

***Over The Years
With
Meher Baba***

By Bill Le Page

An Avatar Meher Baba Trust eBook

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Ahmednagar M.S. India

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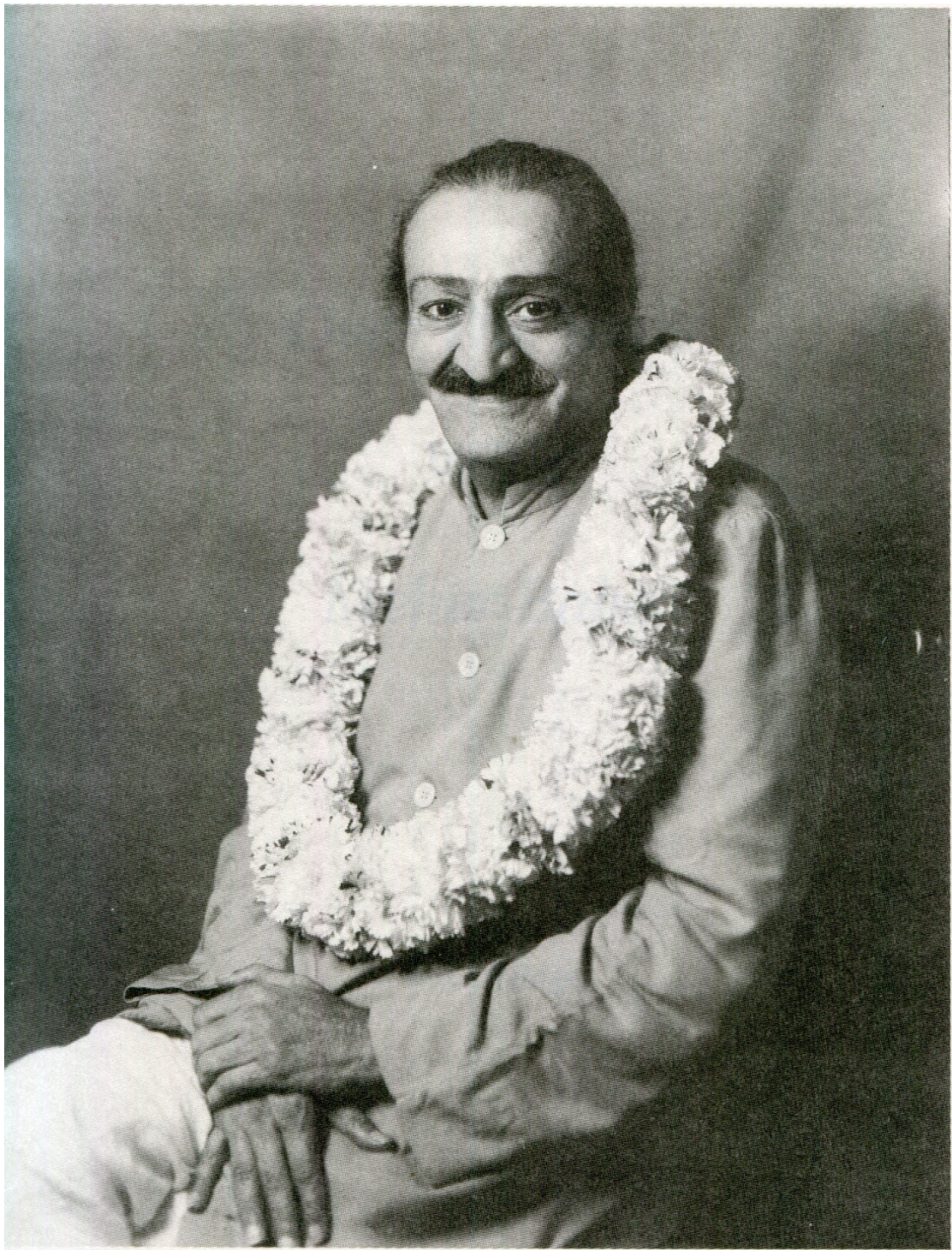


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Meher Baba, Washington D.C. 1956

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When I consider how my days are spent
In company of God - singing His praise
First in my heart and then in written lays
For other lovers and sweet friends' enjoyment,
I wonder at such fortunate employment,
Such happy days, such happy, happy days
Out in the fresco of beforetime maze
Called living - sure, clear, without argument.

These are the days that in the years to come
Men will inquire of - probing every word
He spoke, seeking the meaning of each look
And gesture recorded. Some this, and some
That, will find - some, agreement; some, discord:
Some will build churches, some will write a book!

