ever been subjected this 'head' pain was the most difficult to surmount, because the mental *effort* involved seemed to accentuate the pain. This caused me to become more tense, more immersed in the disorder. Baba, of course, sensed at once my problem and used the occasion to drive home needed lessons, which I'm afraid I did not accept very cheerfully.

"When either the mind or body are tired or in pain, the other reacts," he told us. "Only the *soul* is able to remain aloof from such discomforts. That which is disturbed by these things is the limited 'I' – the ego. This 'I' wishes always to be *comfortable*, and is therefore unnecessarily disturbed by the presence of pain. It considers unimportant things as important and vice versa. The body's needs, though of secondary importance, must, of course, be considered."

Later he elaborated on this same theme: "I want you to lead a simple life here in India; then, when you return to the West you may resume your accustomed life there, yet you must be unaffected by either. In view of this you may wonder why I have arranged these comforts for you. If I required you to sleep on the floor, for example, the body would rebel and in turn react upon the mind. Such *sudden*, drastic changes would make it difficult for me to impart truth to you through the mind. I will therefore *gradually* withdraw these comforts from you and later return them to you again. The world is slave to needs. The needs must become *your* slaves. You must learn to use your modern conveniences – not be used by them."

He also warned us that at first we might feel confused, tired and restless, but we were not to be disturbed by these feelings; they would be merely the natural reaction of our minds and bodies to the transition we were making from

West to East. The East symbolizes the passive subjective aspect of consciousness – deeply introverted – in contrast to the active, conscious extraverted attitude of the West. Such a radical change in environment would necessarily be strange and disquieting to us. For the first few weeks we were free to map out our own daily program, except for two stipulations: we were expected to be punctual for meals and we were pledged not to step beyond the confines of the twenty-four acre Ashram property. Except for periodical excursions with Baba, this latter ruling remained in effect until his birthday on February eighteenth.

CHRISTMAS PARTY

On Christmas morning, early, Baba came to our rooms to greet us with a special emanation of love and radiance. Not always does he mete out the same degree of love. He seems at times deliberately to withhold it, as Kabir say:

“My Lord hides himself,
And my Lord wonderfully reveals himself.”

But on this blessed morning Baba poured himself out in Christmas benediction upon us all.

Shortly after daybreak, devotees began to arrive to pay homage to the Master, and by ten o'clock the grounds were covered with groups of men, women and children, some of whom had travelled many miles on foot, others by car or train, intent upon seeing the Beloved One. Meeting these ardent followers of the Master, and seeing the deep love and reverence which they lavished upon him, made us marvel anew at our unparalleled good fortune in being the recipients of his intimate care and guidance.

Just before noon, two cars drove up before the community house. A few moments later happy voices and excited greeting told us the English group had arrived. The child-like spontaneity of 'Kimco'—as Baba calls them – especially endears these English disciples to the Master, and his face gleamed with loving welcome. In the evening about twenty of us sat down to a beautifully decorated table, with Baba at the head. Piled high before him were the gifts which we

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had unearthed from our trunks in the afternoon and made into un-labeled packages for Baba to distribute. Some, of course, were marked especially for him. He would hold a package in his hand for a moment, as if determining its contents and its suitability for a particular person. Then, with a twinkle in his eye, he would designate the recipient. I recall that a bottle of Chanel No.5 came my way!

The crowning touch to the dinner was a speech by Kaka, whose droll English was just then in the formative stage. Every moment of the meal was crowned with gaiety and high good-humor, but at Kaka's speech the house resounded with our laughter. Baba prefaced it by telling us that he had heard it read several times but could make nothing out of it except that apparently Kaka didn't think much of marriage! One would have to know Kaka, or 'hear' him in action to appreciate fully the scene. He smiled good-naturedly at Baba's raillery, but very solemnly, very earnestly and with terrific force – as though he were addressing an audience in a huge colosseum – he delivered his speech while Baba and the rest of us rocked with laughter. We agreed with Baba that it was difficult to know what it was all about. Only occasionally would we hear the word marriage and judging from the violent emphasis he placed upon it, we gathered that he *was* somewhat dubious of the institution!

Later, after having had our fun at good Kaka's expense, Baba pointed out that we Westerners would be brave indeed if after a few months of *Urdu* (an East-Indian dialect) we would attempt to deliver a speech to native Indians! We heartily agreed.

In this account of our Christmas day in India may be seen how simple and natural is life with Baba; too 'simple' perhaps for those who have not yet learned how to recapture the lost joys of childhood. Yet, in the words of the Master, Jesus, we are told that it is just this child-like capacity for acceptance of the *simple*, unsophisticated joys of life that qualify one for the spiritual Kingdom.

During our stay in India, Baba divided his time between his three Ashrams; ours at Nasik for the Westerners, Meherabad for the Eastern men and women disciples, and Rahuri where a refuge for the God-intoxicated had recently been established. This work with the spiritually-dazed is one of the newer phases of Baba's activity, as it is also one of the most important. About a year before our going to India, Baba initiated this symbolic and merciful service. He sent some of his disciples to the bazaars of the large cities to find the particular types of deranged men with whom he desired to work. He wanted especially those whose minds had become unbalanced by intense longing for God, or unguided yogic practices – or, as we would express it in Jungian terminology, those overwhelmed by archetypal experience. When these men were brought to Baba, he could ascertain immediately whether they were 'God-mad' as he called them, or suffering from a derangement due to organic disease or other psychological causes. If among those brought to him were any in these latter categories, they were returned after a short period of treatment, with new clothing and money. The God-mad were ministered to by Baba at the Rahuri Ashram, an oasis of peace and protection in the Jungle – symbolic of the service which the Master renders *all* those earth children who are wondering about dazed and bewildered in the dangerous jungles of the Unconscious.

Baba's treatment of these spiritually-dazed men is uniquely his own. He uses, as he always does, a physical medium to symbolize the spiritual benefit he renders them. One has only to watch his sacramental ritual of bathing, clothing, and feeding the *masts* (Indian name for mad) to realize that something profound and significant is being accomplished through it. Baba pours tremendous concentration, unstinted love and tenderness into his handling of these men; and they respond to him with the spontaneous adoration of little children. He never coerces them in any way; and if they are not in the mood to be bathed, fed, clothed – and none of them seems to enjoy being clothed – Baba sits by, waiting patiently until he is given the 'go-ahead' signal.

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Of the many who have received this spiritual benediction, the majority have been returned to their home towns with their mental balance restored. Depending upon the degree of their spiritual readiness, they find their equilibrium on their present plane of consciousness, or are led by Baba to a higher and safer plane, beyond dangerous psychic entanglements. If, as in a number of cases, they had induced in themselves a state of consciousness for which they were not prepared by character development, then the Master returned them to ordinary functioning, and saw that they were helped to lead normal lives.

When we had been in India about three weeks, we paid our first visit to the Rahuri Ashram, a place of utmost simplicity but great charm. Small huts made of matting, with thatched roofs, lined one side of a large tree-shaded compound: Baba's miniature house, which stood at the far end, was decorated with the symbols of four great world religions – Zoroastrian, Hindu, Mohammedan and Christian. One especially large banyan tree had a circular cement platform built around it. Here some of the men were sitting as our cars drove up. Instantly on Baba's arrival they grouped around him, their faces beaming with obvious delight at his return. These men, functioning as they do in the subjective world, have no intellectual obstruction to their spontaneous response to Baba's love. One of them, Mamoud – a third-plane *mast*, Baba informed us – would, at that time, sit for hours with his head and eyes down, unresponsive to anything or anyone except the Master. To him, however, he reacted with childlike joy. Hours before Baba's arrival he would predict his coming, and a year later, when he was sent for by Baba to be taken to Europe, he told the disciple in charge of the Ashram, a week in advance, that such a message would shortly come. When he finally arrived in Europe we were astonished to see the change in him. He was alert to his surroundings, interested in the new faces and environment, and particularly intrigued with his new Western clothes and shoes to which he called our special attention. He was obviously functioning in a totally new psychological world – about seventy-five percent more

conscious of his environment than he had been when we first saw him. He talked in his Indian dialect with Eastern disciples with no evidence of strain or embarrassment. Only when one of the disciples repeatedly asked him a question which annoyed him did he display any sign of maladjustment – he spit in the disciple’s face! For the three months during which we were in Europe Baba continued his daily ritual of bathing, clothing and feeding Mamoud, whose consciousness, Baba informed us, was being raised to a higher plane.

“The derangement of the masts,” Baba explains, “differs from that of ordinary mad persons both in its origin and nature. The latter lose their mental balance through disintegrating physiological or psychic causes of an ordinary kind. In the physiological field, disease of some sort is the cause, while in the mental field acute and apparently insoluble conflict between deep-rooted instincts and man’s conventional codes is the source of the madness. In the case of the *masts* their state of unbalance is induced by their powerful urge to realize God. As the spiritual aspirant advances in his all-consuming desire to experience God the mental structure with its normal tendencies and capacities is dissolved. The *successful* termination of this urge initiates the aspirant into the supra-mental state of perfect integration and direct realization of the Supreme Self. Naturally the methods of treatment of the ordinary insane person and the God-mad will differ. In the case of the former, the usual method consists in counteracting whatever physical causes may have contributed to the derangement. If a psychic origin is also involved, expert analysis helps to bring to the surface of consciousness the deep-rooted conflicts and complexes which have led to the mental breakdown. Unfortunately the average analyst cannot give the patient the power to solve these problems. Though the analyst may exercise the utmost patience, gentleness and understanding, unless he has the capacity to arouse the latent *spiritual* powers of the patient, no cure is possible.

“It naturally follows that the ordinary analyst, who has little insight into spiritual realities, could hardly be expected

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to help the God-mad, whose experiences and objectives are entirely beyond the range of his own experience or even his imagination. Only a supreme master of consciousness can give them the help that they so greatly need. With his discernment he is able to appreciate both their spiritual yearnings and their peculiar individual obstacles, and through the exercise of his spiritual power he can advance them toward their goal, or bring them back to three-dimensional consciousness, as their case requires.

“During the process of transcending the mind, one is subjected to so much disturbance that the aspirant is unable to use his mind in the normal way, and to all appearances behaves like a mad-man. But a Master who has direct insight into the workings of the mind, knows the true cause and nature of the *mad*'s peculiar mental condition. He knows precisely what spiritual motivation has induced this state of unbalance and is therefore able to help the *mad* attain his goal in his own particular way. With such help the spiritually-dazed eventually emerge into a *supra*-normal state of perfect integration and harmony.

“The appearance of balance which the ordinary man possesses is only provisional, and is due to his ability to strike a compromise between the warring elements in his psyche and his environment. However, in order that the mind may achieve a *true* balance, the provisional balance has to be considerably disturbed. When this happens without the supervision of a Perfect Master, a condition of apparent madness results.”

In the early days of Rahuri, Baba had thrown out hints to the effect that those mad-men to whom he gave most attention represented the leading nations of the world, and that Mamoud – to whom he gave special attention – represented Germany. These hints were given to the disciples before the war in Europe had started.

If the consciousness of humanity as a whole is to be raised – as Baba foretells – then even those nations which have become obsessed by demons of the underworld – or in psychological terms, possessed by destructive archetypes –

must participate in this regeneration. In the course of time further significant phases of this particular work became more apparent to us.

In February, 1937, Baba again established a “Free Meher Dispensary” – this time at Rahuri—with Dr. Nilu Godse in charge, assisted by Baba’s younger brother, Jal. About 200 patients were treated daily by Nilu and Jal with Baba sparing no expense for the treatment of their physical ailments and bestowing upon them the blessing of his divine presence and love. During the period the sleepy little village of Rahuri buzzed with human activity as the hundreds of poor, sick pilgrims poured into the dispensary. Those who came for physical relief departed with the added gift of spiritual benefit – according to their readiness to receive it – for in Baba’s dealing with humanity, the physical and the spiritual go hand-in-hand. Even those closest to him – most responsive to his spiritual ‘touch’ – have experienced this dual aspect of the healing technique which Baba employs.

VISIT TO MEHERABAD

Our first visit to Meherabad was momentous one for us. Here we were to meet the other members of the *Mandali*, and the women were to visit the special group of Indian women disciples. We left Nasik shortly after midnight in order to avoid the heat of daytime travel and arrived at Meherashram just at day break. Baba’s men were gathered outside the doorway of the Ashram to greet us as we drove up to the house. A few we already knew and loved, having been with them in the West or at Nasik; and with these new ‘brothers’ we felt the same quiet strength, the same selfless love and whole-hearted dedication to our Master’s service which had endeared the others to us.

Their quarters were situated in an open stretch of level country with mountains in the distance. The building, extremely simple, consisted of one large main room about thirty by twenty feet, which served as the general meeting room in the daytime and at night was converted into sleeping quarters through the simple expedient of placing bedding rolls upon the floor. To one side of this room was a smaller one for cooking and eating, and on the other side

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were the wash-rooms and the free medical dispensary for the neighboring villagers. Everything was so immaculately clean that one had the impression that even the floors would be sanitary enough to eat off.

After a short visit with the men, the Western women were taken by Baba across the road and up the hill, where six Eastern women have been secluded for many years. This meeting of the Western women with our Eastern sisters-in-Baba was a memorable experience. As we embraced each other, we felt – as we had on the boat the day of our arrival in Bombay – how the love of our Blessed Master united us and enabled us to transcend any outer barriers of language or background. Certainly more opposite types could scarcely have been brought together ! In the Western group was a former dancer in the Russian ballet (Margaret Craske); a woman with her own insurance business in New York (Elizabeth Patterson); an actress who had held salons in many of the large European cities (Norina Matchabelli); two other actresses (Delia DeLeon and Ruano Boglislav); an artist (Rano Gayley); and one who had devoted a number of years to social work in the slums, alms-houses, prisons and hospitals of New York, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh (Jean Adriel). Practically all were women who had traveled extensively and seen much of what is popularly termed `life`. Contrasted with us were these sheltered, saintly women who up to the time of our coming to India, had traveled no further than from one Ashram to another – within a radius of a hundred miles – as Baba moved his headquarters from time to time. In this group were Baba's sister – a beautiful young woman about eighteen at the time we met her – and two others a few years older, all of whom had been with Baba since they were children of ten or twelve and from that time had seen no other man than Baba. Three older women – one of whom was the mother of one of the younger ones – had also been living this life of seclusion for many years.

I felt we had much to learn from them, but it was difficult to see what our contribution to them might be. In general I think that the West has a distinct contribution to

make to the East, just as the East has its unique heritage to share with mankind. In the coming years this amalgamation must surely take place if the human race is to advance further in consciousness. The conscious use of *will* by which Western man achieves his material goals must be balanced with the sensitive, *feeling* faculties of the Easterner. Before this union of the opposites can become an actuality, however, both Easterner and Westerner must become aware of their need for the missing part of their being, as individuals and as nations.

But these women – long conditioned by the Master to a type of consciousness which transcends both the mental and emotional drives – seemed to need nothing which we had to offer. Their ‘House on the Hill’, in which they lived their quiet, gentle lives, was surrounded by a wall twelve feet high. This enclosed a compound of about forty feet square upon which two houses faced. The larger one consisted--at that time – of a single room about thirty feet by twenty. The chief appointments of the room were six iron beds, each with its mosquito – netting canopy. Beside each bed was a small wooden trunk, in which were kept the few belongings of the women, and a straight wooden chair. There were no ornaments, no gadgets, no books. The most austere convent would be luxurious by comparison. Yet in some indefinable way an impression of gracious living was conveyed. In spite of the ascetic background, one felt nothing of the spirit of asceticism. How could there be with the warmth of Baba’s radiant spirit blessing and adorning this house?

Though on the surface their lives were acutely circumscribed, monotonous and meager, their faces bore the unmistakable imprint of a happier, more contented life than we Westerners with our so-called full, colorful lives had ever known. In them we saw the result of consciousness superceding the intellect with its tendency to speculate and argue. As they performed quietly and graciously their simple tasks, one sensed that the heat of striving for either material or spiritual goals was no longer theirs – if ever it had been. Pure soul-force flowed into their free and spontaneous ac-

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tions. Having no need to disburden themselves of mental impressions, and feeling no inclination toward gossip, they spoke but little. But one could see that they lived deeply, consciously; each one, a distinct *individual*.

A significant story is told of one of these holy women: when Mehera – who was born of a cultured Parsee family in Poona – was a little girl of seven or eight, she felt drawn one day to stop at the tree under which Babajan sat with her circle of disciples and pilgrims. The aged Master greeted the child warmly, and in course of conversation asked her what she would like above everything in the world. The little girl–after pondering the question for a few minutes–replied that she would like a ‘white horse’ on which she could ride. Babajan smiled and promised her that she would have such a horse, and that she would be honored by everyone who saw her with it. When she returned home her mother told her she had a surprise for her. There, in the compound, was a snow white horse which her mother had purchased that day in the bazaar.

The spiritual significance of this incident becomes apparent when we realize that the Avatar of this age has been described in ancient scriptures as the *White Horse Avatar*; and since this little girl, Mehera–now a beautiful young woman–occupies the place of pre-eminence in Baba’s Ashram, the story suggests a deeper meaning than the purely objective one.

Beloved *above* all others by Baba and the other woman on the Hill, she is second only to the Master in the hearts of her spiritual sisters. Because of the utter selflessness of her devotion to the Divine Beloved – which, Baba once described as surpassing the love of anyone in the world – is she worthy of the homage which is accorded her. Having sacrificed all that the average woman holds most dear, she receives from the Master the greatest love.

To anyone familiar with Baba’s way of working, it seems quite possible that through these chosen and safe-guarded women he is resurrecting the soul of woman from her age- old bondage to the male side of life, so that in the impending new day, she may be free to take her destined place as the

co-worker with man-no longer his subordinate, to be dominated by his intellect and enslaved by his desires.

Because we Westerners were still far from the conscious inner freedom which these holy women enjoyed, many of us suffered acutely on the Meherabad trips. I felt as if I were being required to function in a kind of mental vacuum. It was so unfamiliar, so strange, yet withal peaceful and lovely. It was like being dropped into a fair country where language is neither spoken nor read, but where people go about their affairs with serene, happy faces, communicating with each other by some inner means which one does not yet know.

The god of the Westerner – the intellect – was being dethroned and I, for one, had to enthrone the true God – the balanced soul-life in my innermost being. The inner conflict which was generated within me intensified the severe headaches which were becoming an almost daily anguish. Yet always on leaving this hill-top Sanctuary I felt as if I had participated in a sacred and profound experience. Driving away in the late afternoon, just as the Oriental sun was sinking behind the distant hills, painting the sky with liquid rubies, topaz and amethysts, I would feel myself purged and uplifted – better able to appreciate the transcendental beauty and wisdom which is inherent in the soul of the Perfect Master.

SACRED SIGHT – SEEING

Our strict confinement to the twenty-four acre property was periodically relieved by motor trips with Baba to places of spiritual interest. He took us first to the town of Nasik, about five miles from our Ashram. Here we found an Oriental town untouched by Western civilization; one therefore which retains all its dirt, spicy odors, color and uncivilized charm.

Nasik has long been considered one of the sacred cities of India. Its ancient name *Janastana* (The Place of Sacrifice) is mentioned in the *Ramayana*, one of the revered books of the Hindus, as the dwelling place of Rama and his

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wife Sita during their voluntary exile. One finds here many relics connected with the spiritually romantic tales of this great epic.

Mukerji, in his *Visit India with Me* also mentions Nasik as one of the places where Jesus is reputed to have stayed during his legendary visit to India.

After halting at the bridge which spans the Godavari, one of the sacred water-ways of India, we threaded our way through another portion of the city to a spot on the Godavari called Gangapur – a place of sacred pilgrimage for centuries. Here Baba led us past the many separate shrines to a spot under the rocks just at the base of a water-fall; A place in which yogis delighted to meditate – the roar and rhythm of the falling water helping them to achieve a still mind.

Baba seated himself under the over-hanging rock while we grouped ourselves silently at his feet, with the water gurgling past us just a few yards away. We were no yogis, but we felt the deep peace which quiet moments with Baba always engender. Some of the Shrine watchers who had recognized Baba stood a little to one side with worship in their eyes. It was a new and wholesome experience for us to see the veneration which these strangers accorded the Master.