- Francis Brabazon
(From a letter from Meherazad
December 4, 1959)

Contents

Acknowledgments

Preface - A Little Personal History

Sunrise.....	1
Meher Baba's Presence	7
The Jessawala Family	10
<i>Bindra House, Poona</i>	10
<i>Mary Lodge, Nagpur</i>	14
<i>Bindra House continued</i>	22
<i>Mary Lodge continued</i>	25
Baba Stories From The 1970s	28
<i>Meher Baba's Humour</i>	31
<i>Meher Baba's Attributes</i>	33
<i>Some Stories Of Meher Baba's Mandali</i>	53
Some Letters From The '50s And '60s	61
Meher Baba And Miracles	68
Meher Baba's Journeys	72
<i>The Blue Bus Tours</i>	74
Prophet Mohammed	81
<i>Sayings Attributed To Prophet Mohammed</i>	83
<i>Stories And Anecdotes From The Life of Mohammed</i>	85
Not We But One	91
<i>Spirituality Is Everyday Life</i>	91
<i>Intelligent Action</i>	103
<i>Love</i>	117
Books Dictated by Avatar Meher Baba	129

Acknowledgments

In 1962, when Judith Garbett met Beloved Avatar Meher Baba at The East-West Gathering, He told her to help me in my work for Him. This latest book is a further tribute to her fulfilment of His wish. Despite increasing old age and debilitating physical ailments, but with cheerfulness and patience, she has typed the whole manuscript from my atrocious writing, edited my careless flow of words and made numerous helpful and correct alterations to the text. All praise for our Beloved Lord who creates such sweet and fruitful connections.

Another Baba lover who has helped much in the past, and has again, is Liz Gaskin. She has created the form, design and layout of this book. My deepest gratitude to her.

My grateful acknowledgment is extended to Avatar Meher Baba Perpetual Public Charitable Trust, Ahmednagar, India, for permission to print extracts from some published material for which they hold copyright.

The contents of the chapter on Prophet Mohammed were gathered many years ago from early biographies of the Prophet. I thank the authors and I regret that I am unable to individually acknowledge the sources.

A belated heart-felt thanks to John Grant who so patiently recorded on audio tape Eruch Jessawala talking on Beloved Baba in Mandali Hall at Meherazad. Those recordings have supplied so much of the material in my various books.

This brings me of course to my final acknowledgment for this book, Eruch Jessawala, 'right hand' to God-Man Meher Baba. His reliving his life with Baba, his telling of incidents with Baba, stories of other Baba lovers, stories from spiritual tradition, all this, countless hours of giving out from the depth of his love for his Master, again forms the base of this book as it has with the others. I hope that Eruch does not inwardly groan but graciously accepts this latest attempt to do justice to his Beloved and to His 'right hand'.

Preface

- A Little Personal History

It was in June of 1947 that I was casually introduced to Meher Baba's Discourses, and a subsequent seven-year period of intense study culminated in my meeting and being with Him in India over three weeks in September 1954.

Over those seven years I sought Truth - yes, Truth was God and Meher Baba was God, and by the study of His Discourses and messages, attendance of meetings, discussions, and through meditation ('thorough thinking' as Baba defines it), I believed that I would come to a plateau of certainty and understanding. I was very earnest and diligent, and I did have insights and experiences that encouraged me, bringing a concentration more and more on a relationship with this supreme spiritual Master, Meher Baba.

I no doubt accepted Baba intellectually as the Christ, and although there was fervour, there was not the depth of attachment to the Body of the Avatar until my meeting Him in 1954. Not that this 'depth' was instantaneous, but the promise of its increasing assurance was. How was this not possible in His physical Presence? The magic quality of those days in 1954, the sharp mornings and soft evenings, the indefinable quality of the atmosphere of Meherabad in which the ordinary became extraordinary. That atmosphere, heightened immeasurably by the physical Presence of Baba, pressed around me, palpable, warm, comforting, supportive, containing so much that I was 'at home' to the exclusion of any other 'home' in the world. At the same time, the atmosphere was so vibrant, stimulating, charged, that I experienced, as it were, a state of heightened awareness, of bodily and mental sensations provoking search and insight. This was established in various incidents (minute cracks in the veils surrounding the heart) over that three-week period: but it was confirmed and accelerated when Baba had me sit in His future Tomb-shrine at midnight.

Perhaps it all began like this: around the middle of the three weeks I and a young American, Lud Dimpfl, had quite a heated discussion whilst seated on my bed in Baba's Seclusion Cabin located adjacent to His Tomb-shrine (Baba had directed that Francis, myself, and John Ballantyne, the other young Australian, use the Cabin as our dormitory). Lud insisted that love for the Beloved alone was sufficient for spiritual development, and I was equally insistent that while love was important, absorption of spiritual knowledge (as exemplified by Baba's Discourses), was the necessary foundation for unshakeable spirituality.

(Now how I wish that I had spent my time entirely absorbed in His Presence, storing in my heart images of those wondrous times of His Companionship, but instead I spent much time recording His words somehow, thinking in that I would find the Truth. This is so true. Still, I also do not regret my early study of the Discourses and my intense effort to understand them because that has been invaluable in my public talks and in the preparation of introductory booklets on Baba, many of which Baba signed the first copy and returned it to me.)

Perhaps it was after this discussion with Lud that Baba, the All-knowing and Compassionate One, directed that I and John Ballantyne sit in His future Tomb-shrine for half an hour at midnight, silently repeating His Name with eyes open. With the windows and door of the Tomb tightly shut, it was absolutely dark and silent, and I experienced most painfully that I was absolutely alone, as it were, in the universe. There was only myself, no comfort of sun, earth and people, a distracting yet reassuring plethora of noise and movement and creatures. So overwhelming was the welter of emotions that I could only think of His Name little and with great difficulty.

So much for the vaunted foundation of my life in intellectual study of spirituality! The very first minute test of the strength of my love for Him, and I dissolve in panic and mental turmoil. But it was Beloved Baba's immeasurable blessing to me, the awakening of the truth that He had given: Just love Me more and more until you lose yourself in Me: a practice which I have found applies at each and any moment of times of worry, fear, uncertainty.

Following our first night in His Tomb-shrine, the next morning Beloved Baba gave a most beautiful message to me and to mankind:

"Do not be frightened; there is nothing to fear. Don't force your attention; keep awake and don't move. Even if a snake crosses your legs, let it pass by. And love Baba during the half-hours. Fear means there is no love. Think of Baba from the bottom of your hearts; after seven nights you will have a glimpse of Baba. Why this fear? Francis of Assisi and Francis Xavier loved Christ with all their might, and what they suffered, none of you could guess, but fear was foreign to them. Do not fear, love Me. Don't be troubled, think of Baba and be happy."

It is now 45 years later, and still that time is vivid in memory and experience. It constantly reminds me to turn to Him, allowing the heart to respond to His Truth and Beauty and thus replacing, submerging the clamours of the mind with its jumbled sanskaras of worry, fear, lust, greed and anger. Beloved Baba awakens assurance that He is always present with the calling of His Name and the image of His Face.

In my book *The Turning of the Key* published in 1993, I wrote the following passage :

"[This experience] signalled, together with His instructions to me in our interview, the beginning of a very real and personal development for me as a human being. It was a traumatic experience, and to use a trite phrase, I shall never be the same again. From it, words read in spiritual discourses came to life, or rather, the minute beginnings of life: the relationship of Baba to self is one to one; Baba is truly the One to take and not to give until the two become One; fear is a fear of loss of self and its world in the mistaken belief that the self and its world must exist; one must not let the mind know what it has lost, must not give it the opportunity of dwelling upon loss; and to do this, one should constantly feed the heart from the Source of love, Meher Baba. Love conquers all, love alone prevails."

Bill Le Page
Avatars Abode, March 1999

Sunrise

It is not unusual for a dominant figure to arise from time to time who reflects something of the hidden but potent collective psyche of a particular society. The society may be wide-spread, and the figure a voice for many people: such were the musicians who sang for the young in the 1960s 'The times they are a-changing'. Such figures do arise, and yet quickly fade.

But only once in a thousand years does one arise who cuts across all ages, creeds, sexes and nationalities, who touches something deep within each psyche and awakens a new level of awareness of life and of the true purpose of life, and who continues over the centuries to inspire and awaken.

Such a one was Gotama the Buddha (or the Enlightened One); Jesus the Christ; Mohammed the Prophet. Now for this Age and the succeeding 700 years it is Meher Baba, known as Avatar Meher Baba.

The end of the 1960s saw Avatar Meher Baba cease to walk this earth as Man among men, and although He touched the hearts of so many during His life on earth, and gathered disciples who of their own free will became His slaves, it was not until He dropped His body (on 31st January 1969) that His world-wide manifestation began. The message He gave in English is now translated into many languages and His following is very wide-spread, but especially among the young seekers.

•I•

Over The Years With Meher Baba

He does not come often, He does not stay long. When He has gone, the period of His stay seems to have been but the time-space of a gloriously Sun-filled Day. Although the phases and activities of His life were very complex and often over-lapping, to continue this figure of a Sun-filled Day, it appears to me that His ministry falls into five main periods - Daybreak and Early Morning; Mid-Morning; High Noon; Mid-Afternoon; Late Afternoon and Evening.

As the Sun bursts over the horizon in life-giving vigour, so my imagination and narrow empathy reach out to the lean, intense figure of Meher Baba of the very early years, flinging disciples twice His own weight around like rag dolls yet causing no injuries; banging His head on stone so hard that His teeth were permanently loosened. Oh! the glory, the intensity, the electrifying grandeur of that lean frame and face and unruly locks of hair!

Those destined by past endeavours and connections were drawn to Him, and these men and women were to stay with Him for their lifetime, among them those who remained physically close in His household, serving Him as slaves who so loved Him that they would rather end their lives than displease Him, cause Him pain or disobey Him. They were immensely strong individuals both physically and mentally: they literally wore their hearts on their sleeves, maintaining a cheerful and loving attitude to all as a wonderful reflection of His perfect love.

Then the beauty of the Morning Sun brought forth the flowers of His Western women disciples. How gentle was the warmth of His Sun: the endearing vulnerability of His human-ness - the mercurial display of human qualities all mysteriously and hauntingly beautified by a shining light that emanated from Him - constantly drew their hearts. And how beautiful and loving were the bonds that Beloved Baba awakened in those strong, gifted women, their tears of surrenderance at His Feet the fulfilment of women's liberation. As one said: 'We lived only in the light and love of His wondrous being. And the silence was fuller than any music, any poem, any scripture - a silence filled with love and light, revealing the true meaning of life. Love made flesh was dwelling among us.'

In the Full Sun of the Day Beloved Baba fed with His perfect love the lovers of God, His saints and His masts, and harnessed them in His work. 'These contacts have constructive results they are not only beneficial for the God-intoxicated souls, but they also help the universal spiritual work.' One mast being brought to Baba said, on reaching the gate, 'We have come to the Garden of Paradise'. When Baba came out the mast gazed at Him, laughing with tears of joy, and then embraced Him. 'Look at this Man's face and forehead! They shine as if the Sun is there. Can't you recognise Who He is?' And after most lovingly embracing a young mast, who on seeing Baba some thirty metres away had danced ecstatically for some time, Baba said: 'If someone were to ask Me what makes Me happiest, My reply would be: Embracing a mast such as this one'.