Another expedition with Baba – which was for me particularly significant – took us about five miles from Nasik to the Pandulena Caves. These rock dwellings – twenty-two in number- are situated near the top of a mountain which commands a magnificent view of the whole surrounding country. Most of them were originally carved out of the rocky mountain wall by the Pandava brothers, disciples of the Avatar Krishna, who lived, according to some traditions, about the seventh Century B.C. The legend tells how Yudisthira–then overlord of all India – had gambled away his kingdom in a game of dice. As punishment he and his four brothers, of whom Arjuna was one, were banished from the kingdom and wandered as homeless exiles for about twelve years. It was during this period that they carved out these caves as shelter for themselves; here Krishna and other great sages came to visit them, and from here they wandered forth with

Krishna on many pilgrimages. No doubt this exile constituted the preparatory phase to that great battle of the *Mahabharatta* – Kurukshetra – in which Arjuna received his initiation at Krishna's hands. It seems as if a similar drama has but recently been enacted on a more comprehensive scale, and perhaps Baba's foreknowledge of the war to come was one of the reasons he made a special point of our visiting these caves. Again a group of disciples had been undergoing long years of rigorous training, preparatory to a *world* initiation which the subsequent world-wide war heralded.

In later times other Masters lived in these caves with their disciples and left upon them the imprint of their lives there. A particularly unusual one had been occupied by a famous Jain Master with his circle of eighteen men. A balcony, which extended in a semi-circle around the cave, was supported by seventeen pillars, each resting on a massive stone jar. In the center of the cave was a raised pedestal or altar. On the steps in the center – where Baba now sat – the former Master would sit – Baba informed us – with his disciples gathered around him on the steps below, as he instructed them in spiritual Truth. An adjoining cave with eighteen cells, also carved out of the rock, they used for meditation.

Another profoundly impressive cave contained, in an alcove at the rear, a giant figure of the Buddha which was not visible on first entering the cave, but as one's eyes became accustomed to the darkness it suddenly stood out in bold relief, as though some rear lighting had been mysteriously turned on. The spiritual power in this cave was prodigious. One felt inclined to linger here and tune in on the potent wave-length which the accumulated meditations of ages must have produced; but Baba hastily led us on to the next cave.

Since, prior to this trip, I had been rather ill, Baba assisted me in my climb up the mountain by taking my hand. As we neared the place of the caves, I turned to look out over the broad expanse of plain which lay below us. Instantly there flashed through my mind the memory of the 'Mountain-top' experience which I have described at the begin –

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ning of this volume – one of those contacts with Reality which had prepared me for the meeting with the Master. The experience having been so vivid and profound had naturally left an indelible imprint upon my mind. Now as I looked out over the valley below, I saw the same landscape, the same relation of country-side below to the place on which I was standing, as I had witnessed in that transcendent experience. I turned to Baba and asked him if he knew of what the scene reminded me. He nodded, smiling, and indicated to me the ‘Mountain – top.’ Then for a timeless, supernal moment – in which unutterable truths were conveyed – his eyes held mine. In ways which defy the rational mind, I had – years before – tuned in on this mountaintop of initiation, reliving an ancient experience and perhaps anticipating one which was to come. Later, as we were getting into our cars, Baba told us that some of us would go back to those caves some day, and stay there with him for awhile.

MAJOR CRISIS

An important aspect in Baba’s technique of freeing his disciples from their bondage to the past—from their egocentric selves—is the ‘crisis’ which he so skillfully induces. Inevitably, after coming in close touch with Baba, the life processes are so speeded up that one finds oneself in the midst of circumstances which compel one to do some penetrating soul-searching. It is not necessary that we be with Baba outwardly to participate in this speeding-up process. Many who have established a deep *inner* contact with him but have not met him in the flesh, have experienced the same intensification of rhythm. But being with him physically usually makes the experience more dramatic, more poignant. No one who is close to Baba escapes this treatment which, though painful, strips off the constricting veils from the real Self, and opens the way to a more abundant life.

Such a crisis developed for me when I had been in India a little over a month. Baba was on the fifth day of his forty-day fast—and we had long ago been told that

something significant always happened on the fifth day of any of Baba's special activities. Certainly it did for me! One sultry afternoon, having one of my frequent headaches, I had not gone over to the main house for tea. It had instead been brought to my room by one of the servants. I was sitting up in bed, cross-legged, with the thinnest of nightgowns on, when suddenly the pot-full of boiling water overturned onto my lap. As may be imagined, the pain was excruciating. I had nothing to apply to the seared flesh and there was no one within calling distance. There was nothing to do but wait – with as much fortitude as I could muster – until tea was over and someone came back to our building. About forty minutes later, Malcolm and the others returned to their rooms. Baba was at Rahuri, but word of the accident was telephoned immediately to him. One of his first questions : “Was she brave ?” indicates the essential quality in a disciple which he looks for at such times. The doctor whom Baba recommended arrived about an hour later.

One strange and psychologically important feature of this experience was a dream which I had had, just the night before, of being burned at the stake. Evidently my inner being knew that I was ripe for a drastic purification, to such an extent that it immediately became objectified in my outer life in the form of the accident.

When Baba arrived a couple of days later, after assuring himself that I had received the proper care, he told me that painful though the burn was, its results would be good. He showed keen interest in the dream.

Though the acute pain diminished after a few days, the nervous shock lasted for some weeks. Just as I was beginning to limp around my room, a bitter altercation arose between Malcolm and another man. Now, in retrospect, it is quite apparent that Baba engineered the whole conflict – and drew me into it-to effect one of his major surgical operations; perhaps a three-in-one operations, because as time has since revealed, all three of us have been compelled by force of subsequent circumstances to face the emotional conflict involved in this crisis. I, for one,

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realize it to be the most helpful of the many benefits which Baba has rendered me, for it was the initiatory momentum which compelled me to integrate into my conscious life certain latent qualities of soul, without which I would have remained very lop-sided. At the time of the crisis, however, I did not see it this way. But, as Baba predicted when he heard of the accident, the salutary effects of this painful ordeal have been incommensurable.

After speaking to me in the morning about this friction between the two men, Baba said he wished us all to meet together, when the whole affair would be thrashed out. The other man had written an editorial for the new magazine on which some of us were assigned to work. Malcolm groaned when he read it, for when it was not pontifical it dripped with sentimentality. When he spoke to Baba about it he was instructed to put in writing his comments on it. Though his criticism was justified and in fact ordered by Baba, the other man could not `take it'. He responded with a vitriolic outpouring which made me feel actually ill when I read it. Baba pointed out that my reaction to it was due to the fact that there was something in me – something in my relationship to this man – which absorbed the poison of his remarks. Consequently, I was indirectly involved in the situation. Baba gave me very explicit orders to say quite frankly whatever came into my mind, when we all met together, regardless of its possible effect upon the two men or upon myself.

Late that afternoon I was helped down to the room at the far end of our long porch. There – with Baba as the masterly director – the crisis, of which the dream and the burn were but the pre figuration, took place. Considering the symbolism inherent in both the dream and the accident, I have no doubt that the session in that room marked the beginning of a life-initiation which was destined to take us all to the brink of the abyss. Upon me it has bestowed a more universal understanding of love and human relationships such as every woman must experience if she is to fulfil her appointed destiny.

Baba directed each of the two men to give his side of

the affair. Then I was told to say wherein I thought each one was at fault. The emotional pain which this produced in me seems now—as it did even twenty-four hours later—out of all proportion to the immediate cause; an indication, no doubt, of the deep *unconscious* forces which Baba was bringing into consciousness. I felt as though I were undergoing all the anguish which woman has ever suffered for the man she loves. Yet all I was doing was to say frankly what I thought were the basic faults in the two men's characters, which had precipitated this unhappy situation.

By compelling me to override my feminine instinct to avoid painful controversy, Baba was bringing into my consciousness the fearlessness of the male side of my nature, which was largely dormant. By this means he was releasing me from an age-old bondage which I shared with most of woman-kind—the bondage of fear that she will lose the loved one, if she chooses the strong course and ceases to cater to his egocentricity and his role of intellectual dominance.

In taking this line of least resistance in her contacts with man, woman relegates herself to an inferior position, and impedes the higher function of her sex, which is to arouse in man his latent soul side. But to do this she may have to inflict pain, or risk his displeasure even to the point of forfeiting her close relationship with him.

Since writing the above, I have read *In search of maturity* by Dr. Kunkel, in which I find corroborated the above conclusions: “. finally we may meet the great test of maturity; if necessary to inflict, consciously and conscientiously, pain and sacrifice upon our most beloved friends.”

Only the perspective of time, however, revealed these things. While in the midst of it I felt that Baba was unnecessarily cruel in compelling me to participate in this dispute. My only part in it had been that of arbitrator, but Baba, with his penetrating insight—knowing better than I—used this occasion to teach me a greatly needed lesson. First he would stir up my emotions by insisting I speak my

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mind; then he would include me to become clam – detached. This soul-surgery continued for about an hour, during which time I must have recapitulated all the emotional crises of my entire life – and there had been many. Perhaps this emotional review was another aspect of Baba's `game' – one for which at the time I felt little zest.

When it was finally over, I was utterly shattered. I had to be carried back to my bed, where for hours I lay sobbing with hysterical heart-break. I could see no reason for the ordeal to which Baba had subjected me. The tender, loving Father seemed to have become the Devil himself! When he looked in on me a little later, I told him I could not stand any more; I had reached my limit of endurance. Then from sheer exhaustion I fell asleep.

On awakening in the morning I felt more dead than alive. My body seemed drained of life, my soul devoid of hope, my heart barren and cold. The brilliant Indian sun infiltrating through the doors and windows of my room was powerless to penetrate my inner darkness. Later I sat on our back porch with Malcolm, in silence. I saw the sympathy in his eyes, but my heart could not receive it. Where faith had upheld me, despair now ruled; where love had drawn and impelled me, icy fingers gripped my heart. My God had failed me; I longed for the oblivion of unconsciousness—for the peace of utter annihilation—the great temptation which comes to all at this moment of the soul's Calvary. Then I thought of Jesus' agony in the Garden of Gethsemane—how even he had asked to have the cup removed from him. But with the next breath I remembered the succeeding words: “Nevertheless, not my will but Thine be done.”

“Not my will, but Thine”; here was the key to my problem. I let the words sink deep into my soul. A deeper abandonment to God – to my Master, an incarnation of God –this was what was required of me. Much of my anguish was due to my rebellion against what Baba knew to be for my highest good. I had trusted him for many years; he had not failed me. I must know that he was not failing me now. He saw more deeply into my need than I could

possibly see; and better than I, he knew how to meet that need. In my heart I offered my life to him anew to use as he deemed best. I accepted the darkness, then I let go. At that moment out across the fields a robin sang its liquid canticle; and with its melting lilt a blockage was released in me and peace poured into my heart.

A few minutes later, with his perfect timing, Baba appeared. He had pointedly stayed away until this moment. He looked at me seriously – questioning me with his eyes, even as a surgeon examines his patient after a major operation. Then I asked him a question:

“Is it possible to love God merely through obedience-when feeling is absent?”

He smiled. The operation had been successful and the patient would live!

“It is the highest form of love,” he replied.

Later in the day, with Malcolm’s help I walked over to Baba’s room to tell him he could finish the job whenever he wished. The look of happy satisfaction which he gave me wiped away the last vestige of pain.

Such an experience as this reveals many *other* basic truths in addition to the fundamental lesson one needs to learn. I see now what an invaluable service Baba rendered me in compelling me to accept the dark side of life as well as the light; the Devil as well as God; crucifixion as well as resurrection. Through this crisis he inspired in me a deeper surrender to the will of God – of the Master – than I had yet made. I had offered my self to God; the Master was making sure that no hidden sins or virtues were being withheld.

I had always before run away from love when it hurt. Now I was learning to love in spite of the pain – to have faith in spite of disillusionment. I could now better understand those words of Kahlil Gibran:

“For even as love crowns you so shall he crucify you. Even as he is for your growth so is he for your pruning. . . . He threshes you to make you naked. . . . He grinds

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you to whiteness... And then he assigns you to his sacred fire, that you may become sacred bread for God's sacred feast."

Doubtless there were also other implications in this upheaval than the purely personal ones. Once, in the early days, one of his Eastern men, puzzled at Baba's methods, asked why he sometimes subjected them to ordeals for which they could find no reason. Baba then told him that occasionally for his universal work he needs the energy resident in the emotions, and to avail himself of it he would stir up the emotional nature of one or more of his disciples. "Whom else should I use for my work, if not my own?"

I have related this personal experience to illustrate how a Master of Life works when he knows a soul to be ready for an important step in unfoldment. All of Baba's disciples in some measure pass through a similar ordeal, and all are agreed that the beneficial results are profound and far-reaching. Like the modern psychotherapist, but in his unique and superior way, Baba uncovers whatever lies hidden in the recesses of the Unconscious; both the demons and the angels are released to be utilized in more creative living; and when the moment is ripe, the deep transference, which in the beginning he fosters, he finally resolves.

The wider ramifications of this particular crisis are only now becoming apparent. Another of Baba's inimitable techniques is to work out a small-scale model of events, swiftly, in dramatic and realistic form. It is as if by this means he registers such events with the Cosmic Timekeeper, who, over a later and longer period of time and through the medium of daily circumstances, slowly unfurls the dramatic sequences—previewed earlier—giving more time for each phase of the drama to be thoroughly assimilated. Certainly this was so in my own case, as the later life pattern proved.

BIRTHDAY FEAST

One of the most memorable experiences of our stay in India was Baba's birthday celebration, the preparations for which began shortly after our arrival in December. Forty

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days before the birthday a fast began in which we all shared. The fifteen of us in turn joined Baba in a one-day fast of two cups of tea and two cups of milk. Again, we all participated as he fasted without even water for twenty hours of the day.

Some weeks before his birthday, Baba assigned specific duties to each of his Indian disciples, but like the Generalissimo that he is, kept himself in touch with the overall plans by calling his men to him from time to time to give account of their particular duties. All of his devotees, embracing Brahmin, Mahratta, Harijan, Christian, Parsi and Mohammedan, were notified and their help solicited in distributing the handbills in different languages among the slum districts in the Bombay Presidency, the Gugurat and the Deccan, inviting the poor to the birthday feast. Accommodations were engaged in the neighborhood of the Nasik Ashram for the devotees who would be staying a night or two. Busses were chartered to convey them from the railway station to their cottages and to the Ashram grounds. An enormous tent, two hundred and fifty feet long by one hundred and fifty feet wide, was erected to protect the visitors from the heat and glare of the sun. A smaller one was erected for kitchen use. Brahmin cooks and helpers were engaged; ditches were dug in the ground and covered with brick and stone to form the stoves and ovens. All the paraphernalia to cook and serve food to fifteen hundred people was imported from Bombay and with Baba supervising every detail, a commissary was set up that would well have rivalled for efficiency New York's finest caterers.

Thousands of yards of cloth had been purchased, together with tons of rice and lentils to be made into birthday packages for the poor. The Westerners worked at all spare moments tying up these bundles of food, until finally a pyramid of packages, twelve feet high, arose in the midst of the garden. The Ashram hummed with activity and by the fifteenth of February the preparations were completed. With Baba's arrival from Meherabad our fatigue vanished like mist before the sun. Knowing that all action initiated or supervised by Baba is symbolic, one may see in this con-

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centrated effort of the Westerners to prepare the gifts of food and clothing for the poor, a token gesture of the role America particularly was to play in rehabilitating the poor of the world, made destitute by man's greed and lust for power.

On the day of Baba's arrival came the Brahmin cooks and the following morning the kitchen was completely installed. Huge brass and copper cauldrons steamed with rice, vegetables, laddoo (an Indian sweet) and tea. The cooks were naked to the waist, with the sacred thread of the Brahmin caste dangling from their necks. They were magnificent looking men, of fine carriage and dignity. They might readily have been mistaken for great teachers or holy men. Being cooks apparently in no way impaired their sense of being the ruling caste of India.

In an attempt to see what was being cooked two of us approached one of the steaming copper cauldrons. Quickly, one of the cooks asked us to move away. A strict Brahmin would not eat food which had been polluted by a non-Brahmin's shadow cast upon it. In view of this it was a heart-warming sight to see later in the day Baba's Brahmin devotees eating their meal in close proximity to devotees of other castes, many of whom were 'untouchables'.

One elderly Hindu, himself a Brahmin, approached Malcolm who was watching the devotees at lunch. "Is this universal brotherhood, I see?" he asked, smiling. "I hope it is a step in that direction," was Malcolm's reply. "It is indeed," the devotee rejoined, "and one which only a Perfect Master like Shri Meher Baba, through the influence of his divine love, could inspire."

It was an impressive sight to see these some seven hundred devotees of Baba's sitting together on the ground, in long rows, as they ate their noon-day meal. The Brahmins prayed for two minutes before the food was served. The Mohammedan commenced their meal with the customary "*Bismillah*"—"Begin in the name of the Lord!" The Mahratta men stripped to the waist, as their ritual before

eating. Before *any* of the guests touched their food, and after they had performed their traditional devotions, the tents resounded with choruses of “*Shri Sadguru Meher Baba Maharaj ki jai!*” – “Hail Shri Meher Baba, the Perfect Master, the Great King!” Nor would any of the arriving guests take even a cup of tea until they had paid their respects to Baba.

After luncheon Baba called the Western group to his little straw hut in the garden which had been built as a special resting place for him. There, on his knees beside the Master, was the figure of an elderly Hindu. His eyes were closed in ecstasy; his hands lovingly caressed Baba’s feet. This man – a saint – had seen Baba’s photograph the year before in the home of one of Baba’s devotees, and immediately recognized him as a God-realized Master; and though he himself was worshipped as a saint by his own devotees, some of whom he had brought with him to the birthday feast, he offered Baba the full homage of his awakened heart, as he buried his head in Baba’s breast, overcome by spiritual emotion. A few moments later Baba left the tent, with the group following. One of the saint’s disciples plucked a rose and handed it to him. Still deeply stirred by his meeting with the Master, the saint inhaled the fragrance of the flower, touched it to his forehead, his eyes, the top and back of his head and finally to his heart, then, partially dazed, stumbled off to the large tent supported by two of his men.

Later in the day, when one of the Western disciples who had not met the elderly saint in the hut, was introduced to him, he looked at her for several minutes and smiled. “Always be happy as you are now,” one of his devotees translated for her. Then he embraced her. Taking a scarf from the neck of one of his followers, he gave it to her; then, linking her arm in his, he led her through the tent toward the kitchen where he found Baba. Taking her hand he placed it in Baba’s and then prostrated himself at the Master’s feet. By this gesture, she felt he was making it clear that only one like Baba could give her the supreme realization which, apparently, the saint knew she sought.

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It was on this same day that Baba, hearing of some vainglorious remarks of one of his disciples, took time out to drive home a needed lesson. This man had boasted how hard he had been working, how long he had been fasting, how much he had been suffering, how little he had complained. Baba's eyebrows arched. Any form of pride is anathema to him. "Every second the little 'I' predominates! 'I work ... I fast ... I suffer ...'!"

Then he pointed across the garden to another of his men who was repairing a fence which the crowd had broken. He had been one of the boys in Baba's school in the early days at Ahmednagar, and ever since had lived and worked at Baba's Ashram. In January he had come to Nasik where he had been working day and night, setting up fences, unloading bolts of cloth and sacks of grain, helping to erect the tent and lay the special piping. He was thoroughly exhausted, as his posture and movements indicated; but no word of complaint passed from his lips; nor did he boast. "There is the man," Baba indicated, "who works and never says he works. That is *real* selfless service."

The next morning—the day when the cloth and grain would be distributed to the poor – we were asked to be in the tent by six o'clock. The men of our group helped the Eastern men to give out the bundles, while the Western women sat with the Eastern devotees as they watched the ceremony. When we awakened at daybreak and looked toward the tents, we saw milling mobs of poor people being held within bounds by some of the devotees and stalwart Indian police who had been called out from Nasik to help preserve order. Punctually at six o'clock the procession started and, until seven o'clock that night, ten thousand beggars filed past Baba, receiving the bundles of grain and cloth from the disciples and from Baba's hand sweet-meats and blessing. "This is India," whispered one of the Eastern men. "Not the Viceroy's new palace at Delhi, nor the monuments of the historic past, but *this*. Over eighty percent of India's population is like this!"

I had done social work in the slums of America's greatest cities, and thought I had seen most abject poverty. But

the people in those slums dressed like princes in comparison to these poor creatures. Shreds of dirty cloth—which must have been rags when their grandfathers wore them—inadequately covered bits of their bodies. No wonder many of them had travelled hundreds of miles for a piece of cloth and a few handfuls of grain! One tottering old couple – of whom the man was stone blind – had walked for days for the birthday gift and blessing. Another, a boy whose torn shirt – his only garment – failed to hide his bleeding syphilitic sores, was taken aside by Baba’s men for medical care. A group of about forty men and women lepers with an attendant were segregated from the others and given their bundles and blessings separately. Undoubtedly there were many other lepers, unattended, who mingled unnoticed with the crowd.