But as the full force of the Sun brought forth the glory and majesty of Baba's contact with the lovers of God, so also it seemed to intensify the physical hardships for both God-Man and His disciples in their search for them, enduring incredibly difficult journeys while maintaining long and exacting fasts.

To continue the solar figure, in the strong warmth of the Afternoon Sun Baba travelled again to the West and to major parts of India, and in the process planted the seed of His love ever more widely amongst people. And whilst doing so He gathered His men-workers and also the children of His workers - for example, on two separate occasions Baba asked the whereabouts of a Baba lover's son; on a third occasion when the son was present, Baba said to him: 'Did you think you could escape Me?' Thus carefully Baba laid the foundations for these workers to become beacons, pointing the way to His Feet for the many seekers who were to begin gradually surging forward after He dropped His physical body.

But in the meantime, although His Sun was still high over the earth, increasing age and the severe effects on His body from two car accidents all coincided with this new influx of workers and lovers, and it is interesting to note that Baba became moderate in the testing of their love for Him, requiring only short fasts and brief spiritual exercises.

Over The Years With Meher Baba

Then in the further-declining Afternoon Sun Baba gave us a leisurely wine-feast of kisses and hugs, gently strengthening the sinews and spirit of His new workers and lovers. He did give us hints of His approaching departure, but, basking in the mellow warmth of His wine we really did not want to acknowledge the inevitable. He emphasised the forming of internal links, He withdrew more and more into seclusion, He beautifully orchestrated His dropping of the body - but we recognised that only after the event.

As in that moment when the Sun seems suddenly to go below the horizon, so in one moment He was still with us, still shining, still beckoning ('I will give you darshan even if it be lying down'), touching our hearts with His ever-flowing love and His ever-joyful invitation to the Dance - and then He slipped away.

So He prepared us, and we knew that while His beloved Form was not now walking with us, He had so placed Himself in our hearts that we might forever walk with Him. As in the Evening of the Day when we may sit and reflect on the course of the day, so now that He as the Sun has physically disappeared, we can bring into our lives the glories, the joys, the heartaches of His Day, because He remains ever-living within us.

Avatar Meher Baba is the very Self of all, the Being of all beings. He comes time and again to dwell for a while as Man amongst mankind. He is therefore called the Ancient One: but above all He is our Compassionate Father. Compassion, though, does not just mean kindness, mercy, or taking pity on others: it has a far deeper meaning. The Ancient One, Meher Baba, through His Infinite Compassion takes upon Himself the suffering of mankind. He suffers because of that, and in doing so vicariously relieves others of suffering. He suffers to lessen the immense burden of suffering that we have brought on ourselves. He is the Redeemer, the Comforter, the Succour of mankind. He is also the Awakener, in that He awakens mankind to the illusory nature of this world. He does not come to destroy illusion, but to reveal the reality of illusion *being* illusion. In order that illusion be sustained, Reality has to be veiled, and to do so draws upon Itself a veil, a shroud: that shroud becomes the body of God-Man.

Through all the phases of His ministry, no matter what the outward activity and the variations in His interactions with His disciples and lovers, Meher Baba remained absolutely Meher Baba - the compassionate Father of Creation intent on the conscious liberation of the Self from the bondage of illusion. The Sun is ever the Sun (to continue with this figure), no matter how, in our ignorance, we may perceive and experience it.



This book is another attempt to do some justice to the truth and beauty of that incomparable Being, Avatar Meher Baba who, like a Sun, descended from the heavens and dwelt for a short time on earth among us.

As in the past, I do not regard myself as a writer. My practice is to take His Name, start writing whatever comes to mind, and hope that by His Grace something that will do Him justice is brought forth. In doing so, and to the extent that He blesses the output, I feel that I am carrying out a part of my role of worker in His Cause. If the writing is instrumental in helping to bring the joy, the 'spring-time' of His Advent this time to others, then my efforts are justified; if not, the joy is mine anyway.

Much material for this book is based on very rough notes which I made during visits to India over the last twenty years. I regret now that they are short and rough. The material often reflects this, but I have not attempted to embellish it - in embellishment I fear that it may only result in disservice to others. In any case, may this book bring cheer to every heart who opens its pages; and as for bringing any such heart to Meher Baba's Feet, I remind myself of His words: 'Your job is to bring My Name to the ear, My job is to bring it from the ear to the heart.'



Over The Years With Meher Baba

The following lines came to me while I was at Meherazad some years ago, and I feel now are related to what I have written above:

*The head is a swirl of thoughts
the shifting sand of a thousand questions
until it is placed at Your Feet:
And the stillness behind the
movement of Your Eyes lovingly creates
in the depth of the mind a rock of certainty.*

*May the Poor One find a home within my words.
May He be in the silence between the words
so that the listener will know His Presence.*

*Oh! Baba, help me to not dissipate
the love You pour forth from Your resting Place:
help me to store Its jewelled Breath to use
in Your service.*

•I•

Meher Baba's Presence

Meher Baba is the hidden reality of every thing and every place: but His Presence is experienced more strongly in some places than others, and in certain special places associated with His life on earth, the perfume is strongest. Some of these special places have gone, and some more no doubt will go in time.

But for me, the memory of my time spent in these places in Poona remains ever-living and fragrant: Bindra House with Gaimai Jessawala slowly moving around the dining room table and the stove nearby, taking Baba's Name as she prepares and serves food; Baba House with the manifold blessings lovingly dispensed by Perinmai, Beheram's wife - the well and tree and courtyard softly visible in the early morning light, and at the far end the light glowing from inside Baba's Room; Guruprasad Memorial where Eruch once said to me that he and his brother Meherwan would happily settle as caretakers on the verandah of the one-room dwelling - for the peace that was in Guruprasad continues there, even though this small building, constructed of materials lovingly transferred from the original house, is so much closer to the busy main road.

Guruprasad Memorial building awakens memories of Guruprasad itself, and I re-live the experience of its imposing size and decoration contrasted with the simplicity of the life-style of Baba and His mandali whilst staying there: Baba's bedroom; His office with one chair for Him and simple floor coverings for the mandali and lovers to sit on; Eruch's 'office' the end of the long side verandah and his 'desk' a clipboard propped on one knee as he sits on the floor.

Over The Years With Meher Baba

And no matter how dominant is the memory of one place or another, always present and giving the memory its life and fragrance is the unseen Presence of Beloved Baba. He is always there, the felt reality that the mind accepts intellectually as Reality, but which the heart simply calls 'Beloved'.

I am reminded of a story concerning another Place of Baba's, Meherazad. It concerns a young English woman who worked for a married couple, both of them Baba lovers. She herself was interested at the time in meditation and yoga, not Meher Baba, and for her holidays had enrolled in a course in such subjects in the south of India. She had paid her 500 dollars. When she was leaving, her employers who had become with time her friends, asked of her a special favour - seeing that she was going to India would she please travel via Ahmednagar, visit the ashrams of Meherabad and Meherazad and give their love to friends who lived there, and their respects to Meher Baba. Out of affection the young woman agreed.

So she travelled to the city of Ahmednagar, then visited the Tomb-shrine of Meher Baba at Meherabad, and the Trust Office in Ahmednagar itself, in each place giving her friends' message to the various old disciples. She was greeted courteously and warmly, although their invariable response of 'Jai Baba' certainly puzzled her. But she happily went about her task and departed for Meherazad, also some miles from the city.

There she was greeted by Aloba. She did not explain herself clearly and Aloba, who was not fluent in English, naturally assumed that here was a new Baba lover who had come to be with Baba at Meherazad for the first time. So he quickly ushered her into Mandali Hall to take darshan of Baba at His chair. She, bewildered by all this, tried to say something, but Aloba thought she was simply new to Baba and so, as was his way, he quickly bowed down before Baba's chair with his head on the cushion that had supported Baba's feet. Then indicating that she could now do the same, he began to leave the room. As he did so the young woman moved towards the chair, wishing not to hurt 'the nice little man's feelings' (she is taller than Aloba), and thinking 'in any case what does it matter, it is only an empty chair'. So she also put her

head on the cushion, and promptly began to weep. For a long time she continued to weep; and although she is not able to speak of her experience, she does say that one thing is definite, 'it is not an empty chair'.

Yes, Beloved Baba is there.

•I•

The Jessawala Family

Bindra House, Poona

To return now to Bindra House and the table at which I spent so many happy hours telling and listening to stories of Beloved Baba: a table at which He had sat so many times; a table at which He appeared to a distressed Baba lover after He had dropped His body; a table at which amusing incidents took place, such as the continuing tussle between Baba and His old disciple Gustadji over the cheese, Gustadji pulling it towards himself, saying in sign language (he was silent on Baba's orders for thirty years), that it was not good for Baba's digestion, and Baba pulling it back, saying that Gustadji did not have any teeth to eat it with anyway!

What wonderful stories that table, and indeed the whole house, could tell of Baba's love, stories that would remind us how much He, out of love for His creation, is the slave of the love of His lovers.

How did Bindra House become the Jessawala family home? This is what I remember hearing from Eruch, and from his brother Meherwan and sister Mani (known as Manu - to avoid confusion with His own sister Mani, Baba gave her the name Manpur as she came from Nagpur, but this was shortened to Manu. Eruch's other sister Meheru died of cancer in September 1953):

It was in the year 1943, the month of January, that my father and mother, brother and sisters moved to Poona, Eruch told me.

We all, the whole family, had come to Baba in 1938, and we were with Him during those years, staying in various places such as Bangalore,

and travelling with Him on the Blue Bus tours. Sometimes we would stay for an extended period in one place, and sometimes Baba would direct that a bungalow be rented for a month, and then stay only a day or two and move on.

There is an amusing story from that period. One such place was a large house in the district of Lonavla, belonging to an English woman. She did not mention, when letting it, that it was haunted. One bed in the house was so large that Baidul's wife and two daughters, who were with the women mandali at the time, could comfortably all sleep on it. But each night the ghost would so raise the mattress that all three would land in a heap on the floor! Baba would innocently question why they could not stay on the bed! At all hours the ghost would move things around, roll objects across the floor, cause all manner of disturbance, but the final insult was in its pulling Mehera's plait of hair whilst she was trying to sleep, and pinching Mani's backside! When all this was related to Baba over some days, He said He would free the ghost from its tortured state, and did so. There were then no more disturbances. They later learnt that a washerman of the household had committed suicide by drowning himself in the stream running at the bottom of the estate.