Hour after hour, these ten thousand men, women and children in all stages of poverty and physical need filed past the platform, holding out emaciated hands for food and bundle. Here and there one could see indications in their eyes of a hunger which transcended the physical, as they would come before Baba, bowing their heads to his feet, then looking up into his eyes for a brief moment. As Baba would touch their feet with his sensitive hand, one wondered what measure of his divine love they were able to receive. Certainly the majority looked as though they would be completely insulated by their dire poverty. But Baba, who sees deeper into men’s hearts, no doubt found many who were conscious recipients of his spiritual gifts. One woman – as tattered as the worst – was so lost in ecstasy at Baba’s feet that she had to be helped to get up and move along, and induced to receive her bundle. Her supernal joy so filled her eyes with light, that even her rags were glorified. “I gave, and I received,” said Baba, later. “As Baba I gave; as those wrecks, I received.”

In the middle of the afternoon someone asked him if his back hurt. Leaning over and touching with one hand the feet of ten thousand people, and with the other handing out ten thousand balls of *ladoo* sweet-meat, with only brief intervals of rest, was a strenuous ordeal even for a Master’s

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body. “My back aches so much it doesn’t ache at all!” he admitted, smiling a little wearily. “The whole evolutionary scheme passed through my spine today. This is the first time, you know, that I have touched the feet of those who came to pay me reverence.” We had wondered about this deviation from precedent, but when asked for a further explanation, Baba only smiled and said: “I saluted the divinity in them, as they saluted the divinity in me.”

That evening, after the ceremony with the beggars was over, we relaxed with Baba to the strains of native devotional music provided by musicians from Bombay. As we sat there our attention was attracted by the figure of a young man clad in a rough robe patched with burlap. We had noticed him earlier in the day as Baba singled him out from the many thousands who had passed before him. In response to Baba’s questions it developed that he had been silent for two years; that he had no home, but wandered about from place to place, sleeping wherever he could find shelter and eating whatever was given to him. Baba said he was a spiritually advanced soul but one who needed the expert help which Baba could render him, so he invited him to stay at our Ashram until he was ready to leave for Rahuri. A few days later he accompanied Baba to the jungle Retreat.

Now, as we watched his lovely spontaneous rhythm, it was easy to discern his spiritual ecstasy from the freedom of his movements. Unconscious of any watching audience, he moved his hands and arms as though he were conducting an invisible orchestra of celestial beings.

We had noted others during the day who were much more spectacular – who might have deceived those who would be impressed by the trappings of holiness. One such was a tall Hindu clad in a long green robe who stood in the midst of the crowd, holding aloft a picturesque prayer wheel and chanting, “Om! Om!” When we asked Baba about him, he said that he was a professional beggar and a rogue!

There were two others of these colorful mendicants who make a business of wandering about India, and eating

at the expense of those who are impressed by their outer regalia. Their long hair was matted, their foreheads painted with weird-looking symbols, their bodies covered with ashes. Their possessions they carried in packs on their backs. One shaded himself from the sun with a fantastic straw parasol. While hundreds of Baba's devotees were patiently waiting to be served their luncheon, these three insolently demanded that they be served at *once*. The result was they were ordered to *leave* at once!

By the morning of the next day – the twenty-fifth of February – the number of Baba's visiting devotees had grown to over a thousand. This day was in sharp contrast to the preceding one, when we had witnessed the continual outpouring of Baba's benediction upon those human derelicts. Simply to sit in the audience as a spectator of the bountiful love and mercy which one could see and feel emanating from Baba was a soul-stirring experience which moved some of us to tears. Light and darkness, pain and joy mingled in a symphony of human heart-beats, as the compassionate hands of the Master reached down to the level of humanity's affliction.

How superbly Baba transcended the pain involved in this drama, some of us knew later that night, after the distribution of gifts was over, and the beggars had departed. About mid-night – the hour when Baba would break his forty-day fast – he called us to the main house. We seated ourselves around the couch where Baba lay prostrated. Never before had we Westerners seen him like this. We yearned to do something for him, as we watched him in breathless silence; but what could we do that Baba himself could not, except to pour out upon him our love? We knew now what a tremendous oblation he had made of himself that day for suffering mankind. Then he stirred slightly. With great effort he pulled himself up into a semi-sitting position, then fell back again to rest a few more moments with his eyes closed. Again he pulled himself up, this time fully erect. Wearily, he passed his hand over his eyes, inhaled deeply a few times, then looked upon us with

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a wan smile. “I want to talk to you about this day’s activity and what it signifies for my Universal work.”

We begged him to defer it until the next day when he would be more rested. But no, that was the psychological moment, apparently. He must impose upon his fatigued and underfed body the task of ministering soul-food to his Western neophytes. Only after half an hour of pouring upon us his melting love and tenderness did he break his fast with tea and toast, prefaced with a bath and a clean robe. Toward one o’clock in the morning he bade us goodnight. The next morning at five, he was fully refreshed and busy with the hundred and one details of the celebration, all of which he personally directed. Smilingly, he spelled out for us: “I have that bad Avataric habit of supervising every detail myself!”

The second day of the celebration was one of great rejoicing. On this day the thousand or more devotees who had traveled from all parts of India brought their adoration to Baba – whom they worshipped as an incarnation of God. Through symbolic rituals they found appropriate outlet for their devotion. These ceremonies began with the washing of the Master’s feet. Baba’s Mother led the procession of women who were the first to offer their homage.

Baba was seated in a chair on the edge of the platform, with his feet resting in a silver basin. To one side stood a silver pitcher containing a mixture of milk and honey; another pitcher contained water. A little of the milk and honey was poured by the devotees over Baba’s feet, then a little of the water. Some of the worshippers scooped up a handful of the mixture in the bowl and drank it. Others touched their moistened fingers to their hearts or foreheads. It reminded us of the use of Holy Water in Catholic Churches and of the sacrament of baptism, with its symbolic washing away of sins.

Later, Baba explained this symbolism to us: “The feet, which are physically the lowest part of the body, are spiritually the highest. Physically, the feet go through everything, the good and bad, the beautiful and ugly, the clean and dirty, yet they are above everything. So, spiritually,

the feet of a Perfect Master are above everything in the universe, which is like dust to him. When people come to a Perfect Master and touch his feet with their heads, they lay upon him the burden of their *samskaras* – those subtle impressions of thought, emotion and action, which bind the individual soul to recurrent earthly lives. This is the burden to which Jesus referred when he said, ‘Come unto me all ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest’.

“A Perfect Master collects these *samskaras* from all over the universe, just as an ordinary person, in walking, collects dust on his feet. Those who love him deeply and wish to share his burden as much as possible, wash his feet with honey, milk and water, which represent different types of *samskaras*, and place at his feet a coconut which symbolizes the complete surrender of their wills to him.”

The washing of the Master’s feet was followed by the ceremony of garlanding him with flowers and *darshana* – (taking the dust of his feet). Again the women led the procession, each one placing for a moment a wreath of jasmine and roses around his neck, then touching their foreheads to his feet.

Another picturesque ritual was performed by Baba’s Mohammedan devotees who enveloped him in a mantle of flowers. In a similar manner are Mohammedan brides and grooms shrouded at their wedding. In this instance it typified Baba’s union with God.

In all of these acts of devotion Baba played his role of the loving Father who knows the need of his children’s hearts for visible and sacramental expression of their love. In the ceremony of washing the feet the Western group asked permission to participate. As I approached Baba he gave me an amused smile and when I looked up into his face after finishing the ablutions I was greeted with a solemn wink of one eye, showing with what detachment he plays this game with *maya*, according to the individual need.

Later, birthday messages and addresses in Baba’s honor were read by devotees in Gujarati, Marathi, and English;

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Malcolm and Will Backett representing our Western group. The afternoon was given to spiritual songs and dances. One of India's most celebrated singers – Master Krishna, as he is called – sang for two hours, and groups of devotional singers from Bombay, Poona and Dhulia chanted Baba's favorites.

One unforgettable feature of the celebration was the performance by the whole male population of Arangaon, of traditional spiritual dances, to the accompaniment of elephant horns, drums, cymbals and clanking chains. These were the villagers with whom Baba had worked so patiently many years before, to raise their consciousness and standard of living. Today they are wholly devoted to him. Occupying the place of honor in their homes is the photograph of the Master who labored so consistently for their betterment. In the presence of this symbol they prostrate themselves before starting out upon their daily chores of cultivating the fields, repairing roads or driving to the bazaar with produce; and whenever they pass the Ashram at Meherabad, which is a few miles from their village, they salute it reverently. Now they were here at the birthday feast – every man, woman and child of them – to pay their respects to their beloved Master and Friend.

On this day one felt the overflowing joy of the devotees in seeing Baba again, and the Master's happiness in receiving their love. Yet, to me, the previous day was the more significant one. Perhaps my recent 'crisis' had conditioned me to sense greater joy where pain also abides, than in the happiness which lacks the overtone of suffering.

Concerning devotees in general, Baba pointed out to us: "There are always many who are devoted, but will not obey; a few who will obey after hesitation; and almost none whose love is so strong and pure that they obey without hesitation and without question."

Throughout the birthday feast Baba's closest disciples were busy serving, as usual, in the background. These were the truly selfless ones, constant under all trials, unquestioning in their obedience, whom Baba had been train-

-ing for many years, and through whom, he tells us, he will one day change the world, as Jesus changed the world of his day through his disciples.

CHANGE OF RHYTHM

Just as the birthday celebration marked the end of our confinement to the twenty-four acre estate, so it marked for some of us a complete change of inner and outer rhythm. Baba assigned to us new duties, new routines. My assignment – to meditate, write and think continually of him – was a most welcome and joyous one. Having for many years been of a deeply introverted temperament, I had found the discipline of having to be with people almost constantly a trying one. Now that was over! I was free to introvert and write to my heart's content.

The weeks passed much too quickly. Baba visited us twice weekly, and once every two weeks the group journeyed to Meherabad for the day. Only one night did we spend on that sanctified Hill, where the vibrations were so spiritually stimulating that I, for one, could not waste a moment of that Holy Night in sleep.

The days when Baba was with us at Nasik were always charged with greater activity and heightened consciousness, because Baba is a divine catalyst who quickens into swifter rhythm the lives of those whom he contacts. We never knew precisely when he would be coming; sometimes it was in the very early morning before we were awake. On these occasions we would hear a firm rat-a-tat at the door of one of the rooms and the call would reverberate throughout the length of the long porch: "Baba! Baba is here!" We would scramble into our clothes in order to be ready to greet him when he knocked at our door. Then would come the awaited knock and a quick tender embrace. With loving eyes and questioning gestures, he would inquire about our state of mind and body. If nothing needed his attention, he would pass on to the next room. Later we would all gather in the dining-room for breakfast. In the midst of our meal Baba would appear, gay, teasing sometimes, slipping quietly behind one's chair and gently

tweaking an ear, then darting away before one could catch him at it. At other times he would serve us the food himself, with such grace and deeply focussed concentration that one knew that something more than physical food was eaten that morning.

Later we would sit around his couch, perhaps as he read our dreams, which we had been instructed to record on the nights when he was there and give to him the next morning. Usually, after reading the dream to himself he would look intently at the dreamer, as if conveying some secret information which would someday become known to him. Often he would laugh merrily, and shake his head, as if to say: "Just wait and see what this means!" I recall one of my own dreams which had made a deep impression upon me because it was linked with Baba in a wonderful way and seemed to indicate my part in future work with him. After reading this dream he looked so deeply into my eyes that to this day, whenever I think of his face, I see those pools of infinite love reflecting into my soul, as if re-establishing an eternal connection between us. When he handed the dream back to me, he ordered me to return it to him on a particular date. Perhaps one of these years, on that date, the prophecy of the dream will be fulfilled.

Later in the morning, after we had attended to our necessary duties, Baba would send for us to meet him in the main house. Sitting around him on the floor or on low stools, we would partake of the spiritual food he offered. By means of his board, he would discourse on Divine Love; the Cosmic Plane of spiritual consciousness; on the Realization of God. Sometimes he would discuss some future phase of his work, or someone's immediate problem. Often a crisis would develop for a member of the group – as if by chance, but always it bore the unmistakable imprint of Baba's skillful maneuvering.

In the afternoon, after tea, when the heat had somewhat abated, we would gather on the main veranda while Baba and some of the group played table-tennis. This game, which he seemed thoroughly to enjoy, he played with great zest and concentration. One always had the

impression that in some way he used the game and energies aroused for his inner activities. No score was ever kept, but he loved a swift clever return, and he himself hit hard and skillfully.

At times his playing of this game was used by him for a very different purpose. There was one period in which his universal work took him out of his body a great deal during waking hours. A far-away look would come into his eyes and the next moment he would be lying prostrate and motionless on the couch, with his head covered. After a while he would pull himself up with considerable effort, and force himself to the table, motioning one of his partners to follow. Then, supporting himself by holding on to the table with one hand, he would begin to play, slowly, laboriously. Sometimes he would clutch the table to steady his swaying body. Then he would proceed with the torturous game. These moments with him were heart-rending, because one could see and feel the agony to which he subjected himself, in compelling his consciousness to return to the physical body. Occasionally he would stop the game and drop into a near-by chair, with his head back and eyes closed. The group would stand by, silently watching, wondering, longing to help, but powerless to do anything. One or two of us would feel impelled to drop down on our knees beside his chair and touch his feet or limbs. From the look of grateful love which he would turn upon us we gathered that this helped a little to hold him to the earth where he elected to stay to fulfill his destined mission. Later he would walk briskly through the garden with the group and by dinner time he would be his beautifully poised and tranquil self. After dinner he would again give us spiritual food, or if the night were warm enough we would sit with him silently in the garden under the brilliant stars, as the velvety warmth of an Indian summer evening merged with the glowing halo of divine love which Baba would shed upon us.

Shortly before nine o'clock we could *feel* Baba starting to withdraw, and if his eyes were visible, we could see

that far-away liquid expression which heralded his imminent departure from the restrictions of this earth-plane.

SYMBOLIC EXCURSION

Seldom was the pattern of these days with Baba duplicated. Though his roots are imbedded in that which never changes – the Eternal – the foliage of his being, in this world of illusion, is subject to constant mutation. He is one who knows that there is no such thing as a good habit, except as it may be the stepping stone to a better one. Our birthdays were always the occasion for a special celebration; and since there were fifteen of us in the Ashram, we had frequent parties, with the time-honored embellishments of ice-cream and cake. Movies also diversified our rhythm. The leading motion-picture house in Nasik, owned by some of Baba's disciples, always provided us with the best seats in the house. During these performances, as on similar occasions in the West, Baba was deeply engrossed with his inner work. I recall one picture in particular because of the point Baba made to ask me, especially, how I liked the story. The theme concerned a woman who had relinquished great human love for the divine – for the Master. I remember that Baba looked smilingly interested when I expressed complete approval of the outcome of the story, no doubt because he knew that it dramatized the same principle which was active in my own life – a progressive relinquishment of the personal for the impersonal; of the human for the divine.

Sometimes a picnic or a pilgrimage to a place of spiritual significance would alter our routine. One of these took us to Trimbak, the source of the Godavari, one of the sacred rivers of India which are held in reverence by all Hindus.

I was still far from robust health, but Baba said he wished me specially to go. As usual we left in the cool of the night and arrived at the base of the mountain as the first rays of light were dissolving the darkness. As we emerged from the cars in the hushed expectancy of early

dawn, we could hear the chanting of monks in a near-by temple. It was a touch of the India of yesterday – of age-old religious observances – and it struck in us a deep chord of response; but only for a moment were we permitted to revert to the past. Baba signalled us to draw near him. No doubt he felt our pull backward to a phase of consciousness with which he did not wish his disciples to merge. Baba – in so far as he belongs to any one country, by virtue of his physical birth – represents the India of the future, the India whose resurrected spirit will some day transcend all dead forms and rituals when it exercises its rightful prerogative as spiritual leader among the nations of the world.

As we gathered around him he gave us a few general instructions, then told us to begin our climb of the seven hundred wide steps which formed the way of pilgrimage to the river's source. To reach the steps we had to cross a wide field. I started on my way with Malcolm beside me. He, knowing what little energy I had, was much concerned at my attempting such a long climb. I felt, however, that if Baba expected me to climb those steps he would give me the necessary strength. So we continued on our way. But in a few moments we heard a call from one of Baba's men who was running after us, beckoning us to return. As I approached Baba he looked at me with a deep smile and spelled out on his board that he wished me to be carried up the mountain in a basket-seat, by bearers. I returned his smile and climbed into the seat which hung between two poles. In such a manner I made my ascent of the sacred mountain.

Shrines and temples lined the path-way. The chief one was supervised by Brahmin priests who were greatly excited that Baba was blessing their place of pilgrimage by his presence. Though they had never met him outwardly before, one of their number had prophesied that Baba would be coming soon, and they felt that his visit had deep significance for them and their temple.

After viewing the source of the broad river – which appeared as a tiny trickle between rocks – we found a suitable

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shady location in which to relax. The sun was high now and the climb had been arduous for the others. They looked forward to a period of rest. But Baba decided that we should eat at once. So the picnic baskets were unpacked and when the food appeared we discovered that we were very hungry. Our appetites appeased, we again anticipated a long rest in the cooler mountain air. But within an hour Baba suggested we eat again! After this second meal, in which the remainder of the food was consumed, Baba said that since there was nothing more to eat, we could go home! The purpose of leaving our Ashram in the cool of the night had been – Baba said – to avoid the heat of noon-day travel. But now the party had to begin their descent of the mountain just when the sun was at its zenith! Moreover, Baba chose another route down – a short-cut – which led through the open country without even the slimmest sappling to suggest the protection which the tree-shaded steps had afforded! I volunteered to return on my own two legs, but Baba insisted I go down as I had ascended – carried by the bearers.

One episode on this trip revealed to us Baba's benevolent attitude toward suffering. When we reached the top of the mountain, a poor emaciated dog came limping from the bushes toward the group. His face was almost eaten away by some disease. The only visible eye looked pathetically at us, as he whined miserably. A couple of the younger women cried out hysterically and involuntarily drew back from him. Baba instantly came forward and, leaning down, gently placed his hand upon the running sores. The dog sat down on his haunches and turned his face up to Baba, obviously grateful for the healing balm which was being poured upon him. His whine changed into a deep sigh of contentment as the hand of the God-man wiped away the intolerable pain. Turning to the group Baba admonished: "If you can do nothing to help suffering, don't make it worse by indulging your emotions."

The spiritual implications of this trip are sufficiently apparent to those versed in symbolism to need little elucidation. Baba had used this excursion to typify a phase of

our spiritual journey. In the darkness of night, veiled, as yet, by the ignorance of the lower mind, we had travelled to the source of the sacred river – the River of Life. Having arrived at our destination, the Bread of Life – spiritual sustenance – was given to us by the Master. The descending short-cut suggests a quicker return to normal consciousness and functioning, after the super-conscious state of God-realization, which arriving at the Source and receiving food implies. We descended again to the Valley of Illusion to fulfill our destiny as servants of the Master. Perhaps the process which Baba had initiated at the Pandulena Caves, some months before, was now consummated. That I should have made the ascent and descent of the mountain carried by bearers, rather than under my own momentum, suggests my need for a special technique which the Master's grace supplied.

MONSOON MYSTERY

Early in February Baba had predicted that April would inaugurate a period of merging more deeply with the Divine Life, and most happily this was true for some of us. I felt so closely attuned to Baba's spirit that I saw and felt him in everything. Naturally this heightened perception brought with it deep peace and joy. I felt as though I were reliving the early days of his first visit to America. Through-out May this awareness continued; then with the coming of the monsoon Baba cancelled his weekly visits to our Ashram and coincident with the withdrawal of his physical presence it seemed for me as though he withdrew an inner contact as well. The deep 'transference' which he had induced and fostered was now to be resolved. But I did not then perceive this. All I knew was that a screen of darkness seemed to shut me off from inner contact with him.

This strange gloom found its outer counterpart in the leaden skies which now over-shadowed us for weeks. The Indian monsoon has truly a disquieting effect upon one.

The tremendous tension which the physical body has been sustaining during the intense tropical heat is now released. Human beings, animals and the very earth are almost hys-

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terically grateful for the refreshing downpour – a torrent which seems likely never to cease. At first one does not care whether the sun ever shines again or not; the relief from the torrid heat is so welcome. But as the days pass into weeks, the constant deluge, the heavy skies, weigh upon one's spirit. With the torrential rains seems to come a descent of tremendous forces, both positive and negative which serve to annihilate the past, even as the sheets of rain seem to wash away all traces of yesterday's promise. A feeling of insulation from the rest of life pervaded me, and I found it increasingly difficult to respond to even the kindest overture on the part of my comrades.