Now Baba's mother, Shirinmai, Eruch continued, had a very strong feeling for my mother, Gaimai - they were, you might say, chums, and loved to be in each other's company. At this time we all were with Baba, and Shirinmai was in Poona not strong in health, and she longed to have Gaimai with her for company. Gaimai would be happy to visit Shirinmai, but of course did not want to be separated from Baba. Baba knew this.

Also at this time my father was concerned about my young brother's education, and because he liked Poona as a place to live with its pleasant climate and beautiful gardens, he thought it would be good if our family moved there. Baba of course also knew this. So the little drama developed, and see how beautifully Beloved Baba arranges everything to keep all happy. He asks my mother to go to Poona for fifteen days only to visit His mother and keep her company; and separately He tells my father it would be good to settle in Poona. So both are happy, one

Over The Years With Meher Baba

thinking the move was only to be short, and the other thinking it will be long - although Gaimai was apprehensive that the move would *really* be only for a short time, and Baba had to reassure her.

Baba instructed me to write to His brother Beheram and ask him to find a suitable place for our family. Beheram found one, and Baba directed me to go, see it, and report to Him. I found it a very good place, built by an Army medical officer, a Colonel Bindra, as a small hospital. It was in a quiet location near Baba's family house. It was called Bindra House, and the ground floor of the two-storey building was available to rent because the doctor had now decided that it was not suitable after all as a hospital, and was therefore seeking a tenant.

Baba approved and the family moved in. He said it was only for fifteen days so we did not unpack, and the large trunks served as our beds. There was no furniture, just the luggage as beds with small pillows.

Well, time passed, Shirinmai was happy having Gaimai and they were together quite often. Although Shirinmai was not really ill, she was generally unwell, and towards the end of a brief illness of about fifteen days she lapsed into a coma. She was in that coma for five days and during that period sometimes she would weep and sometimes laugh. Gaimai was with her continually in the hospital. Whilst still in the coma Shirinmai suffered a stroke and died on 25th February 1943. At the time of her passing, Gaimai said that for about five minutes she saw golden hands sprinkle flowers over the body, sometimes large and sometimes lots of little ones. Just after Shirinmai died I brought Baba to Poona from Mahabaleshwar in a special taxi for His mother's funeral. It was then that Baba also visited Bindra House for the first time.

Around this time one of the Zoroastrian community had died and my father was to attend the funeral. But for that special clothes and hat were needed, and these were buried in our trunks which we were using as beds. My father complained about this, asking me why we did not unpack the trunks, why were we living like this. So I opened his trunk and gave him the gear needed for the funeral.

On another occasion when Baba again visited Poona, my father took the opportunity to complain to Him that the family was not unpacking, and that this was an unsatisfactory way to live. So Baba comforted my

mother, saying that He had to come to Poona every now and then, that Bindra House would be a Baba House, and that she should therefore unpack and really settle down in the house. 'See,' said Baba, 'how I have come now? Every so often I will come.'

True to His promise He did come, sometimes for a night, sometimes longer; sometimes He would send the women disciples, sometimes the mandali, so the house was often full. It was like an inn, with people coming and going, and mother was happy because she enjoyed having company - not social company, mind you, only the company of Baba lovers. It was not unusual to have 12 to 15 people staying there for lengths of time - and this was in a house of two bedrooms (one occupied always and only by my father), a big living room, and a long verandah.



As said earlier, I was one of the visitors to Bindra House who loved so much its all-pervading joyful atmosphere of Baba. I cannot now recall the details of all the numerous stories of Baba and of His close ones that I heard over the years. But as I walk through the rooms in my mind's eye, savouring again the chairs, the beds, the swing, the bathroom and so on that Baba used, so certain stories come back clearer than others. Here is such a one:

After a tour in which Baba contacted masts, Baba and Eruch returned to Bindra House. It had been a long journey, they were very dirty, and Baba asked that hot water be prepared for Him. He took His bath, and then told Eruch that there was hot water still left and that he should have his bath now too. They would then have lunch.

Eruch asked why all the hurry? He would take his bath later. However, Baba insisted, saying that the water would get cold.

But Eruch knew Baba's ways, His impatience, and so before going into the bathroom he said to Baba to wait until he could give Him the medicine that He took for digestion. Eruch said: 'Call me, there is no hurry. I will give you the medicine.' Eruch carried it in a small bag, and he knew it would be best if he himself took it out and gave it to Baba.

Over The Years With Meher Baba

And Baba did become impatient after having some lunch, and in fumbling in the bag He dropped and broke the bottle of medicine. So Baba quickly called Gaimai and said that the mess should be cleaned soon, otherwise Eruch would find out what had happened and scold them. Gaimai was very displeased to hear this, asking 'Who does Eruch think he is, and how dare he do such a thing with Baba!' Baba asked again for a cloth, saying that He would clean it all up, even defending Eruch's attitude as he had to look to all details of Baba's requirements.

When Eruch emerged from the bathroom nothing was said, and it was as though nothing had happened. Baba told Eruch to have his lunch, and Eruch said 'But what about your lunch?' When Baba replied that He had had some, Eruch then asked about the medicine, 'Have you had it?' And on saying this, Eruch then sought for the bottle, and not finding it asked what had happened. Baba then said it had dropped and broken. 'Why did you take it?! I would have given it to you.' At this Gaimai became really upset: 'How dare you say such things to Baba!'

But in recounting the incident Eruch pointed out that the mandali had to see to Baba's needs properly, just as parents do with children. In a way, Eruch said, the relationship was like that: Baba was his Father, the Ancient One, but he, Eruch, was also His mother. In fact, Eruch said, Baba would refer to him as His mother.



Mary Lodge, Nagpur

Gaimai Satha was born and lived until her marriage in the small rural agricultural town of Ahmednagar. The family home was known as Akbar Press, and remained so until recently. She was always drawn to the spiritual life, not interested in and indeed uncomfortable with expensive clothing, finery, 'polite society' with its social chatter and shallow interests. When she married at 15 years an older, already-successful company executive, she was ill-at-ease at gatherings where her husband naturally wished his relatives and friends to see his beautiful wife. Gaimai was very conscious of the ridicule, gossiping and back-

biting that was directed at her, and the occasions were very painful for her. She was a fine-looking woman in the conventional sense, but her real beauty was in her love for Zoroaster, and later on in her love for Him in His Advent as Meher Baba. Indeed Baba said that Gaimai would be His mother in His next Advent.

Her husband, Beheramshaw Jessawala, was a self-made man, very disciplined and fiery (in fact Baba's sign for him was shooting a gun, and He would refer to him as the 'pistol'). He also was very devoted to Zoroaster and later to Meher Baba. In the family he was a very strong disciplinarian, and it was he who inculcated routines and habits in his son Eruch particularly, which proved invaluable in Eruch's subsequent life with Baba - habits such as not having snacks between meals each day; no rest during the day; intensity and thoroughness in work and responsibilities. Baba once praised Papa, as he was always affectionately called, for his excellent bringing-up of Eruch, saying: 'You saved Me all the trouble and effort I would have had to undertake when Eruch came to Me.' But Baba would also tease Papa, pointing out the expense He would have had to meet if Papa had agreed to give Him Eruch as a boy. 'See, you trained him, and I get all the benefits!' Baba said.

There is an amusing story of Papa which illustrates his strength of character and control. During a certain phase of His work, Baba directed that Papa and three other mandali members including Gustadji spend a period in seclusion in an isolated part of the country. Papa was to be in charge and the others were to follow his orders. The daily routine was so exacting and the discipline so severe, that after a few days Gustadji wrote to Baba: 'If you don't release me from having to stay with Papa, I'll run away. I have served three Perfect Masters and none was as bad as Papa!'

Gaimai also played an equally significant role in Eruch's upbringing, but one oriented towards other aspects of a rounded life. It was she who was the source of the tremendous fund of stories from spiritual tradition that so often entertained God-Man, the historical Source of them all; and which in recent times also inspired the thousands of pilgrims who have found their way to Meherabad and Meherazad. It was she who made sure that Eruch knew about and could attend to all

Over The Years With Meher Baba

household activities including cooking, gardening, and basic medicine. The servants of the family home were regarded and treated as much a part of the household as the family itself. Their home in Nagpur was visited by Perfect Masters, Perfect Ones, Saints and Sadhus - and any Sadhus who flaunted their spiritual prowess and powers got short shrift from Gaimai. On one occasion she came home to find two Sadhus demonstrating their powers to Eruch. When she entered the room, one was producing milk from his hands pressed together. Gaimai unceremoniously drove them from the house.

In short, Eruch's childhood and pupilship years, and also those of his sisters and brother, were well-rounded and balanced within a marriage that fully involved living in and handling the world, and also developing the mind and heart qualities necessary for the spiritual life.

Interestingly, Gaimai and Beheramshaw form a contrast to Meher Baba's parents, with Sheriarji the more other-worldly one and Shirinrai the more practical and pragmatic.



Mary Lodge, the Jessawala house in Nagpur, must have been, from all accounts, a beautiful home with extensive gardens, aviaries, fountains and pottery in floral designs, and the house was very large with ample accommodation for visitors, including Meher Baba and His mandali. Of the many stories I have heard over the years concerning the Jessawala family in Nagpur, one particularly stays with me.

It was in the early 1930s. Gaimai had staying with her one of the young sons of her sister Banumasi Kerawala, whose husband was at the time in a very poorly-paid job. While there the child became critically ill with an extremely high temperature. He required constant, careful attention.

During this time Beheramshaw was due to leave on one of his important tours of factories in the Central Provinces, but he hesitated and agonised over leaving Gaimai alone with such a critically ill child. In the midst of his mental turmoil, Beheram received a telegram from Baba saying that He would, unexpectedly, reach Nagpur shortly, and that Beheram could therefore leave on his tour of duty free of worry. Now

it appears that Baba was at the time on a train journey not anywhere near Nagpur, but inexplicably He suddenly announced a change of plan, and with the mandali changed trains for Nagpur. This incident was the turning-point in Beheram's mind regarding Meher Baba and he accepted Him as a Perfect Master.