From the beginning of June until we left for Europe at the end of July we saw Baba only twice. Perhaps he was preparing us for the much longer separation which was later to follow. Just prior to his absenting himself from our Retreat, a major crisis developed which involved the entire group and gave Baba the 'cue' to break up the Nasik Ashram. For a day or two he discussed with us possible alternatives of location; he suggested certain sections of India where the climate would be more salubrious, and others in southern France or Italy. Many of the group wanted to return to Porto Fino on the Ligurian coast of Italy, where they had spent such happy hours with Baba; but without opposing their suggestion, he led the decision toward Cannes, on the French Riviera. Why he chose this particular spot he never revealed, but a variety of possibilities suggest themselves. Its strategic location in the war-pattern shortly to unfold may have been a determining factor in his decision; or perhaps he wished to touch the soil which is so pregnant with legends of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Joseph of Aramathea and others of the disciples; or may be it was to keep a psychic appointment with one who was later destined to become a whole-hearted devotee of the Master.

MASTER ANGLER

Though much of his activity in the West Baba directed toward motion-pictures, the results were inconclusive until at length he came in contact with a particular man. Al-

exander Markey was drawn into Baba's orbit by some of our New York friends who had charge of the motion-picture phase of his work. He was prevailed upon – as many others had been in the preceding years – to write a motion-picture treatment incorporating certain fundamental spiritual themes which Baba had outlined. Many other treatments had been submitted to Baba, only to receive his courteous 'thank-you' and the request to his New York group to 'find another writer.' When this new man's name was cabled to Baba, prior to his beginning the script, Baba cabled his reply: "Markey is the man." When the finished treatment was sent to the Master, he cabled back that it was accepted and from that day Baba ceased his search for other motion-picture writers.

It was not until months later that Alexander Markey met the Master in London, at the time the Western group was on its way to India. He considers that meeting as the great turning point in his life. After a lifetime of spiritual groping and searching – 'mostly in the dark,' he says – he had the rare privilege of being drawn into the orbit of this very great soul – the living incarnation of what man has always conceived as his ultimate, noblest Self – Meher Baba. The Master's work and personality had made a profound impression on Markey long before he met him, but intellectually he found it impossible to gauge the nature of this impression, or the reason for it. His mind kept rejecting its influence, yet in the midst of a very active life, a vague, insistent premonition of something extraordinary about to happen, persisted in dogging him.

Then a series of mysterious, even startling, events came into his life. At the time, they seemed wholly unrelated, often without apparent meaning, at times incredible. Incidents, too many to relate, culminated in a call, out of the blue, inviting him to London to supervise the production of a motion-picture. At the time, he was so involved in long-range activities in the United States that it seemed absolutely impossible for him to accept the offer, much as he felt inclined to do so. But overnight, everything changed,

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as if by magic, and within a few days he found himself on the “Queen Mary” bound for the British Isles.

In England he was confronted with an entirely new, unexpected set of events which seemed to have nothing to do with his summons to London, the source of which vanished into ‘the blue,’ whence the call had come. To his reasoning mind these baffling developments made no sense, until the momentous day when he received a message that Meher Baba had arrived in London from India and wished to see him.

As a journalist and editor he had occasion to interview some of the world’s outstanding, most spectacular figures, nor had he ever had any difficulty in taking them all in his stride. Crowned heads, the great in the world of letters and the arts, dictators, had been just so much grist to his editorial mill. But when he stood at the door beyond which Meher Baba was waiting for him, he felt ‘like a bewildered little child.’ For the first time in his memory, he admits, he was ‘wholly at a loss to know how to behave, what to do, what to say.’ It was an astonishing sensation and he was utterly confounded.

Then the door opened, and he found himself ‘in the presence of the most sublime embodiment of purity in human form I had ever beheld.’

Before he realized it and without conscious volition on his part, he and Baba were in each other’s embrace, like ‘two long lost brothers, who had at last found each other again, after eons of anguished search.’ And in that supreme moment, all Markey’s doubts, all intellectual questioning, all bewilderment dissolved, like snow at the loving touch of the sun. As if a magic touch had adjusted the focal lens of his vision, he saw things in a light that had never before been his. He knew within himself that this moment was the real reason for his being in London and that the whole bizarre kaleidoscope of events which had preceded it had been wondrously pre-arranged for this one purpose, by the unspoken command of the silent Master. In a flash he saw vividly the beauty and perfection of the whole pattern which now culminated in this supreme meeting of his

career. He felt for the first time the full surge of that divine solvent of which we hear so much and speak so often, but which few experience; the Love that transcends human limitations; the Love that embraces the world. Nor is he the least reluctant to admit that he found himself weeping, for the sheer inexpressible joy of it. Between the time he stepped into Baba's room and the time he left it, a new world had been born for him. So overwhelming was the experience that, in 'boundless ecstasy,' he walked the streets of London all night, completely oblivious of time, space and such archaic habits as sleep. Since that incomparable event, he affirms, life had taken on an entirely new meaning and momentum for him.

Some months after my return to America, I met 'Zander' – as Markey is known to his intimates – and he told me of a further arresting chapter in his experience with the Master. While we were on our way from India to Cannes, a year later, Zander – who was then in Paris – had a strong urge to start work on a particular play which he had long been mulling around in his mind. The ideal setting for the writing of it, he decided was, of all places in the world a certain hotel in Cannes, which overlooked the Mediterranean. He had not been in touch with Baba or any of our group since that momentous meeting in London, so had no way of knowing of Baba's plans. Packing up, he went to Cannes, wondering why he had chosen it. On arrival there, he found a radiogram awaiting him. It had been forwarded from London by way of Paris, and was from Baba, somewhere in the Indian Ocean, asking Zander if he could arrange to go to Cannes, as Baba would be visiting there for some months and would like him to be near him. Suddenly Zander knew why he had been drawn to that particular spot at that precise moment in time! Such is an example of Baba's drawing power with those who are deeply in tune with him, and may possibly have been one of the reasons why Baba chose Cannes as his headquarters in Europe at that time.

CHAPTER VII

TO EUROPE WITH BABA

MY DEPARTURE from India stirred in me the opposing emotions of sadness and relief, as I recalled the poignant moments associated with my life there. I was still smarting under the drastic discipline of being compelled to face the dark side of my nature, alone, unaided by any apparent help from my Master. I sensed that a phase of this discipline was about to terminate and for this I felt a genuine sense of relief, even though it meant leaving India. I sensed also, as I drove away from the Nasik Ashram, that it would be many years before I would return there. Regret and joy danced together in my heart in a strange counterpointal rhythm. The part of me which was still unredeemed delighted to be leaving the scene of so much pain. The better part of me wept that a phase of my life with Baba was over. I felt that after our European visit, I would be separated from him for some time. Mercifully, the Master veiled from me the knowledge that it would run into many years.

Our voyage through the intense August heat of the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea was a trying experience for everyone, but especially for the group of secluded women from the Holy Hill at Meherabad. Baba wished this seclusion to continue, in symbolic form, even on this long voyage. To ensure this, some wore dark glasses, taped at the sides, to shut out as much as possible, the distracting sights of the mundane world. Others used the hoods of their capes to cover their heads and eyes when passing people. Due to this enforced blindness, they were led at each stage of the journey by some of the Western women, symbolizing the role that she, the awakened woman, must

play in leading her blind sisters to the realization of their true destiny. This is not, of course, to suggest that these particular Eastern women were spiritually unawake, but merely that they were being used by Baba as symbols of the inner redemptive work which he was effecting through them for womankind everywhere. This blindfolded journey also illustrates the child-like faith which surrenders utterly to the will of the Master, asking nothing but to be led by him. On board they kept strictly to their cabins, except during the early hours prior to dawn, when by special arrangement with the purser, they were permitted to walk with Baba and the Western women on an upper, first-class deck which was free from the intrusion of other passengers. Baba appointed two of the Western women to watch over their Eastern sisters – to safe-guard their cabins from outsiders, and to attend to their bodily needs. During the rough part of the voyage this necessitated their acting as combination nurse and chamber-maid. One night when Baba foresaw possible embarrassment to the Eastern women, he asked Norina to sleep on the floor outside the door of the women's cabin which had to remain open to give better ventilation. She was suddenly startled out of sleep by the form of a man stumbling over her as he tried to enter the women's cabin. Having stayed too long at the bar, he was reeling his way back to his cabin, and in his confused state of mind got into the wrong passage-way. Thus did Baba's prevision and a Western woman's devotion prevent an unhappy experience for the little nuns.

VIA CRUCIS

As our ship ploughed through the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea, I was compelled to face the full impact of the negative images in the Unconscious – which, of course, the sea typifies. The reverse current which Baba had instituted in India at the time of his withdrawal from our Retreat became more and more intense. Even before boarding the ship my inner darkness seemed to shut me off from all contact with Baba or the group. I, who had been so close to the Master's heart, now felt like an utter stranger.

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On board, outer circumstances confirmed this feeling of estrangement. The cabin which had been assigned to us was in the hold of the ship, with no possibility of any ventilation. The portholes were sealed, because they fell below the water line. Just a few yards from our cabin door was the hold in which sheepskins shipped from Australia were odorously drying!

Just one visit to the cabin was sufficient to convince us that sleeping there was out of the question. Malcolm was considerably disturbed, chiefly for my sake, because of my physical condition which was far from normal. When Baba was told about the accommodations he made various suggestions, one of which was that I take a first-class cabin – since there were no other cabins available in second – and he would see that the difference in price was paid for it. Naturally I refused this offer. When he, the Master, was travelling second, I had no desire to travel first. He sent word back to me that he wished me to accept a first-class cabin, but again I refused. I sent the message that I could not obey such an order. Later, word was brought to me that he was very happy about my decision. When I saw him some days later I laughingly suggested that there were apparently circumstances when one would be compelled to disobey his outer order if it conflicted with one's inner guidance. He agreed that this had been one of those rare occasions. It was finally arranged that we remove the mattresses from our bunks and sleep on deck; and I was given permission to use the first-class washrooms and toilet which saved trips up and down-stairs. Being very ill and weak this new arrangement was a great boon. Twice a day Malcolm would descend for a few brief moments to our cabin to bring up our mattresses and night clothes and to return them in the morning.

As the trip through the Indian Ocean progressed I became more ill in body and more desperate in mind. Baba, who was constantly watching over the other, I saw just twice; once in the beginning of the trip and once when I asked permission to see him, regarding the terrible hatred I was experiencing for everyone and everything. I recall

that he asked if I knew why I had such feelings. My answer – that I must be a very wicked person – was not highly discriminating, as his shake of the head indicated. Now, of-course, I recognize that I was being brought face to face with the inner darkness which is resident in every human being, but at that time I was unaware of this psychological necessity. Consequently, I unconsciously projected this ‘Shadow’ upon everyone and everything outside of myself, in the form of negative emotions of hatred, resentment, bitterness and self-pity. In such a state of mind I naturally felt completely cut off from any contact with Reality. I was imprisoned in a dark, enclosed universe and a very minute one at that. All that might have comforted or sustained me was non-existent. Even hope had vanished. Though my physical eyes were open, they saw nothing but dead form. My ears heard only the moaning of my own heart. Again I tried to surrender more deeply, but now there was nothing – no one – to whom I could surrender. I was at length compelled to accept this living death, but I did so not with the high valor which the saints have displayed in their dark hours, but with the pitiful acceptance of one whose soul is still resistant to the Master’s touch. I am now aware that behind this resistance was the unconscious fear for my body. Much as I tried, I could not ‘let go’ of body-consciousness, which this trip and much of my painful experience in India was bringing into the foreground, to be faced and transcended; such facing and transcendence being essential on the path of discipleship, because so long as there is fear for the body, there can be no Realization for the soul.

Two things were taking place during this *via crucis*. All secondary centers of consciousness – even those which one would normally consider good and legitimate – were being shut off as karmic forces converged upon the soul’s citadel. At the same time, Baba was unloosening the *personal* fetters which bound me to him, the youthful period of discipleship being at an end. He was preparing me for the more mature role which would involve for me greater depth of insight and full-hearted acceptance of responsibility; and

lead eventually to the merging of my consciousness with his universal Self. These are really two aspects of one process – and essential one for the soul which seeks union with its God-self. But only subsequent soul-searching brought to me this understanding. The best I could do – and a very poor best, I must admit – was to bear this period of trial with as much fortitude as I could muster. So skillful a divine psychologist is Baba that even in one's Calvary he leaves little room for glorying in one's tribulations. That one comes through such an experience unmaimed in mind and spirit is more through the grace of the Master – even though unfelt at the time – than through any heroic efforts of one's own.

That which in psychological terminology we call the 'abyss,' is the same condition which the mystic terms the 'Dark Night of the Soul.' Both terms graphically depict the mental state through which everyone, apparently, must pass in making the transition from a self-centered life to a God-filled one.

In *The Spiral Way*, John Cordelier writes:

"The love of God is never idle, for it constrains us to follow the Way of the Cross. Pressing in on us, transfusing us . . . thrusting Life forward on its long quest of perfection, that stern and tender Love compels its children to the only journey which leads Home. It blocks all other paths . . . to force us to a path of unutterable harshness, that leads us, it seems, to the place of death, yet *shall* lead us, if we trust it, to the only country of the soul . . . He desires to consume our very life, in order that He may change it into His own . . . When He has utterly devoured us, then it is that He gives Himself to us . . ."

I now had embarked on that phase of the 'crisis,' initiated in India, in which I felt utterly out off from Baba, from God; and since this unrolling of the 'film' in *reverse* was now in the slowest of 'slow motion,' it was to be many months before the robin's song across the meadow would awaken my soul to the peace of God again; so much there was, apparently, that I needed to assimilate; so much of the little self to be eliminated. Yet, now in retrospect, the pain-

ful memory of this voyage is mingled with a haunting ineffable joy, which I am sure must have been there all the time, had my channels been clear enough to sense it. I can now apprehend the truth of Baba's words, "For one who has no self-interest, even Hell is Heaven."

When, before leaving India, we expressed to an Eastern disciple the wish that he were going with us to Europe, he smiled and shook his head: "I've travelled with Baba and it's never a picnic!" If the vicissitudes attendant upon travelling with Baba occurred only occasionally, one might ascribe them to coincidence. But when over the years they occur without fail whenever Baba travels, one is induced to look for a less circumstantial reason. Whenever the Master journeys negative, as well as positive forces, are called into action. That one is often more aware of the negative or 'Shadow' side is due to the fact that our egoistic selves are too much concerned with the elements of discomfort and dislike to discern the 'Light' which I now realize is also present at such times.

Some weeks after we were settled at Cannes, one of Baba's men who had been on the boat with us told me that every morning around three or four o'clock Baba took them to the upper deck where I was sleeping and stood quietly watching over me for a few minutes. So I was not as utterly deserted as I had thought myself to be!

THE FILM UNFURLS

When we arrived at the villa in Cannes, which one of the English group had acquired prior to our coming, Baba found it inadequate for his Indian women whose seclusion had to be maintained. Within a day or two another house was leased a few miles away and here the Eastern women lived with a few of their Western sisters. Baba spent most of his time there, coming down to our house only for interviews in the morning and for the bathing and feeding of Mamoud – the chief *mast* who, at Baba's order, had been brought to Europe, shortly after our arrival, by some of the Indian men.

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After the various movings from one room to another, which have been earlier described, Malcolm and I settled down in a very large room in the main house, with a beautiful view of the Mediterranean seen through large, waving palm trees in our front garden. Physically, the surroundings were ideal. The climate was most beneficial for those of us who had suffered from the tropical heat of India. Renewed physical life began to stir in me. But how little this counted when my heart and mind were so ill at ease. With me Baba was continuing his inner withdrawal as well as the outer. I saw little of him and when I did he assumed a remote and casual role, for the most part. Added to this trial was the increasing tension between Malcolm and me, which the 'crisis' in India seemed to have brought to a head. He was now under the discipline imposed by Baba, of being confined to our room, eating but one meal a day and maintaining complete silence. Difficult as this no doubt was for him he derived some real joy from it, as it gave his naturally reflective temperament opportunity for deeper introversion.

If a human relationship is too possessive, too dependent – one upon the other – it will constitute a serious obstruction to the free flow of divine life and must therefore be dissolved and reformed. It was this process which Baba had initiated. Furious 'images' from the Unconscious were released, and even though Malcolm was pledged not to speak – and he obeyed this order faithfully – I became the recipient of all the dark and repressed emotions which were being stirred in him. No doubt to him I seemed to be the provoker of his moods, just as he seemed to me to be the occasioner of much mental anguish. Less and less was I the indulgent 'mother' who catered to his moods; more and more was he the antithesis of the comforting 'father' who would fortify me in my weaknesses. If he seemed to fail me, certainly I must also have failed him. Since in both of us there was so much unconscious longing and adolescent craving which we were trying to fulfill through each other, it was inevitable that Baba should stir up these hidden

forces and bring them into the light of consciousness for us to face and assimilate the power resident in them.

But during those days at Cannes I was too close to the problem – both physically and emotionally – to have much understanding of it. To escape from the tempestuous atmosphere of our room I took to spending the day up in the hills. Fortified with a few raw carrots and a piece of cheese, a sketch-pad and crayons, I would set forth in the morning into the mountains which overlooked the town and the ever-enchanted sea. To ‘let-off’ some of the pressure which I was experiencing, I would dance and sing with complete abandon when I found myself far enough away from houses and people. This proved to be a providential safety-valve, because during this period I came as close to the border-line of mental disintegration as one could go and yet retain some degree of balance.

Baba was, of course, watching and guiding behind the scenes as I realized even then, but see much more clearly now. One night, just before dinner, I had reached such a zenith of desperation that I left the house and again climbed into the mountains. Some of our family had encountered enormous snakes – which we had been told were poisonous – on their tramps through the wooded section; so into this part I hiked, hoping, praying that an obliging snake would relieve me from any further responsibility to this life. As it became very dark and I became weary from climbing, I sat down in the woods and played with the thought of how sweet death would taste if it should suddenly come upon me there in the cool dark of night. “To cease upon the mid-night without pain,” or even *with* it, seemed a most desirable fancy that night. After about two hours of this eerie vigil I was compelled by some inner force to pick myself up and walk back to the house. With no sense of jubilation, but with the realization that a low-water mark had been passed, a new surrender plumbed, I trudged homeward. Life must be *lived*, not cowardly rejected. In spite of the anguish of soul; in spite of everything, I must go resolutely forward. With this conviction I found my way home. As I approached our property, I heard the voices

of searching parties who were scouring the neighborhood for me. Humiliated and ashamed, I slunk in through a back lane without encountering any of the group. Stopping at the kitchen, I made apologies to our housekeeper for being absent from dinner.

The next morning when I saw Baba he never showed by even the flicker of an eye-lash that he knew of my escapade. But I was aware that he had been with me every moment in consciousness and knew even better than I the motivating causes of my reckless behavior. That afternoon when I saw him again, as I knelt beside his couch, he took my head between his hands and poured upon it such healing balm that most of the anguish dissolved. Again he had proved himself the Master of consciousness who takes one to the breaking-point, but not one hair's breadth beyond that which the mind can, with safety, endure.

During this period he said to me once: "You think I am cruel." Feeling rebellious, I exclaimed: "You are cruel!" "I must be temporarily cruel," he replied, "in order to be permanently kind." Then looking at me compassionately for a few moments, he added: "The day will come when even the memory of this pain will be completely obliterated by the all-consuming joy which will flood your soul." When I remonstrated that the 'Night' was *so* long, he assured me that when daylight came everything I had borne would be seen to have been a thousand times worth while.

Illustrating another aspect of his dealing with souls, he said to me toward the end of the European visit: "I push you away, then I draw you close; again I push you off and draw you even closer; now I push you far away and the next time I draw you back to me it will be to remain one with my Universal Self, forever."

This period of darkness which I have related was, of course, the pushing-off part of the process; painful in the extreme, but how necessary and beneficial I now comprehend it to have been. Through it was generated in me greater intensity of soul-desire for union with God.

One of the strangest and probably most significant episodes of the European visit was the trip which Baba made to Paris, accompanied by a few of his Western women devotees and all of the secluded Indian women. On this journey – made by motor, in cars driven by two of the Western women – the same strict regulations were observed to assure the privacy of the Eastern women. When they arrived in Paris they were received by Consuelo Sides – a devotee of Baba – whose charming house faces the left bank of the Seine. Probably never in the whole history of Paris – or any city in the world, for that matter – had such a strange sight-seeing party graced its precincts. During the three-day visit Baba and the group rode up and down the Seine; drove around the city and the neighboring localities, with the Eastern women looking up or out only when instructed by Baba. The main feature of their sightless-sight-seeing was a trip to the Eiffel tower, one night, during which Baba held one of his most important ‘inner meetings’ with saints and Masters of the sixth and seventh planes of consciousness. If my supposition is correct – that the consciousness of womankind is being raised by the special work which Baba is doing through these Indian women – then the women of Paris – who by reputation have particular need of a more spiritualized concept of life – must have been subjected to a strangely unfamiliar rate of vibration that night! Fantastic as this supposition may seem, it would appear to have been somewhat substantiated by the amazing action of the new post-war government in France which has outlawed prostitution and bawdiness as it has also granted to the French woman for the first time in the history of France, equal rights with man; both actions indicating radical changes in the French attitude toward women.

Baba and his party arrived back at Cannes in the evening and the next morning he came to our room. When he entered I saw at once that he was almost wholly in a super-conscious state, so I ran to take his arm and lead him to the couch. I sat down beside him while Malcolm stood before us. Baba looked first at one, then at the other with

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the expression of a little child who is dazed by some unearthly beauty which no words can describe.

“What is it, Baba dear?” I asked.

Looking at me as if I should know, he spelled out: “Hadn’t you heard about the ‘meeting’?”

His eyes were so eloquent with anguished joy, that I could inwardly hear the plaintive tone in his unspoken words. This was one of his beautiful childlike moments.

“No, dear,” I answered, “I hadn’t heard.”

Then he told us that a most important ‘meeting’ had been held in the Eiffel Tower, and that ever since it had been difficult to hold himself in his physical body. He rested his head on my shoulder for a few moments, as he gathered his forces together to go on with the next phase of his daily work which never ceases. Finally, at his signal, we helped him to the door, where a couple of his devoted Indian men were waiting to assist him. When I saw him an hour later the painful transition had been accomplished. He was his usual dynamic self, playing again his cosmic game with the forces of the universe.

BABEL OF TONGUES

During our visit to Cannes, people from all countries of Europe came to see Baba. Frequently at lunch or tea, a veritable cross-section of the League of Nations was seated around our long table. French, Italian, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Swiss, Scandinavian, different Indian dialects and of course English, vied with each other for vocal supremacy. But what a different mission these people had! Most of them shared with the rest of us the conviction that only through a change of the consciousness of mankind will the ideals of universal brotherhood – which underlie the original concept of the League – come into being. These men and women – many of them diplomats, statesmen, leaders in their particular fields of art, science and religion – came humbly, to sit in the presence of one whom, they believed, held, the key to the world’s problems – the divine solvent of selfless love. In talking with them, after their meeting with the Master, one could see in their eyes

that Baba's life-giving leaven was already quickening in their souls a purer love, an altruistic ambition to become better instruments for the power of God to work through.

One of these visitors was Alexander Markey who came daily to sit at Baba's feet as he outlined for the Master a program of spiritual, inspirational and educational motion pictures, which Baba said will some day form the basis for an entirely new trend in motion pictures.

SYMBOLS OF HEALING

After the Paris visit, we began to scent change of plans, and within a week or so we were told that in October Baba would return to India with some of the group while others of us were instructed to return to our home in the West. My health had been steadily improving, but Baba said I was not yet able to cope with the Indian climate; that I would, in fact, give up my body if I returned to India at that time and this he did not wish. He needed me for his future work, he said.

The healing process, which was an intrinsic part of the wiping out of karma, began shortly after our arrival at Cannes and was initiated by two techniques ordered by Baba. One involved writing for an hour every day, the words: "Jean is not body, Jean is soul." After a few days of this practice, I found myself awaking in the morning with this affirmation on my lips; and throughout the day it continued to repeat itself automatically. Gradually, I became more and more aware of the soul-quality in myself and in all expressions of life. This was the healing aspect of the psychic-surgery which Baba had been performing for many months. It indicated the mental attitude which the disciple must acquire toward his body.

The second technique might be regarded as the sacramental aspect of the healing, which had for its objective the making of the mortal immortal – the overcoming once and for all of body-consciousness. One day Baba brought to me a small bottle which contained pills about the size of pin-heads. These, he informed me, were pulverized gold, pearl, silver and a few rare Indian herbs. He had ordered them

specially prepared before leaving India, just for the purpose of facilitating my recovery. He instructed me to take one each morning before breakfast, on a small piece of butter, and under no circumstances was I to omit taking them. Almost immediately my health began to improve. Though aware, at the time, of the part which my mental acceptance necessarily played in the healing, I learned only some years after my return to America the symbolic meaning of the pill and butter strategy.

Through the study of Jungian dream analysis in which I was engaged, I was led to delve into the mysteries of Alchemy. Here, in the source material of Hermes, the great Master of Greece, I discovered that the properties contained in those pills, plus the butter on which they were to be taken, symbolize the processes which man must undergo in order to attain immortality. The pearl, of course, is the precious jewel of consciousness found by man in the innermost cavern of his soul when he turns his eyes God-ward. The gold represents the positive life-principle – the spiritual Sun; the silver the receptive moon element in the human soul. Together they form the psychic circuit which the individual must utilize if he would achieve God-consciousness. The herbs effect in the body that glandular balance essential to the immortalizing of the vehicle of the Spirit. The butter, with which the miniature pills were to be taken, is the product of churned milk to which we find reference in the *Mahabharatta*, Book 1, Chapter 15: “The Suras, and all the glorious hosts of heaven, having ascended to the summit of this lofty mountain sparkling with precious gems, and for ages raised, were sitting, in solemn synod, meditating the discovery of the Amrita, or water of immortality. The Dewa Narayana being also there, spoke unto Brahma, whilst the Suras were thus consulting together, and said, ‘Let the ocean, a pot of milk, be churned by the united labour of the Suras and Asuras (good angels and bad angels) and when the mighty waters have been stirred up the Amrita shall be found. Let them collect together every medicinal herb, and every precious thing, and let them stir the ocean and they shall discover the Amrita’ ... It was

from this milk-like stream of juices produced from those trees and plants and a mixture of melted gold that the Suras obtained their immortality. The waters of the ocean, now being assimilated with these juices, were converted into milk, and from that milk a kind of butter was presently produced.”

That the churning of the milk sea suggests the profound stirring of the waters of the Unconscious will be evident to the students of symbolism and Jungian psychology. The butter represents the individualized consciousness of God which the churning of the waters of the Unconscious precipitates.

Having through force of circumstances been made deeply aware of drastic changes taking place in body and mind, since returning to America, I am satisfied that Baba's pill-prescription set in motion a process which is now bearing fruit.

The parting from Baba was an extremely painful one. In my farewell moments with him I was moved to thank him for all the joy and pain of my life with him, to which he replied: “Thank me *only* for the pain.” Now, years later, I fully appreciate the wisdom of these words. The expression ‘growing pain’ is just as applicable to the spiritual life as it is to the physical, and without it no growth is possible for the human creature. In the process of self-regeneration all veils of self-excuse and self-pity must be torn asunder by repeated experiences of pain and humiliation. Were we free of egoism and self-will our spiritual growth would be as effortless and painless as the unfoldment of a rose. The human, however, has to deal with the problem of *conscious* unfoldment which requires a focal point, such as the ego, around which his impressions can be centered; but being only a provisional center, it must some day be relinquished in favor of the true God-center. When this time comes, both pain and effort are necessarily involved in its elimination. In the ignorance which our ego fosters we set up resistance to the activity of God in our souls, when he undertakes to free us from our self-centered, body-conscious limitations.

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Were we enlightened enough not to rebel, but to accept fully the will of God as it manifests in our life, then our inner reaction would bear the imprint of joy. As one great soul has expressed it: “we should be grateful for each messenger of pain that reveals at once our weakness and our Self to us.”

As I have been re-living in retrospect the days I spent with Baba in India and Europe, I find more and more that the moments which then, in my darkness, embraced the keenest anguish, now, with many veils removed, give to me the purest joy. I am also aware of joyful overtones which were present even in the painful moment of parting from him. The *deeper* mysteries of divine love can only be known through the alembic of pain.

I intuitively felt that for those of us who were returning to our homes in the West it would be many years before we would be with him again in the flesh; and that many momentous changes would, in the meantime, occur in our individual lives and in the world situation. Certainly no intuition ever proved more true.

In my own case, the dramatic sequence which began – or was previewed – in India continued to unfurl in “slow motion” for a number of years; so much latent darkness was there that I needed to face and assimilate. No cobweb corner of consciousness was permitted to go undiscovered, unswept, ungarnished.

SILENT PARTNER

The trip which Malcolm and I made from Cannes to Paris by motor bus, and thence to America by the “Queen Mary,” provided many soul-testing ‘curtain-raisers’ which the Master was directing from behind the scenes. My husband was still under the disciplines of silence and one meal a day until he reached California, so it became my job to act as the man of the party, in buying the tickets, making all the arrangements and generally supervising the trip. This constituted no hardship until we found ourselves in circumstances where Malcolm’s excellent French would have

served us well, while my being limited to the English language proved a distinct handicap.

I had been told by the agent at Cannes that our tickets provided for a stop-over and hotel accommodations at Lyons – where reservations had been made for us by the company – and that we would be deposited by the bus at the hotel. But when we arrived at Lyons, at night – in a remote section of the city – the courier, who had evidently dined and wined well that evening, indicated that we would have to pay extra for a taxi fare across the city to the hotel. We suspected that this was one of the famous tricks played on unsuspecting tourists by palm-itching natives, and since we neither felt like encouraging the agent's rapacity, nor, in fact, were financially able to do so, we insisted that he fulfill the contract which I had made with the bureau at Cannes.

These complications had already provided tremendous emotional fermentation. Malcolm, who knew French, was not permitted to speak; I, who knew only English, could speak as much as I liked but to no purpose! Malcolm had a small alphabet board which had once belonged to Baba, and by means of this he could communicate somewhat laboriously with me; but when he tried it on the courier, the man burst into a torrent of what sounded like very adequate French abuse! Then Malcolm tried writing what he wanted to say. This was worse yet, for even his best friends claim that one must be psychic in order to read Malcolm's hand-writing! Obviously the agent wasn't. He seemed to regard Malcolm's silence as an unpleasant kind of practical joke, and my inability to speak French as a personal affront. At length we managed to compel the gentleman – by a series of graphic gesticulations and ominous grunts from Malcolm, and imploring looks from me – to see the light! But at the hotel we encountered further difficulties. The agent declared that the bus would not pick us up in the morning; we would have to taxi across the city. Since their calling for us had also been part of the original arrangement made at Cannes, we again insisted that they fulfill their contract. By this time the altercation between Malcolm and the man

had reached its peak. Then in his excitement the agent touched me on the shoulder. This was too much for Malcolm. His hands sought the man's collar! Silent he remained, but when the basic urge of protecting his mate was called into play, only brute force was apparently adequate to express his pent-up emotions! The cave-man technique worked. The man agreed to stop by for us in the morning. Inside the hotel, however, we encountered another problem – no reservations had been made for us, they said, and no room was available. Again the pantomime started, with much hand-waving, scowling, writing and spelling on the board in French, only in the end to find out that the woman at the desk understood English! Whatever we said or did must have been formidable, because she finally consented to materialize a room without the bribe for which she, too, was evidently angling.

The ten days in Paris deserve a book to themselves. We were there for the purpose of buying French silks, with which Malcolm would resume his business of manufacturing and selling men's neckwear. To present to his Hollywood clientele, a month before Christmas, a choice assortment of ties made from Charvet, Rodier and Bianchini silks seemed an auspicious way of re-establishing ourselves financially. Our idea proved to be a good one, though I'm sure the clerks at these silk houses must have wondered how on earth a dumb man could be a salesman! Leading Malcolm around Paris with my inadequate French, asking for directions on trams, ordering in restaurants, buying in shops, while he stood by silently squirming, was a most unique experience which only a Perfect Master could devise for the further elimination of our egos.

Nor was the homeward trip on the "Queen Mary" without its moments of awkward fun. Malcolm was continuing to eat but one meal a day – at noon. At one of the meals at which I sat alone, a young man from across the way came over to my table. With the usual camaraderie of shipboard travel, he offered his condolences for my husband's 'affliction.' Had he always been dumb? He asked. I assured him that it was only a temporary indisposition of his vocal cords.

“He seems to eat so seldom – is that part of his treatment?”

I was grateful to him for giving me that answer! Yes, I assented, fasting was part of the treatment. He shook his head in sympathy. He seemed to think that it was a serious situation and that I was very brave. There were moments when I thought so, too!

On the day of landing in New York – as we filed by the passport inspector – I went first, handing him our joint passport. He looked at it and asked the usual questions: was I an American citizen, and so forth. My replies satisfied him, so he turned to Malcolm who stood behind me. To his queries, Malcolm merely nodded his head. The officer repeated his questions. Again Malcolm nodded. The man became very angry: “I didn’t hear you!” he snarled.

Standing beside the official was the ship’s purser who had come in contact with Malcolm on board. He informed the inspector in a stage-whisper, loud enough for the whole waiting line to hear: “He’s dumb – he can’t speak!”

We had an anxious moment as the officer looked Malcolm over. For less than this, innocuous travellers had been incarcerated on Ellis Island, pending medical examination. I debated quickly in my mind what I should say, were I asked any probing questions. To tell them the real reason would hardly have helped the situation. What would a passport official understand of a man who does not speak on orders from a spiritual Master? He might think it a blind for something subversive. Or, if I said that Malcolm had contracted this strange ailment while abroad – because his passport showed no indication of his being ‘dumb’ when he left the country – the inspector might conclude he needed medical examination before entering New York. But my momentary concern was quickly relieved. Apparently thinking Malcolm was deaf as well as dumb, he shouted at him the usual form questions, while all down the line I could hear kind old ladies and gentlemen commiserating with me: “Poor young woman! How sad to have a deaf and dumb husband.”

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Malcolm's father met us at the dock. To say that he was shocked by his son's silent greeting is greatly to understate his reaction. Though a kind and gentle man, his exasperation became almost explosive when I told him that Malcolm was not permitted to speak until he reached California. "You mean to say he's going to visit me for the next week without talking?"

My explanation did little to appease his bewilderment!

Though on the surface a simple thing, this silence of Malcolm's created the most astonishing complications which had the effect of making one or both of us appear ridiculous or pathetic; all of which was, of course, grist for Baba's mill of further eliminating the ego.

CHAPTER VIII

ON TOUR WITH THE MASTER

JUST as we arrived in New York, in November, 1937, Baba and his party landed at Bombay. With him were the Eastern women, the Eastern men and three of the Western women. Three others were to follow later after brief visits to their families in the West. Three weeks after their arrival Baba, with a few of the Eastern men and two Western women, made a nine-day tour to the towns and cities of various of his devotees.

The first stop was at his childhood home in Poona, where his Mother played the part of the gracious hostess in showing them through the house which had sheltered Baba in his childhood and provided the earthly rendezvous for the momentous descent of Godhood into man. In sympathetic imagination the group entered a little into the supernal joy and agonizing pain of those months in which he was compelling the human spirit to fulfill its divine destiny by balancing itself in the physical body.

Baba's Mother is a lady of great natural charm and intense spirit. The contour of her mouth and chin indicate a determined will and her twinkling eyes still retain the fire and enthusiasm of youth.

Some interesting anecdotes were told us in India of her reactions to what she felt was an abnormal development in the life of her favorite son. Often, after Baba had gone to live with his second Master, Upasani Maharaja, his mother would travel to Sakori – Maharaj's 'seat' – to plead with him to give Baba back to her.

"You've taken my best boy away from me," she would remonstrate. "Give him back to me!"

Once, Upasani called Baba and told him of his mother's

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pleas and gave him permission to return home with her. But Baba ran away.

Another time she visited Babajan, Baba's first Master and accused her of taking away her son: "My boy has gone to stay with Maharaj and it's all your fault! Make him come back to me," she cried.

Babajan, from the depth of her great heart, looked upon her compassionately: "But Merwan is with you now! Don't you see him?" Then she called: "Come, Merwan, come," and turning to the anxious mother, asked: "Don't you see him? He is here. He is everywhere!"

On another occasion, when she visited Maharaj, shortly before Baba's return home, she told Maharaj that she wanted him to tell her son that he must obey her in every respect. The Master, knowing what was in her mind, smiled, and replied that as long as Baba lived at home he would obey her in all things except one; he would never marry, as that was not his destiny. The mother was greatly annoyed because that was precisely what she had in mind to achieve!

Knowing, however, by this time a little of the implacable ways of Perfect Masters, she had to relinquish this fond desire and soon afterward found consolation in having her son home with her again. One day while a neighbor was calling on her, Baba's mother expressed her joy at having Baba with her again and boasted that he obeyed her every command, just as Upasani had promised. The friend, a little dubious of her claim, persuaded the mother to ask him to do various things as a sort of private demonstration. Cheerfully and promptly Baba complied. Then the neighbor whispered: "But these are such simple things. Tell him to do something more difficult – walking around the block, naked, for example!"

His mother's eyes flashed: "I wouldn't think of it," she declared. "He would do it instantly, without question!" Thus ended the demonstration of implicit obedience!

As the years passed and Baba gathered around him his group of disciples who revered him as a God-man, his mother's former possessive attitude changed. Though still

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at times puzzled at the extraordinary destiny which life had cast for her and her son, she is now one of that devoted group of women disciples who give to the Master the whole-hearted allegiance due and incarnate God.

The next step of the travellers was Talegaon, where Baba was received with the usual enthusiastic and loving devotion of his followers. In the home of some devotees where they put up for the night, a complicated emotional situation had arisen between two brothers who were partners in business. No difficulty, however apparently mundane or trivial, is too unimportant for Baba's attention, if it vitally concerns the lives of his disciples. Like a loving father, he gives freely of himself, his wisdom, his love, in helping those who are still caught in the snares of illusion. He therefore proceeded immediately to unravel the tangled human threads. All night long one of the contenders sat outside Baba's door waiting to surrender himself to the Master's judgment. At four o'clock Baba opened his door to the repentant one who was now willing to relinquish his self-will and pride of position in his family. Later in the day Baba departed for Bombay leaving behind re-established harmony and peace.

In Bombay the procession of needy, hungry souls prostrated themselves at Baba's feet, giving to him the love which he himself inspired, and seeking from him the touch, the look, which would fortify them to continue with the life ordeal which, as some faces revealed, seemed too great to be borne.

One lovely Parsi mother brought her two-weeks-old baby who was subject to spasms of rage so violent that it was torture for onlookers to behold it. Baba having been informed about the case, deliberately postponed the interview, thereby generating greater expectancy on the part of the mother, and preparing, in the sub-conscious of the child, greater receptivity. During the waiting period the tiny, doll-like baby, apparently responding to the subtle alchemy of Baba's invisible help, became calm and finally fell asleep. A little later Baba sent for the mother and baby. As he held the child in his arms the little one's eyes

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opened and were caught by Baba's powerful focussed look. Those who witnessed the silent drama relate that an unmistakable expression of smiling peace spread over the little face. The mother, too, was aware of the redemptive work which Baba's look had accomplished. On leaving the room she carried the child high in front of her, as if dedicating it to the higher life which she felt had been awakened in its consciousness.

Among those whom Baba interviewed was a devotee long associated with the Master. An unusually energetic and excited discussion took place between them in an Indian dialect, when Baba spelled in English on his board and had one of his men read aloud for all to hear:

“A man who cannot control action is not a man!” Little self-pampering among his men is tolerated by Baba.

During the interviews the group learned that another of the Mandali was to undergo further testing through a prolonged separation from Baba. To the one so designated, Baba sent the message: “ I suffer every second of my life untold agony, in which you must share. This is the last phase. When you see me again, you will see me as my true Universal Self.” Then he gave directions that this one was to go on a begging tour. He predicted that it would be very difficult for him, for he would be abused and taunted by many, but he would endure it all bravely.

On the twenty-third of December they boarded the train for Navsari, where they were to visit the Desai family. While on the train, to still the speculative thoughts of some of the party Baba spoke of selfless service:

“God as God *alone* is not conscious of being man, nor is man as man alone conscious of being God. Only the God-man is conscious of being *both* God and man; so the God-man is both Lord and servant of the universe. He is Lord or Master in his capacity of helping all souls forward on the pathway to Reality. He is servant in that he continuously bears the burden of humanity. To serve him who serves *all* is to serve the universe.

“Selfless service and love are twin qualities of divinity. Only one who loves can truly serve. When you serve your

beloved God-man you are serving your own Self in all other Selves.

“The service which the Master exacts is for your own spiritual benefit; but this service expectation of reward. Serving him may constitute an ordeal which tries body, mind and spirit. But wherein would lie the perfection of serving, if it were easy and suited to one’s convenience? Yet, in spite of the body’s suffering and the mind’s torment, the *spirit* of the selfless server experiences the bliss of true satisfaction. Only he who without any question or thought of reward serves the God-man, really serves. Any other attitude is no more than *paid* labor.”

The Desai family, with whom Baba’s party stayed at Navsari, are great land-owners in the Baroda State. They have been the Master’s devotees for many years. Sorabji Desai was the author of about a hundred volumes on a variety of subjects: social, religious and philosophic. One book entitled, ‘Hundred and One Names of God,’ was written directly under Baba’s inner guidance and later received his outer confirmation. The day that the last proof was submitted to Baba for verification an interesting phenomenon occurred. Baba was holding the book and pointing, on a chart which it contained, to the highest point in divine existence – God -- when a brilliant light in the form of an arrow shot forth from his head and then changed into a luminous spiral, filling the room with a golden glow. This was visible to all present and infused them with a feeling of heavenly Oneness.

Now, at the time of Baba’s visit, the Desai family was being brought face to face with the two great cosmic forces of life and death. Within a few days one of the daughters was to be married and extensive preparations had been made for the large gathering of family and friends. Also, at any moment, although only Baba knew the hour – and seemed in fact, to be playing the role of Time-Keeper -- Sorabji Desai was to experience the great drama of physical death. The morning after their arrival

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Baba, after visiting Sorabji's room, gave orders that no other visitor was to see the sick man, and instructed the household to recall the invitations to their three hundred guests for the wedding ceremony to be held three days hence. Only the few near relatives and friends were now to be invited.

Later in the afternoon, as the group sat around Baba's low divan, listening to the strains of music from an Indian orchestra, a message came from Sorabji requesting, as his last wish, to pay homage to his Master. A short while later, with superhuman effort – as two members of his family supported him – he stood before Baba, then shook off the protecting arms and dropped on his knees at Baba's feet. He had offered the final oblation of himself to the Master whom he had long loved and served. Suddenly Baba gave the order for him to be carried back to his bed.

The next morning the group heard that the patient had slept but little. Baba went in to see him for the last time and left with him the benediction of his own great joy and serenity. The departing soul was happy that his earth life was ending with the Master's blessing and he rested contented in the knowledge that shortly he would embark upon a new phase of soul-life.

Shortly afterward Baba and his party left for Bombay and the next day journeyed on to Nagpur. While there, the telegram which Baba had been hourly expecting arrived from Navsari, announcing the death of Sorabji Desai, just twenty minutes after the wedding ceremony. Thus did the lords of Life and Death graciously fulfill their appointed functions. While reading the message Baba appeared pleased, and spelled out on his board: "Well done."

One of the outstanding features of the Nagpur visit was Baba's interview with a mentally – deranged child – a boy of seven – whom the Master had, weeks before, ordered to be found and brought to him when he would arrive at Nagpur. When the boy – usually extremely shy – saw Baba he immediately jumped up on his lap and threw his little arms around Baba's neck. Every day during their visit Baba bathed and clothed the little chap, even as he had done

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with his *masts* – the God-intoxicated – at Rahuri, thereby cleansing and renewing the boy's mind even as he cleansed and clothed his body. Before leaving, Baba instructed the child's father to bring him to Meherabad the following April, when the work of redemption would be completed.

Like forest-fire the news spread that the Master would see anyone whose life was destitute, defective or despairing, with the result that a steady stream of sick and sorrowing – many of them little children – passed before him for blessing. Placing his holy hands upon their anguished heads, he poured upon them the spiritual balm which both heals and quickens.

The next evening was devoted to 'open house' for those who desired Baba's *darshana* or blessing. Police had to be called to clear a passage outside among the waiting throng. In the center of a large hall, Baba sat on a beautiful couch richly adorned with pillows, shawls, carpets – all loving offerings of his devotees. Again Indian music throbbed and sighed, charging the atmosphere with its soul-quickening crescendo.

The next day again vast crowds of soul-hungry human beings – seven thousand of them – waited in line for hours for the sight and touch of the Master. Then came the moment of parting from his gracious hosts. He embraced them, as a loving father does his children, caressed their faces, looked deep into their eyes as though imprinting upon them an invisible gift. To a few he also gave visible gifts. He took a handkerchief from Norina's pocket and after holding it for a few moments in his hands, he passed it on to one of the family. One child he held tenderly in his arms. Accompanying all these simple, human gestures, there was traced upon his face the suffering which he was experiencing as he took upon himself the pain and the burdens of these eager, wistful souls.

When Baba arrived at the station a little later, thousands were waiting there to bid him farewell. As the train pulled out into the enveloping darkness the echo of the crowd's

reverent cheers reached Baba's party. "*Shri Sadguru Meher Baba Maharaj ki jai,*" – the same salutation which had rent the air at Nasik at the time of the birthday celebration – "Hail to Meher Baba, the Perfect Master, the Supreme King!"

Arriving early in the morning at a railway station a few hours distant from Meherabad, they found one of Baba's men waiting for them with a car. As they drove along the dusty road Baba suddenly declared he was hungry, so they stopped under the ample shade of a banyan tree and unpacked the lunch which the family at Nagpur had prepared for them. After being bountifully fed, Baba suggested that they all take a siesta. Not long, however, did they relax, for Baba was in a light, playful mood. As he played a game with them, a man appeared on the road, apparently very poor, carrying heavy bundles. Instantly on seeing him, Baba ordered the food unpacked and an excellent luncheon of patties, cheese, bread and fruit was presented to the man, with the words, dictated by Baba: "Shri Sadguru Meher Baba is the giver," to which the man answered in a serious but natural manner: "It is my good fortune that I should be fed by him."

It seemed evident to those accustomed to the Master's psychic appointments which frequently attend his journeys that this man was one of his spiritual agents whom Baba knew he would contact at that place and hour.

A similar 'appointment' was described by Ruano Bogislav, one of the party who journeyed with Baba to Hollywood in December, 1934. When their train halted at Albuquerque, New Mexico, for half an hour, Ruano, who was with Baba as he walked up and down the long brick platform, relates how he suddenly stopped and turned toward her as he spelled out on the palm of his hand the word 'Indian.' Ruano, thinking he wanted to see some American Indians, looked around and spied an old squaw sitting in front of a shop, whom she pointed out to him. But Baba's inner attention was elsewhere. He motioned to his four East-Indian disciples, linked Ruano's arm through his and swiftly

made his way toward the end of the long platform; there he turned abruptly to the left and continued up a street as though he knew precisely where he was going. Ruano, unaccustomed to Baba's strange ways, and as yet unconditioned in that state of mind which leaves everything to the Master, was wondering if they should be going so far afield, hunting Indians! The train might leave without them. But on they walked. After a few blocks, Ruano spotted two Indians standing on the corner of the next street. She was delighted, and turned to Baba as they approached the figures: "Here are your Indians, Baba!" One, short in stature, who was selling bows and arrows walked away as the party approached. Before the other – a tall, impressive figure with a red band tied around his head – Baba stopped. They looked at each other intently for a few minutes. Ruano murmured: "I wonder if he speaks English?" But no one paid any attention to her. The East Indian disciples stood in silence. Abruptly, Baba turned and taking Ruano's arm again, strode quickly toward the station, reaching the train just as it was about to pull out. Later, Ruano asked Baba if he had expected to see that particular Indian, to which the Master nodded his head in affirmation and indicated on his board: "One of my spiritual agents."

These incidents, so strange to the average Westerner, are taken for granted by Baba's disciples after years of repeated experiences of this sort. Many of these 'agents,' Baba informs us, are unaware of him as the *person*, Meher Baba, until such an outer meeting as occurred with the Indian in America and the Indian in India. Prior to such a meeting, their contact is wholly on the inner planes, where names signify functions rather than personalities.

UNIVERSAL SPIRITUAL CENTRE

In March, 1938, Baba took the entire 'family' to Panchgani, the scene of the famous cave mentioned earlier in the story. This move served two purposes. One was to spare the Western women the unaccustomed heat of a tropical summer at Meherabad – which, owing to its low altitude,

is oppressively hot; the other was for some special inner work of the Master. A large bungalow was rented just on the outskirts of Tiger Valley. Here the women, Eastern and Western, lived; some distance away in a smaller house, the male members of the party stayed, in as much as the seclusion of the Eastern women was still in effect. After allotting comfortable quarters to everybody Baba selected for himself a small store-room attached to the kitchen. It had a very low ceiling and no ventilation except an old creaking wooden door, and it was in a sad state of dilapidation. The men, however, quickly got busy and soon transformed it into a spotless little cell. A special room was also reserved for the use of the chief *mast*, Mamoud. With him Baba continued the daily symbolic ritual of bathing, clothing and feeding.

During the visit to Panchgani, Baba made several short visits to Bangalore in Mysore and to Belgaum in the state of Hyderabad. These visits were for the purpose of looking over the territories as possible sites for the International Spiritual Centre which Baba was then proposing to establish. The keen interest and co-operation of the late Maharaj of Mysore, and his able Dewan, Sir Mirza Ismail, together with the central location and salubrious climate of the Mysore state, were strong factors in favor of Bangalore – chief city of the province. Here, some months later, the cornerstone of this unique institution was laid. When it is completed, Baba predicts, men and women all over the world will gravitate to it; among them will be great souls from all sections of life.

In this Centre, which will accommodate about one thousand people, Baba proposes to have six departments. One will be *The Spiritual Academy* – which will prepare men and women to give intellectual expression to the world's need for international selflessness and harmony. *The House of Advanced Souls* – will prepare men and women to become practical mystics who will translate their higher consciousness into terms of everyday life. Another, *The Abode of the Saints* – will prepare souls to enlighten the ignorant by quickening in them the realization that only God is real and all else is illusion. *The Mast Department* will minister to

those God-intoxicated souls who have become unbalanced in traversing the inner planes of consciousness. *The Solitary Quarters for Meditation* will afford opportunity for those whose spiritual development can best be furthered by prolonged meditation under the guidance of the Master. *The Resting Place for the Afflicted* will devote its attention to the care and alleviation of suffering of all kinds. This department will train men and women for a life of selfless service. All six departments will be under the direct supervision of the Master. Enrollment in this spiritual Centre will be determined solely by Baba and those whom he will appoint.

Beginners, as well as the most advanced yogis and saints, will find their way to its doors. The chief requisite will be love of God and longing for union with Him. Excerpts from his message at the time of the foundation Laying, read:

“..... The time for a universal awakening is imminent, and important aspect of which will be this Universal Spiritual Centre, founded here today. Mysore will some day realize its singular good fortune in possessing among many other progressive features the Spiritual Capital of the world as well. I bless you all in the greatest scheme of spiritual regeneration which the world has ever known, the foundation of which you have witnessed today. This Universal Spiritual Centre symbolizes the character of my divine mission on earth.”

At this time Baba also decreed that six other Centres would have to be established throughout India before he would break his silence and inaugurate his public work. Four had already been established at Meherabad, Nasik, Madras and Toka, and the foundations laid for another at Mandla, on the Narbada in the Central Provinces, in addition to the one just laid at Bangalore. Sites for the other six – bringing the total to twelve – were then under consideration.

STRANGE DRAMA

A few weeks after their return to Meherabad an extra-ordinary dramatic performance was given at the men's Ashram in the presence of about two hundred guests.

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Though only Baba knows the full significance of this amazing drama we may read a little between the lines and see another evidence of his use of drama – real or imaginary – to set in motion certain forces which express themselves universally or individually, as the case may require.

This performance was given by the God-intoxicated men under the direction of Pleader, the disciple whose severe testing and training was earlier described. *Raja Gopichand*, the king who renounced his throne for the quest of God, was the theme of the play. When one considers that most of these men could scarcely stand in one spot for more than a moment without doing something erratic, with little or no cohesion of thought, the feeling and concentration which they brought to their performances were quite astonishing. For the duration of a two-hour performance these men not only remembered accurately their lines and songs, but they portrayed their roles with fervor and real understanding. Much of the credit was due, of course, to Pleader's wise direction and Baba's constant supervision; yet, the fact that a dozen or more deranged men could so miraculously adapt themselves to direction was in itself an unprecedented achievement.

One deviation from the accurate rendering of their parts occurred when one of the men, apparently overcome by the underlying theme of the play, broke through his lines with the spontaneous cry of a soul to his God-self:

“I fall at your feet; I give you my life; I die for you!

Baba attached much importance to the successful performance of this play, as symbolical of the ultimate successful outcome of the world drama of ‘madness’ in which mankind was about to be engulfed. It remains to be seen how long it will be before the selfishness and self-seeking of individuals and nations will be superseded – as in the play – by the quest for true righteousness.

HAVEN OF MERCY

Shortly after this performance a hospital on the Hill was opened for female patients. A woman doctor was placed in charge of the hospital, while under her served Countess Nadia Tolstoy, as Matron, with the help of other

Eastern and Western women devotees. This hospital was more than a place of physical healing. Through the constant benediction of Baba's love which quickened the afflicted and inspired those who served, this place became a haven of mercy and refuge for many. The first baby was born of a poor demented woman, cast off by her people, who was picked up one day by some of Baba's men about twenty-five miles from Meherabad. Baba was the first to hear the little one's cry and immediately went in to see and bless it. He gave special instructions for its care, and often caressed and fondled it.

With all the patients, it was Baba's presence more than the medicines which revived their drooping spirits, and effected that cure of the soul which alone insures lasting healing of the body. Nor were the patient, the only recipients of grace. Those who served at the hospital learned the priceless lesson of real, selfless service, which sees beneath the squalor to the anguished spirit, pain-racked and sorrow laden. They were learning the wisdom of Baba's words: "Do not think that in serving others you are doing them a favor. Be happy that they have favored *you*, by giving you the opportunity to serve."

Such selfless service Baba himself constantly exemplifies. It is in this characteristic – of the servant supreme – that the true greatness of a Master should be judged. His continual outpouring of mercy; the hand placed upon the head to bless and redeem; the heart ever open to share the infinite love of God; these unflinching, human acts of spontaneous service are the insignia of true God-hood, and these the Master Baba wears with simple grace and beauty.

HOLY HILL

Upon the return of the women to Meherabad they found that a second story had been added to the one-room building which had been the home of the Eastern women for many years. On this second floor lived about eight Western women in a dormitory with their cubicles partitioned off by muslin curtains. Quite a contrast was this to the comparative luxury of the earlier Nasik Ashram! Yet one of the English women writes from India that though all

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the Nasik luxuries have been withdrawn they do not miss them. In fact, she believes them to have been the cause of many of the serious difficulties which arose while we were there.

No doubt in the beginning of this new regime the lack of privacy to which they had all been accustomed must have offered many emotional handicaps to be overcome. But, as my correspondent says, their life on the whole was happy and serene. Two factors contributed toward this: they were living in the rarified atmosphere which had been Baba's headquarters for many years; and they had the blessing of his daily supervision and loving encouragement.

One strange yet psychologically understandable department which Baba inaugurated was a Zoo! A donkey, a monkey, a goose, a snake, a lamb, a miner-bird, a peacock, a gazelle, a pig, a cat, and two dogs had to be fed twice daily by two of the Western women and their pens or cages kept clean! At one period Baba gave orders that the monkey – then in Norina's sole charge – must always be with her even to the extent of sleeping on her bed! Thus does Baba dramatize and make acutely realistic the psychological truths which the western psychologist deals with intellectually. Baba, of course, knows the particular instinctual energies which are typified by the different animals, as he also knows well how to utilize and transmute them.

Kitty Davy, one of the English disciples who returned to India with Baba, has given an intimate picture of their early days on the Hill with the Master. She tells of the conflicts, the difficulties, the crises, and shows how Baba watches over them all and leads them beyond the little self into his own universal life. Perhaps one has become angry with another. The ego is hurt and one starts to see the inside. Then Baba who senses these things immediately calls the offending parties and rebukes them for their lack of love. "If you cannot love each other, then learn to give in, one to the other; when you feel resentment and anger surging up within you, begin to dance, or laugh, or go outside for a moment until the mind and emotions are under control. At all costs, these must be controlled."

Brooding and remorse are two characteristics which Baba strongly discourages, because they so completely insulate from the spiritual life-current those who succumb to them. They act as negative conductors for all the self-centered forces of the universe.

Jealousy is another of the binding cords of the ego which Baba brings to the surface; then in an unforgettable manner reveals its ugliness, its selfishness. The guilty one is now faced with a painful problem which he must somehow solve, because only through self-mastery does the individual spirit evolve. Eventually one realizes that there is but one Beloved Life, with no division, no sense of separation. Toward this realization the Master leads his children step by step, by making himself the Way through which they may see and participate in the Oneness of all life.

If one is attached to money or possessions, Baba creates the circumstances which will make this tendency apparent; as he will also provide ample opportunity to transcend this limitation. To those devoted ones who have given him all their earthly goods, he says: "You have given all for love. All mine is yours. You are my own; and I will look after all who are mine."

Not only does attachment to *things* circumscribe the life of man; attachment to the results of our actions impedes also its spontaneous flow. To surmount this egocentric tendency, Baba suggests that all our actions should be for the purpose of rendering service: "If, for example, it should be your duty to kill a dog to save three cats, let your thought be of helping the cats. Have no attachment to the act of killing."

Again he advises: "Be attached neither to violence, nor non-violence. Fight if you must, but let your motive be only to help. Eat, to serve the God-life in you, not for the pleasure of eating. Only so can you be free from all desire and be attached only to Love."

For those who are aware of the superior value of linking their consciousness with a living incarnation of god, he suggests, as Krishna did in days of old: "Think always of me, whatever you may be doing; then gradually you will

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realize that it is I doing everything through you. 'I', the Doer – not you. What concern need you then have with the results?"

Through one and a hundred ways in his daily life with his beloved ones, the Master leads them to a deeper understanding of divine love, until finally, perfect in service, selfless in their devotion, they become so much part of him that no thought of self remains. United in consciousness with the God-man, they arrive at their own true Centre.

One of the greatest privileges which the disciple has in serving the Master is that of sharing a little in his universal suffering. Yet how few at the time of the sharing are able to rejoice in it and make it a creative experience. Baba never condemns, however, this natural revulsion from pain. With a sad smile he will turn upon one his compassion: "You are not to blame. I threw upon you the tiniest part of my burden, but you did not understand."

SPIRITUAL HUNTSMAN

On Baba's return to India from Europe he focussed most of his outer attention upon those men whom he calls the god-mad. To discover these souls and then persuade them to submit themselves to his compassionate ministrations was the chief purpose of the extensive journeying all over India, which occupied much of his time from December 1938 until December 1945.

In word recently received from India, Baba has further elucidated the object of his work with these souls. It has been his purpose not only to balance their consciousness but to awaken them to the wider responsibility which they must assume in the stupendous task of Universal quickening. During his stay at Hyderabad alone he contacted 125 of these God-intoxicated souls – and many hundreds in other parts of India.

It was by no means an easy task to induce these individuals – absorbed in their beatific vision – to depart even for a brief time from their chosen 'seat' or headquarters where, in many cases, they had lived for years. Had Baba himself contacted these souls directly the task would have been

relatively simple. Being peculiarly responsive to spiritual vibrations they would instantly have felt the divine love which emanates from him and willingly have yielded to his direction, as they all did, once they came into his presence. But this was not Baba's method. He delegated certain of his disciples for this task, and often their ingenuity was taxed to the utmost in trying to find ways and means of persuading these God-intoxicated beings to follow them! Their task was rendered even more complex by the fact that Baba wished his identity undisclosed. Often crowds would gather around the disciples, curious to know why decently clad men were so anxious to take with them the derelicts in rags which most of the *masts* appeared to be. The mention of Baba's name in most cases would not only have struck a responsive chord in the hearts of the God-mad, but would also inevitably have drawn to Baba the usual crowds seeking blessing from the Master.

Sometimes among these people were those who knew the God-intoxicated man and revered him as a spiritual guide. They would then become aggressive as they would try to prevent Baba's disciples from taking their holy man away from them. At all costs a public row had to be avoided, yet Baba's men must accomplish their Master's orders. It was a delicate undertaking, requiring the utmost in patience, perseverance and skill; but in the end the disciples would achieve their mission.

One of these God-intoxicated men was worshipped by thousands as a saint. Baba confirmed his spiritual status. He was brought to the Master by a tipsy *tonga-walla* (a cabman) whom the disciples had requisitioned to help them in their work of gathering up holy men! This particular dazed soul was of the mild type, resisting or hesitating only if the order in some way conflicted with the higher consciousness in which he was absorbed. When these souls are lost in their spiritual ecstasies they feel greatly disturbed and often cry, if told to do something which pulls their consciousness down to earth. Those who are less advanced will use cruder methods to express their displeasure, such

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as Mamoud did when he spat in the face of the Indian disciple in Europe. It is for this reason that Baba – considerate of their delicate psychic mechanism – strictly orders that no coercion or force of any kind is ever to be used with them. The disciples are instructed to watch over them and serve them in all patience, just as Baba himself does. If for any reason they are obdurate, Baba sits quietly waiting until, of their own accord, they signal their willingness for him to continue his services.

Another one when brought to Baba sang in his ecstasy: “I gave my heart to One, but that One disappeared . . . I have searched for him all these years . . . Now I have found him . . . I found him *here today!*” Later, he sang: “To love is no easy task . . . Love is for those who are heroes, who have courage, patience, who can suffer . . . Love is the real thing!”

After days of persuasion by one of Baba’s disciples, a woman saint finally consented to be led to Baba. She was very reticent. Only once did she give expression to her feelings after she had been staring fixedly at Baba for many minutes: “Why don’t you let me have just a few drops of water from the Ocean of Divinity that you are?” she pleaded.

Another of the many who gave vent to their spiritual emotions was a Mohammedan who, when lovingly touched by Baba, cried out: “My heart is intensely burning – you have set me aflame!” indicating the fire of divine love which the Master had kindled in his heart. Later, as he was being fed by the Master, someone asked him where he was and at whose hands he was being fed. “I came to the court of Allah,” he replied, “and ate my food at His Palace!”

Many other were the expressions of ecstasy and recognition of Baba’s spiritual eminence on the part of these lovers of God. One who saw him as he was driving with some of his disciples through the streets of Ajmer, shouted in great joy: “Look! Shankar (*a Hindu incarnation of God*) is here! Run, hurry! Receive God’s blessing!”

Once, in Panchgani, an advanced soul ecstatically chanting a devotional song stopped suddenly when he saw Baba

SPIRITUAL HUNTSMAN

approaching and exclaimed: "You are the great Avatar!" Later, in parting from Baba he declared: "None here knows you, but I recognized you at once. In meeting you my life's desire is fulfilled. Hail to the God Vishnu!" In each case these souls would recognize Baba as their own chosen manifestation of Deity.

Speaking of these outbursts of ecstasy on the part of these God-lovers, Baba explained: "They feel happy with Baba because they see and know who Baba truly is; something which you with a merely human eye cannot see. The special eye which sees the divine form of Baba is quite distinct from the human eye. With your physical eyes you see the plaything of *Maya* -- tables, chairs, couches. The *internal* eye sees *through* all these things to God."

Later, he added: "I love these Lovers of God. They know nothing of the world; even to their bodily needs they are blissfully indifferent. While the whole world craves the playthings of illusion; while human beings rush at each other's throats for self-gratification, these souls are absorbed in their love of God."

Elizabeth Patterson, an American member of the party who travelled with Baba on these journeys wrote that she had seen these weary, tortured souls leave Baba's presence, after the symbolic 'bath,' with an unmistakable expression of regeneration upon their faces. "They were like a garden of humanity, purified and shining, after celestial rains."

Through the 'touch' of the Master, such joy was bestowed upon them that their expression of bliss could not be concealed. It radiated from every atom of their being.

Like most journeys with the Master, these extensive trips from East to West and from North to South of the vast continent of India were laden with diverse difficulties and delights; ample were the opportunities of self-sacrifice, and frequent were the moments of deepening love and veneration for the Master, to whom these men and women had dedicated their lives. Their faith, too, was strengthened as they witnessed the profound reverence which these saintly souls accorded to Baba, and observed how unflinching was their instant recognition of his spiritual supremacy.

ASHRAM ON WHEELS

About thirty men and women – Eastern and Western – accompanied Baba on these journeys. A huge motor-bus was especially designed to suit the requirements of the party, with a partition one or two seats in back of the driver's seat, forming a closed compartment for the Indian women who were still in relative seclusion.

For the Indian men, who are nothing if not vocal in their contacts with each other, this trip must have constituted a peculiarly arduous discipline! In order to make sure that no male voice was heard by the little nuns, Baba instructed the men not to raise their voices above a whisper whenever they were in the bus, or within hearing distance of the Eastern women!

All the luggage -- which included pots and pans, stove and buckets, for the ablutions of the *masts*, as well as thirty travelling bags and bedding rolls – was packed on top of the bus! The moment of departure in their six-wheeled dinosaur always provided plenty of laughter and excitement for the party. Baba usually boarded the bus last – after carefully supervising all the final details – and made his way to the front of the car, which meant that the gangway seats could not, of course, be occupied until he had passed. With their camp-stools pushed back, the occupants of these seats would stand to one side to make an aisle for Baba. The next moment he would snap his fingers, giving the signal to shut the door. Then before the door was shut he would tap on the window motioning the driver to be off. As he speeds up the circumstances of daily life, he accelerates the consciousness of his disciples. These moments of departure always provided him with ample opportunity for this work of acceleration.

Needless to say, he never lost an opportunity to bring to the surface whatever latent shortcomings needed to be faced, or to drive home an overlooked truth. One of the group relates how she had occasion to wait in the car for a number of mornings at the same spot in a particular town. Each day the same beggar – miserable and destitute

as only an Indian beggar can be – would come to her whining for alms. At first she gave him something, but as his demands persisted, she became annoyed and pretended to be asleep when she saw him approaching. Later when she told Baba of the annoying incident, she said: “I don’t know why he persists in coming to me every day.” Looking at her seriously, Baba replied: “He gets *hungry* every day.”

Some nights, after a three-hundred mile journey, the group would find only an empty bungalow for their shelter; and if they were to make an early start in the morning they would sometimes not even unroll their bedding, but would curl up in their coats on the hard floor, or on tables or chairs if the bungalow provided these luxuries. The next night, perhaps, they would find themselves quartered in some Maharaja’s palace, where they would luxuriate in soft beds. Thus, Baba weaned them from their attachment to comfort or asceticism, from their likes and dislikes. Under ordinary conditions such an ordeal might seem insupportable, but with Baba as the guiding spirit, giving encouragement where it was needed, gently teasing to lift one into a lighter mood, the greatest hardship became embellished with beauty, the darkest moment transfigured by the divine radiation from the great heart of the Master. As Rano Gayley, one of the Western group who accompanied Baba on these tours, has expressed it: “The love one has for Baba overcomes all obstacles. To give up all for love of the Master is no hardship, for one gives up nothing and gains all.”

WHIRLWIND TRIP

Baba’s journeys – of which at least one object was the finding of God-intoxicated souls – have continued throughout the years. He has declared that it was necessary for him to contact at least seven out of every ten of these souls before he would break his silence and initiate his public work. This percentage has now about been reached, which may be another indication that the long-awaited world quickening may be imminent.

These journeys have taken him and his disciples many thousands of miles across desert and mountain; they have

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skirted dangerous jungles and forded turbulent streams; they have driven through torrential rains and under scorching sun, from the languorous beauty of Ceylon to the rugged majesty of the Himalayas.

One whirlwind trip-made by Baba and two of his men disciples-in search of these God-intoxicated souls, was particularly arduous. They covered five-hundred miles within seventy-eight hours, during which time none of them slept nor bathed, and they ate but one scanty meal a day. Five days later a similar trip was undertaken, but this one had the distinction of being made in a bullock cart! Such a mode of locomotion over the rough roads of India would have been difficult enough, but nature also added to their discomfort by drenching them with rain and soaking their bedding beyond any possibility of use.

RISHIKESH – ABODE OF SAINTS

Contrasted with such experiences was the delight which the group experienced in visiting Rishikesh, for centuries the abode of saints and yogis. Baba led them to every nook and corner of the district, pointing out to them some of the more outstanding figures of spirituality, among the many who make that mountain shrine their home. They visited one of the jungle Retreats at the far end of the valley through which flows the torrent of the sacred Ganges. Suddenly they came upon the immobile figure of a man standing naked in the stony river bed, with his face turned toward the sun. Baba explained that it was this man's function to perform this duty of establishing contact with the sun, for seven continuous days, without changing his position; then for two days he is relieved by another advanced soul. In such ways, the spiritual titans of the world attune themselves to the laws of the cosmos and even aid in their direction. This saint gave the impression of a mighty oak tree, whose top-most leaves gleam in the sunlight and whose powerful roots tunnel deep into the dark cavern of the earth.

Later they passed a forest where ten advanced souls were taking turns in meditation. One of them sat covered with a long sheet, merged in his meditation and oblivious

of outer things. Evidently, however, he felt the presence of Divinity, for on the way back, as the group passed this shrouded figure, he sprang up from his coverings as Baba approached him and prostrated himself before the Holy One.

One of the favorite places of pilgrimage in this section is the great mountain, reaching eighteen thousand feet into the region of eternal snow, where the Lord Krishna is reputed to have laid down his sacred body. To this high level dauntless pilgrims crawl and climb, many of them sacrificing their lives for the attainment of their goal.

Only on the sacred soil of India can be found such passion for God; such willingness to sacrifice what is generally conceded to be man's most prized possession – his physical life – for the attainment of this supreme objective. And unique even in India is this section, Rishikesh. Here, Baba says, people come *only* to realize God. All lesser goals have been relinquished. This naturally endows it with one of the most spiritual atmospheres in the world.

SECLUSION ENDS

Throughout much of this period of travel Baba was observing strict fasts and relative seclusion, seeing only those of his immediate group, or the God-intoxicated with whom he continued to work daily. Outer contact with his other devotees, who have always had comparatively free access to his presence, was curtailed shortly after his return to India in 1937. Even when he passed through towns or cities where some of his devotees lived, strict secrecy of his movements was observed. Then in March 1943 came word that he had ended his long period of seclusion. His re-entry into more public life was marked by visits to three large towns, Sholapur, Barsi and Akalcut. The news of his impending visits spread like brush-fire, with the result that wherever he went throngs of people were waiting to see or touch him, and if possible to obtain his blessing. At one city the local traffic was so disorganized by the fifty thousand people clamouring to get near him, that the police had to call out reserves to handle the crowd which had organized itself into

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a singing procession with a band at its head, as it led Baba through the town, for four and a half hours.

Two amusing incidents are told of this trip. In one town a man actually stole the sandals from Baba's feet. Fortunately, he had the forethought to bring new ones to replace those which he stole! In another place Baba had to be literally rescued from the attentions of a violent admirer who with tears streaming down his face grabbed Baba and shook him! With such ardent fervor does the Indian mind sometimes react to saintliness.

At the time of these public appearances Baba issued a few messages, giving the keynote of his world mission, which were read and distributed among the devotees. In the introductory one he declared that it is time that man had a fresh vision of the Truth that all life is One. "God alone is worth living for; and God is also worth dying for; all else is a vain and empty pursuit of illusory values."

In another message which is concerned with the freedom of humanity, Baba stated that though the world is talking and fighting for various kinds of freedom, the basic freedom – and the only one which has any true value – is spiritual freedom. "Even when all the external conditions of free life are completely fulfilled and guaranteed, the soul of man would still remain in woeful bondage if it failed to realize spiritual freedom . . . One important condition of spiritual freedom is freedom from all wanting. It is desire that fetters life and enslaves the soul. When the soul breaks asunder the shackles of desire, it emancipates itself from its bondage to the body, mind and ego. This is the spiritual freedom which brings with it the final realization of the unity of all life and puts an end to all doubts and worries . . . There is no gift greater than the gift of spiritual freedom and there is no task more important than that of helping others to attain it. . . . The time has come for all those who would help in the regeneration of man to offer their services in my mission of helping humanity to tread the spiritual path, which leads to the Realization of God. Those who participate in this God-willed, divinely-planned and predestined task of bringing spiritual freedom to mankind, should know

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that every type of suffering and sacrifice – even to giving up the physical body – may be required of them. . . . However, through their untiring activities, humanity shall be initiated into the new life of abiding peace and dynamic harmony, unconquerable faith and unfading bliss, immortal sweetness and incorruptible purity, creative love and infinite understanding.”

CHAPTER – IX

PRELUDE TO DESTINY

TREMENDOUS as Baba's effect has been upon the lives of many thousands who have had a close inner or outer contact with him, his life activity so far has been largely preparatory, because his public manifestation – which many of us believe will substantiate his claims of Avatarhood – is yet to begin. His claims of Mastership can hardly be repudiated by any unprejudiced person who is acquainted with the facts of his life; and if we understand what the role of Avatarhood implies, we may see in many of these facts indications that this claim also is true.

Since in the West we have no literature which deals with the concept of the Avatar as a recurrent manifestation of Godhood in human form, we must turn to the *Bhagavad Gita* – the great sacred classic of India – for enlightenment on this subject. Here we find a dramatic situation which is wholly analogous to the present condition of man. Then, as in our time, a dreadful war – as related to the *Mahabharata* -- was destroying the old order with all its vices and virtues. Both individuals and nations had come to the place where all the intellectual, moral and emotional values had collapsed, leaving man in a state of spiritual bankruptcy and utter bewilderment. The man of action – Arjuna – was asking himself, even as we are asking ourselves today, whether bloodshed ever achieved anything of lasting worth. Did it not perhaps merely help to keep the balance of power in the hands of one group of people or nations rather than in another? With Arjuna, however, directing the battle behind the scenes, was the beloved friend and counselor, Krishna, for whom Arjuna had the deepest love and respect. In his moment of utter frustration, hopelessness and doubt of all his old values, he turns to his wise friend and guide, asking him for a clear rule of conduct by which he may confidently walk.

This man Arjuna is the representative man of his age who has – like modern man – exiled God and spirituality in favor of ethical, social and humanitarian ideals and practical reforms. Both individually and collectively this man of the *Gita* and of today has reached the moment of his soul's greatest need – when he must face his own inadequacy. Up to this time, Krishna's help has been largely that of spurring his friend on to disinterested action in defending his position against the opposing foe; the outer foe who is, of course' but the objectification of the inner. But now Arjuna – having reached the end of his own egoistic action – turns to Krishna in despair, pleading for his help. He begins to suspect that this beloved comrade is more than human friend, more than mere man. He implores him to show him his true form, his real nature. And because the soul of Arjuna – almost like that of modern man – has been sufficiently conditioned by suffering; because his egoistic self-sufficiency has been punctured, Krishna consents to satisfy the soul's urgent desire. He reveals himself in his aspect of universal Saviour or Avatar, and proceeds now to guide Arjuna to the higher state of consciousness for which he knows him to be ready.

In the person of Krishna, we find one in whom the eternal divine nature is fully conscious; one, therefore, who is fully aware of his *destiny* as the spiritual leader of mankind and in that consciousness, directs the destinies of men and nations. In his own right as the incarnate God for the whole of humanity – not merely for a restricted group of close disciples – he lifts the consciousness of the entire created world, for even the animals respond to the magic of his divine flute -- the symbol of the irresistible drawing power of God in the soul. Krishna also recognizes that his role of guide and awakener of the whole of life is one which he has always, since the dawn of humanity, fulfilled.

Of this same consciousness, Baba has given countless indications both in his dealing with people and by his own admission. Once, when a questioner asked him how he knew that he was the Christ, he replied: "I knew it before anything was," which is perhaps another way of saying:

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“Before Abraham was, I am;” or, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

In the instruction which Krishna gives to his disciple Arjuna, we find basically the same technique of life which Baba today gives to his twentieth-century disciples. At some stage of their inner unfoldment he gives them a glimpse of his true nature and mission, and then encourages them to surrender themselves wholly to his will – his guidance. He teaches them how to live in the world, yet not be of it; how to perform all action without regard for the fruits, by thinking of themselves as channels for the action of the Divine Being within. He gives them a new Law of Life by which action may be performed free of bondage yet powerful enough to achieve the will of God or the Avatar. He lifts them above the plane of the opposites, with its endless conflicts and perplexities, into the center of true knowledge, peace and joy – the Divine Self. Also like Krishna, Baba first leads the disciple as the beloved friend, father, comrade. Then, when the time is ripe, he reveals himself as the soul's Saviour, the immortal Being who lives in the heart of every man, while at the same time he takes form as the human Avatar. With Krishna, Baba says: “Seek refuge in me, for you are very dear to me. I will release you from all sin. Do not grieve; do not worry.”

Surely today as in that far-off time of Krishna, we have reached an impasse in man's development. Of himself alone, he seems powerless even to protect his physical existence. This is the psychological moment when man should – and indeed must – turn once again toward God for help. To the least mystical person, it should be apparent – as it was to the pragmatist, Arjuna – that unless some divine means is found to enable man to transcend his greed, selfishness and fear, this civilization will rapidly retrogress to the jungle state of consciousness, or be totally destroyed by the pressure of a button in the hands of a man or nation gone berserk. War has obviously not taught us the lesson that mankind is *One*. War can never teach that lesson. Only as individuals become aware of the basic unity of all life will nations be

able to cooperate in a spirit of universal brotherhood and assure the further spiritual progress of mankind.

Clearly, such a development in man's consciousness presupposes divine intervention of some sort. Not by intellectual means, not by *conscious willing*, can man learn to love his fellow-man regardless of color, creed or nationality. For this, the constructive forces of the unconscious must be released. Fortunately for humanity there is, in the form of Meher Baba, a Divine Force who has the power to arouse these latent powers of Light; and what is more important, who has the *authority* to use that power, as the testimony of many advanced souls and saints has corroborated in this, his life story. Only the Leader – the Avatar – knows when the God-force shall speak his word of power and effect for man his gravely needed spiritual awakening. We can, however, as Baba tells us, speed its coming by surrendering ourselves wholly to the will of God, with the recognition that only divine aid will save mankind from total destruction. When humanity has come to the end of its own resources, at the moment of its greatest need, then, Baba says, he will initiate his public work through the breaking of his silence.

WEARING DOWN THE EGO

This long silence – now in its twenty-second year – has been an enigma to many people and his continual postponement of breaking it has proved a stumbling block to many others. So many times has he set the date for his speaking and then apparently changed his mind. The skeptical person assumes that Baba has lost his power of speech, or that he is using his silence for a novel publicity stunt. Once, in India, when I spoke to him about it, he said that from the outset, he knew, of course, precisely how long he would remain silent – and he knew therefore that it would run into many years. Had he told his disciples in the early days how long it would be and how long, therefore, would be their period of probation (since their full-fledged discipleship depended upon his speaking) they would in many cases have lost heart, become too discouraged. So, like

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a wise father, he led them on year by year, developing their capacity for patient waiting, by promising them their release in but a fragment of the time he knew his silence would have to last.

Though Baba's silence serves many purposes which lie beyond my present comprehension, one of them may be found in its effect upon the disciples whom he is training to take their places as spiritual leaders in the world of tomorrow. One of the most outstanding features of Baba's technique with his disciples is the means he uses to develop their capacity to endure tension and to cultivate patience. Almost everything he does in relation to his Circle in some way contributes to these basic requirements for psychological health and maturity.

He first holds before one a goal seemingly impossible to attain – certainly impossible by one's own unaided efforts. Then he promises aid but only at some hypothetical date when he breaks his silence. When we consider the dynamic power which he has of quickening consciousness and of intensifying longing for the infinite, and at the same time realize how he deliberately withholds that desirable goal, tantalizingly just beyond one's reach . . . always with the promise of 'tomorrow, next week, next year,' it becomes clear how almost unbearable becomes the tension of waiting. Many people have, of course, refused to play his game by reacting negatively against him and by turning away. Their action is understandable. But there is also the constructive way of viewing this puzzling procedure.

I have come to realize that through his unique strategy, Baba *wears down the disciples' ego*. At first the disciple rebels against the prolonged delay in reaching his lofty goal. In his innermost self he knows himself unfitted, unready at the time for such a momentous step. But his accentuated desire fosters in him the belief that anything is possible. And Baba deliberately encourages this reaching for the stars. But as the years pass and Baba continues his silence while the disciple continues to wait, little by little the longing becomes cooled and latent, the ego becomes less demanding, more compliant with the exigencies of the mo-

ment, more surrendered to the Master's will. In this way the disciple becomes more mature, riper for whatever unfoldment his soul is ready. As Dr.Fritz Kunkel says in *In Search of Maturity*: "The most destructive feature of ego – centricity is its rebellion against time. Complying with time means growing older and more mature, slowly and patiently. It requires creativeness, or at least flexibility."

LETTING GO

As the disciple becomes more mature, more fluid; as he learns to wait patiently but without any diminution of his spirit's intensity, he finally reaches the place where he lets go – abandons himself utterly to the will of god or the Master. His intensity of spirit is now turned to the consideration of the present moment. He accepts himself as he is now; he becomes aware of the wonderful potentialities of the present and ceases to focus his attention solely upon the future. The sugar-plum which Baba has been dangling before his eyes no longer makes his mouth water with desire. He is too intent upon finding spiritual meaning and value *now*. The task of assimilating the profound realizations which the Master has stirred in him becomes an ever-present adventure of momentous importance. Gradually his life becomes more deeply integrated, more consciously attuned to the heart and mind of the Master.

Since writing the above I have found in some of Baba's recently received *Discourses* confirmation of this intuition that, for a time, he deliberately fosters the attitude of mind which he would ultimately have the disciple transcend. In his article, *The Infinity of Truth*, he says: "If Truth were to be found only in the future and not in the past or present, it would not be infinite; it would automatically be limited as an event which has its origin in time. All that is inherent in life is deprived of its intrinsic significance if the present is regarded as merely a stepping-stone to some far-off attainment. This is definitely a false point of view . . . It is not right to deprive the present of all importance by subordinating it to an end in the future. It is only through a clear and tranquil mind that the true nature of spiritual infinity is understood to be something not to be

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attained in the future, but as that which already has been, is and ever will be an eternal self-fulfilment. When every moment is rich with eternal significance, there is neither the tenacious clinging to the dead past, nor an expectant yearning for the future, but an integrated living in the Eternal Now."

It has been my experience with the Master that in this dual intensification of feeling – tremendous yearning for God on the one hand and a kind of divine despair on the other – he creates in one a longing so acute, so insupportable, that one is finally *compelled* to 'let go'. To the degree that we are able to do this, without any egoistic thought intruding, we are aware of Him – of Reality – here and now; not in some far-off day. Even if this blessed moment of clarified awareness is not the ultimate one, and we find ourselves again constrained to 'let go' more spontaneously, we now find joy and interest in the process of stripping off the veils of illusion which cloud our apprehension of Truth.

Should Baba *tell* his disciples this fundamental fact, before they have experienced it for themselves, he would belie his role as a supreme psychologist. He knows that a condition must be created in the depths of man's soul that will cause his whole being – both conscious and unconscious levels of his mind, the full battery of his emotional nature – to revolt against all self-imposed limitations, and then to let go and let God take over. Merely to understand this truth intellectually would, at best, effect but a temporary and partial release. Only a profound *need* can give one the necessary incentive to face and accept oneself as one *now* is, unadorned, unashamed. This need Baba certainly creates. His teaching or way of life is basically the same as the teaching of Zen Buddhism – as it is essentially the same with all true teaching, whatever the religious approach to God. Confirmation of this is found in Alan Watt's *The Meaning of Happiness* in which he describes the essence of Zen as: "Total acceptance, which seems to be a response to bondage, is actually a key to freedom, for when you accept what you are now, you become free to be what you are

now; and this is why the fool becomes a sage when he lets himself be free to be a fool.”

MASTER PSYCHO-THERAPIST

Someone has recently said that the new Messiah, when he comes, will have to be a master psychologist; and those who know him best would certainly place Baba in this category. We who have been closely associated with him recognize that his technique with souls includes the best which psycho-therapy has to offer, but also that it goes far beyond it. He does not, for example, need to know a person's dreams to become acquainted with the state of the dreamer's Unconscious. Nor does Baba need recourse to any technique of 'free association' to discover the stumbling blocks on the disciple's road to a free and more abundant life. With his supra-normal insight he sees not only what in this life has bound the individual soul, but what in past lives has contributed to his present degree of unfoldment or retardment. Moreover, he avoids the pitfall which besets many analysts – of knowing better how to break down the personality than to release the soul – for at each stage on the way to individuation Baba both integrates the true individuality and destroys the egoistic factors which blind the soul to its *real* nature. With consummate skill he takes one to the breaking point, but never a hair's breadth beyond.

“Modern psychology,” writes Baba, “has done much to reveal the sources of conflict; but on the whole it has yet to discover the methods of awakening inspiration or supplying the mind and heart with something dynamic which makes life worth living. This indeed is the creative task before the saviours of humanity.”

Unequivocally he states that the cause of man's suffering and unhappiness is his egoistic outlook upon life. This must, therefore, be dissolved. “Man will again and again be dislodged from his illusory shelters by fresh and irresistible waves of life; and he will invite upon himself fresh forms of suffering by seeking to protect his separative existence through escape. But life cannot be permanently imprisoned within the cage of the ego; it must, at some time, aspire

toward the Truth. In the ripeness of evolution the momentous discovery is made that life cannot be understood and lived fully as long as it is made to move around the pivot of the ego. Man is, therefore, driven by the logic of his own experience to find the *true* centre of experience and reorganize his life on the basis of the Truth which he discovers there.”

He points the way to the solution in these words: “If consciousness is to be emancipated from its limitations and made to serve the original purpose for which it came into existence – to realize God – it must draw its directive momentum, not from the ego, but from some other principle. The ego as a nucleus of integration must be renounced and a new centre found.”

In the same sense in which Jesus said: ‘I am the Way,’ Baba says that the Perfect Master – whose consciousness is one with God-becomes the new centre of integration for the disciple who gives him his whole-hearted allegiance. Since the Master is a living affirmation of the unity of all life, allegiance to him gradually dissolves the separative propensities of the ego. Baba makes it clear that in surrendering to the Master the disciple surrenders to the embodiment of *Infinite and Universal Truth, not to another limited, finite ego*. The disciple’s consciousness, therefore, is freed from its bondage of ignorance, instead of being further bound, as would be the case if he became identified with another *finite mind*.

“When the ego disappears, there arises the knowledge of the True Self; one’s consciousness is then that of the eternal and infinite ‘I am,’ in which there is no separateness, and which includes all life.”

Baba is, however, fully aware of the deep-rooted difficulties attendant upon this renunciation of the ego as the centre of life and action. By some means the aspirant must find a way to act without any sense of “I do this,” or “I do that.” Yet he must also avoid the extreme of utter passivity. A way must be found by which he may carry on a life of creative action, yet not be caught up in the bonds of the ego-life. To avoid inaction on the one hand and the

pride of action on the other, Baba says that it is necessary for the spiritual aspirant to construct a *provisional and working ego which will be entirely subservient to the Master*.

“Before beginning anything, the aspirant should think that it is not *he* who is doing it, but the *Master* who is working through him; and when the work is finished he should not claim or enjoy the fruits of the activity, but relinquish them by offering them to the Master. By training his mind in this spirit, the aspirant creates a new ego, which, though *provisional*, imparts the feeling of confidence and enthusiasm and possesses the motive-power which true action must express. Since, however, this ego derives its life and being from the Master who represents infinite freedom, it is harmless and can, when the right moment comes, be discarded like a garment. The construction of such an ego – which is entirely subject to the Master – is indispensable in the dynamics of spiritual advancement.”

Such merging of the disciple with the Master should not be confused with the idolatry which often arises in relationships where one party seems to embody many of the other’s unconscious and therefore unexpressed qualities. These ‘projections,’ though for a time they may induce a temporary expansion of consciousness, are not conducive to freeing the person from his limited ego-life. That Baba is fully aware of this danger of becoming identified with a secondary finite centre is revealed in his words: “When we become identified with a narrow group or section of life, or with some limited ideal or person, we do not experience a real merging of the separative self, but only a *pseudo* merging. The real merging of the limited self in the ocean of universal life involves complete surrender of all separate existence in *all* its forms . . . The final and complete surrender to the Master is identical with the relinquishment of all segregated consciousness and leads inevitably to the attainment of Truth, which is the ultimate goal of all spiritual life.”

For those whose need compels them to find the true centre of integration in themselves, this linking of their consciousness with that of the Master provides the swiftest

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and surest means towards their goal. This should not be misinterpreted to mean that such a devotee makes no effort on his own part. It is true that he does not strive for any specific psychic attainment or degree of initiation such as occult teaching offers to its students. He does, however, seek constantly in his meditations and daily life to become more deeply attuned to his Master's consciousness – that central Sun of divine love, whose radiant warmth melts the frozen shell of all egocentric consciousness.

The disciple's attitude toward his Master is not one of unconscious projection but *conscious introversion*. The saintly woman Rabia – of Sufi fame – has said that if God shall turn toward us, we will turn toward him. Thus, the disciple's turning inward is in reality the inner activity of the Master, which is like a mighty undertow of the Spirit drawing the disciple's consciousness into the pivotal point of his being.

Baba's method of dealing with the well-known inferiority and superiority complexes, shows how almost simultaneously he destroys the false personality and rebuilds the true nature of the disciple. In order to bring about a rapid dissolution of the two chief ego-masks—inferiority and superiority – the Master deliberately stirs both of these complexes alternately. If the disciple is on the verge of losing heart and giving up the spiritual search, he may arouse in him deep, self-confidence. If he is on the verge of being unduly egoistic, Baba may break through this façade by creating situations in which the disciple is compelled to accept and recognize his own incapacity or futility. Thus the Master wields his influence over the disciple to expedite the stages through which the melting ego must pass before its final disintegration. Nor does Baba exclude the spiritual ego from the need for dissolution. "When the ego is overpowered by a flood of spiritual notions and actions, it is just as binding as the more crude ego which makes no lofty spiritual pretensions."

SPIRITUAL DYNAMITE

There are those who say that Baba is dangerous, and they are right. He is spiritual dynamite in the soul of any-

one who comes under his influence. He catapults him out of his protective shell; he demolishes carefully erected intrenchments of pride and self-complacency; he explodes pet prejudices and opinions; he shocks one out of one's virtues just as surely as he reveals one's innermost sins; not a comfortable procedure by any means, but one which ultimately lifts the personality from its self-imposed serfdom into the untrammelled life of the heaven-born. In the Master's words: "You, yourself, are the cause of your separation from the Beloved. Annihilate what is *called* your 'self' and you will thereby gain union with Him – the *true* Self."

Illustrative of the loose-rope method which he advocates for his followers was his reply to a questioner who thought that belief was something which could be coerced: "Always do what you feel like doing; if today you feel like believing in me – in God -- do so; and if tomorrow you feel the reverse – don't believe."

To the critic who passes judgment upon the unconventional outlook and life of the truly great Teachers who cut through the enclosure of man's artificial standards of conduct he says:

"Many conventions express and embody illusory values, since they have come into existence as a result of the working of the mass mind which is spiritually ignorant . . . The freedom from convention which often appears in the life of the spiritual aspirant or Master, is due, not to any willful rebellion against conventional standards or superficial approach to life, but to the exercise of discriminating thought. Those who would transcend the level of conformity to an external code of morals and conduct and experience the inner world of Reality must develop the capacity to distinguish between false and true values, irrespective of man-made conventions. Though such intelligent discrimination is of utmost importance, the newly-perceived values become fruitful only when they are lived out in daily, practical life."

They must be acted upon – made creative. It is not theory but practice which counts in the spiritual life.

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Such precepts and practice would naturally subject Baba to the criticism that he and his teaching are dangerous. "The deeper secrets of the spiritual life," he declares, "are unveiled to those who take *risks* and who make bold experiments with life. They are not intended for the weak-kneed who seek guarantees for every step. He, who, from the shore, speculates about the ocean, shall know only its surface; if he would know the depths of the ocean, he must be willing to *plunge into it*."

If this is dangerous, it is also profound wisdom and leads to that state of consciousness in which the lover loses himself in the being of the Beloved and knows that he is one with the infinite.

THE KEY

It is this transcendent life which Baba would share with mankind when it is ready to receive it.

"Love," he writes, "holds the key to all problems, in as much as under the Law of Love the Infinite is realized completely for all time, in every walk of life – in science, art, religion or beauty."

He adds that this down-pouring of Eternal Love will be released upon humanity when it reaches the spiritual turning point. Everyone – regardless of his former outlook – will participate in the new life-current. Even materialistic people will be affected by the profound stirring of consciousness which will then take place. He recommends, however, as a wise preparation to those living in the world and sharing the worldly viewpoint, that they attend to their worldly life and duties as usual, but at certain times each day they should long for something beyond material life. This will gradually detach them from dependence upon material things and prepare them to receive the higher vibration of Divine Love.

To those for whom some form of art is their 'yoga,' Baba explains that art is one of the great avenues through which the soul expresses itself and inspires others. But to express art clearly, one must have his deeper emotions thoroughly released. "Love your art, and that art will

open for you the Inner Life. When you paint, for example, you forget everything except your painting. When you are keenly concentrated upon it, you are lost in it; and when you are lost in it, your ego diminishes, Love Infinite appears; and when such Love is experienced God is attained. So you see how art can lead one to find the Infinite.”

The greatest mystics of all time have been in complete accord with the viewpoint that through Love God is most readily and perfectly known. In our own time and country, William Jefferys, a great mystic, now on the ‘other side,’ writes: “In the final step which is Union, God reveals himself in His ultimate nature to those who love Him; and God is only completely known in His supreme character – Love.”

In his *When Words Become Life*, he also states: “Furthermore, every step, every act, every moment of fellowship between one person and another in any field of life, brings nearer the day when the whole race will know God as He is. We talk a lot about creeds and life. There is an underlying unity in which one may say that *all creeds will find their union at last in Living Love*. It is, as St.Paul says, the thing which will last forever.”

CORE OF BABA’S TEACHING

To bring about such a living syntheses of all religions is Baba’s avowed purpose. He does not seek to convert mankind to a new religion. He does, however, intend to quicken in man the experience of Reality which is the basis of all true religion. He sums up briefly his purpose in these words: “I shall bring together all religions and cults like beads on one string, and revitalize them for individual and collective needs.”

That it is the *essence* of religion and not the crystalized form which he will revivify is exemplified by his statement that it is time that religion goes and God comes. Apparently religion is to transcend its spirit of exclusiveness, even as races and nations will.

Once, when asked whether he believed that Jesus, the Christ, was the one and only unique prophet, Baba replied:

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“Unique indeed, from the standpoint of his state of consciousness. But not the only one. Each religion claims this for its leader. But making such claims does not help you to know Christ. To *know* Him, one has to *live His life*. *All are Christ, but very few can become Jesus.*”

The above statement contains the core of Baba’s teaching, and the essence of his life. He comes to make man *aware* of his Christhood. He comes to free man from his bondage to self and to lift him to a higher plane of being. He comes to demonstrate anew God’s love for his children by making himself the Living Way. For those who have the spiritual capacity to recognize him – for spiritual perfection can only be spiritually discerned – he represents the highest each one is capable of realizing.

The Eternal Christ comes to us throughout the ages as the living embodiment of the personal aspect of God, and it is with this human manifestation of God that we must make contact if we would enter fully into his impersonal and universal aspect. Something of this thought must have been in Jesus mind when he asked: “How can you love the Father whom you have *not* seen, if you cannot love me whom you *have* seen?”

This Perfect One incarnated originally in the primitive days of man’s earth life, and will continue to incarnate so long as the evolutionary process requires periodical quickening of consciousness through the physical presence on earth of the Avatar. This One manifests each time in a wider synthesis of perfection; always the same supreme Master of his age; always the same divine awakener of souls. What else could Jesus, himself, have meant, when he said that he would ‘come again’?

There are those who say that he did not mean that he would come again in a physical body, but merely in the hearts of men. But how shall those hearts be awakened to receive his exquisite vibration unless he comes again in *person* to recharge the rundown battery of human consciousness? Can we honestly say that the Church – his supposed channel – is making the hearts of men more selfless, purer, more filled with the love of God and his creatures?

Are greed, the lust for power, the warfare between groups and nations evidences of his sublime spirit? Have the heads of the Church been able to turn the tide of the recent devastating holocaust of self-destruction? Even the most purblind among us will recognize that today many needs desperately a great spiritual catalyst if he is to be saved from his own folly and ignorance.

SPIRITUAL POWER-HOUSE

Perhaps the most striking indication of Baba's power to change the consciousness of mankind is revealed by those who have not yet had the opportunity of meeting him in the flesh, but whose lives have been transformed by his quickening spirit. Of the many stories which might be told of his influence upon those who have not met him outwardly, few better illustrate the potency of his appeal than the experience of a violinist in one of America's most outstanding symphony orchestras.

A friend, Frederick, who himself had been deeply stirred by inner contact with Baba, was sitting on the beach at Carmel, California, one brilliant afternoon, at sundown. Though profoundly moved by the glory of the sunset and wishing only to merge in its beauty, he felt strongly impelled to speak to a man who sat near him on the sand.

As they talked, Frederick discovered that the man was under a severe mental and emotional strain, the exact nature of which he did not disclose. Perhaps, thought Frederick, a booklet which he carried in his pocket – *Silent Revelations of Meher Baba* – would meet the man's need. Though reluctant to relinquish it, he offered it to him as they parted.

They were to meet the next afternoon at the same place but when the hour arrived the man was nowhere to be seen. Nor was he at the Carmel address which he had left with Frederick. My friend was puzzled and determined to look him up in Los Angeles when he returned there the following week.

By happy coincidence the orchestra, in which the man was a violinist, was giving a performance the same evening

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that Frederick arrived in town. Purchasing two tickets he and a friend found their way into front balcony seats. During a particular number the concert-master arose to play a solo part. It was the man from Carmel and he played as one aflame with inspiration. The house burst into a torrent of applause as the man finished. Frederic wondered at the change from the desperately crushed individual who had talked with him at the seaside to this dynamic, creative artist.

When, two days later, they had dinner together, the man told him this story: Though by virtue of his skill and artistry he had earned for himself the place of first violinist in this great orchestra, it had been some years since the conductor had commended him, as he did others, for any of his performances. The man knew that some vital spark was missing and he was at a loss to know how he could generate it. He had been brooding over it for months, until that day on the beach at Carmel he had come to the breaking point. Suicide was the only way out for him, he had decided. But that evening after his encounter with Frederick, he opened Baba's little book with the photograph of the Master on the frontispiece. In a flash a current of light seemed to penetrate his innermost being. He was instantly healed of his desperate resolution and the next morning returned to the city to resume practice with the orchestra. The solo part which had been assigned to him – and which had precipitated the crisis – he now knew that somehow he would perform creditably. Little did he realize, however, that God would take over and play through him. He states that he was aware continually of the sustaining power of the Master during the practice days which followed; and when he arose to play his solo at the concert, he could see nothing but Baba's luminous face before his eyes. His whole being seemed illumined by the Master's consciousness. A well-spring of emotion and power, such as he had never before experienced, was released in him and poured out through his sensitive fingers and through his equally sensitive Stradivarius in such richness of tone and depth of feeling that it penetrated to the

heart of every one of his listeners, judging from their tremendous, spontaneous ovation.

After the concert the conductor looked at him in puzzled wonderment as he heartily commended him for his superlative performance. But the man was still looking into Baba's eyes; feeling the embrace of his presence. He needed now no other assurance.

PRODIGAL'S RETURN

In attempting to review Baba's redeeming activity in my own life, I find that it falls into two main categories; a cleansing, purging process which has entailed ruthless self-facing and profound changes in mind and body; and a gradual release from constricting habits of thought and emotion, until now a wide-spreading clarity and peace permeate my consciousness. For a woman who had loved much, whose emotional nature largely controlled her life, to find herself now free of that emotional bondage, yet loving more deeply, more honestly, is an achievement possible only under the guidance of a supreme Master of the soul.

If, in addition, such a woman has, through the Master's grace, been guided out of weakness into strength, out of timidity and self-consciousness into God-assurance and greater power of life-expression, then she knows how merciful has been the Master's activity in her life. If she has become aware of blinding veils being lifted in her consciousness, of joy which is unmarred by the pin-pricks of daily life, of love which is independent of persons, flooding her soul, then she knows even more deeply how true has been her life long intuition that it was her destiny to meet again the Christ in the flesh and to become his disciple.

In earlier days, when my life was passing through a maze of kaleidoscopic experiences, so varied, rapid and apparently unrelated, I found it impossible to discover any dominant pattern in it. Again and again the pendulum swung from the sun-lit mountain-top to the darkest valley; both experiences being apparently beyond my conscious control. With Baba's coming, however, consciousness tended more and more to converge toward the mid-point of

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balance. No longer is life lived at the extremes, with transports of joy today and chasms of anguish tomorrow. What formerly seemed like a crazy piece of patchwork is now revealed to me as a life-pattern of tremendous contrasts, held together by the cohesive power of the Master, who, long years before I met him outwardly, had been guiding my life and destiny behind the scenes. I am inwardly aware that the supernal glimpses of Reality, which came to me from time to time, were gifts from the Altar-room of the Master's consciousness, by which my soul was wooed to return Homeward.

Steadily, surely the Divine Magnet has been drawing me closer to himself in order that he may use me in this life and throughout Eternity for his own ends. Through dark days and light, through weakness and strength, through imperfect forms of love and through divine yearning, he has guided my footsteps lovingly, strongly, patiently, until now my pathway to his heart is clear of rubble and waste.

William Blake sums up in a few lines what I have come to regard as the only possible attitude of the disciple toward the redemptive work which the Master effects in him:

“I will go down to annihilation and death
Lest the last trump sound and find me unannihilate
And I be given unto the judgement of mine own soul.”

All souls, whether they are conscious of it or not are seeking God; to aid them in their search the Master Baba now comes as the Perfect Manifestation of that love and wisdom for which the human soul yearns. His words illumine the way:

“The sojourn of the soul is a thrilling divine romance in which the lover – who in the beginning is conscious of nothing but emptiness, frustration, superficiality and the abrasive chains of bondage – gradually attains an increasingly fuller and freer expression of love. Ultimately, his separate self disappears as it merges into the Divine Beloved. In this unity of the lover and the Beloved is realized the supreme and eternal fact of God as Infinite Love.”

FINIS