Baba arrived at Mary Lodge with the mandali and said to Beheram that he should now depart on his tour of duty. So Beheram left, and Baba and the men settled into the house. That day the doctor announced that the coming night would be the really critical period for the child, who must not be left alone at any time, and that ice packs and cold cloths must be constantly applied.

Gaimai settled down with the boy, and Baba and His men retired for the night. Hours passed by. In the early hours of the morning Gaimai became more and more conscious of the need to go to the bathroom. But she dared not: she could not leave the child even for a moment in case a crisis occurred. Her discomfort grew more and more acute. Suddenly she became aware of a light coming towards her through the dark house: as it came closer she realised it was Baba. In the light of the torch (flashlight) He gestured to her to go to the bathroom and He would sit with the child.

Such is God-Man's love for us, His ever-watchful compassion: 'I dare not care not for My lovers.' That child, Dadi Kera-wala, is now a Trustee of Meher Baba's Trust in India.



A few months before the whole family left Mary Lodge forever at the beginning of August 1938, Eruch had two interesting dreams. Actually they occurred fifteen days before he received his first direct communication from Baba, and, as it were, signalled the beginning of their departure from Nagpur and joining Baba.

Eruch had applied for and been accepted in the renowned Engineering College of Benares, but before departing he had a summer vacation. During this period at home he had these two dreams which, as he has said, was unusual because he rarely dreamt.

Over The Years With Meher Baba

In the first dream, Baba has come to the house, and in his dream Eruch sees Baba holding the hands of his father and mother, and beside them are his sisters with his young brother Meherwan in front, and they are all coming out of the house. At this point Baba turns back and says: 'Is there any foodstuff in the house?' Eruch hears his mother's voice replying: 'There is a lot of milk.' Baba turns to Eruch and tells him: 'Put all the milk in a ditch, clean the vessel and put it back. Close all the doors and windows and come out. Hurry, run!' They then went out of the house and Eruch, after doing as Baba ordered, followed. That was the dream.

The next night Eruch had a second dream, and this time he used the word 'horrrifying' to describe it. He was driving Baba, driving fast, and yet Baba kept urging 'faster, faster'. Eruch said that in the dream he was conscious of noise, of speed, of danger, and of Baba vigorously urging him to drive on and on. Suddenly they came to the brink of an ocean, but Baba continued to insist on Eruch driving, and they went on through the ocean. Eruch was sweating with the effort and with anxiety - not, as he said, for fear of his life, but in responsibility for this 'Man' sitting alongside him. What would people say of him if anything happened to Baba? And all this time Eruch was driving, drenched in sweat, frightened to death. Now darkness came in the dream, and all through the night the car went on and on. Then in the dream the dawn came, and in the distance was a small building, very white and shining. Baba seemed happy and pointed to it. It was a little building with a dome. At the same time the car came to the beach and stopped. The car stopping at the beach and at the dome was such a shock that Eruch woke. He was exhausted, drenched in sweat, and the bed too was wet with sweat, as though he had actually been driving the car all night.



Within fifteen days after this second dream a telegram came from Baba saying to come immediately to Him at Panchgani. At the time Eruch was in the garden, absorbed in tending to the many new plants his father had bought. It was summer, May 1938, with temperatures around 120 degrees Fahrenheit, and the garden needed care and

protection. So despite his mother's urging him to do as Baba said and go immediately, Eruch went on working.

Within an hour another telegram came saying the same thing, but sent from a different railway station. Again his mother urged Eruch to do immediately as Baba ordered: 'See, I told you, don't take Baba lightly! Now go immediately.' So Eruch did go, jumping just as he was into his father's car (he was away on tour), in order to catch the Poona train that would be leaving soon.

From Poona railway station Eruch travelled by bus to Panchgani. Everyone in the town knew Meher Baba, so it was easy for Eruch to find the house where He was staying. Eruch bowed down to Baba and then, at His direction, sat on the floor before Him. Baba motioned the men mandali to leave. Using the alphabet board (which Eruch had learned as a boy in Nagpur to read easily), Baba said to him, 'The world and its affairs are all illusory. Only God is real. War in the world is definite and millions will die, all due to self-interest.' Baba then asked about Eruch's plans and about his family. Suddenly Baba said: 'If I were to ask you to leave everything behind and come and stay with Me, is it possible for you to do that?' Eruch replied: 'By Your Grace everything is possible.'

Eruch has said in recounting this event that he has no idea why he replied as he did. He did not at the time have an affinity with or attachment to Baba, yet the words just came out of his mouth. Baba then said to him to come on 1st August 1938. Eruch rose and was about to leave when Baba told him to sit again. 'Is it possible for all the family to leave everything and come and follow Me?' Again Eruch replied: 'By Your Grace everything is possible.' 'That is good,' said Baba, 'tell them to come also. When you come, bring a trunk and sleeping bag for each, and bring the car. Only those things.'

To Eruch it all seemed so natural, so simple and right. Baba told Eruch to put his head on His feet. Then He embraced Eruch, expressing great happiness: 'I am the Ancient One. Your decision pleases Me more than you can know.' He went on: 'Where will you stay tonight?' 'In a hotel.' Baba said: 'Do you know of My cave?' 'Yes, Baba, I have heard of it but I don't know where it is.' 'Find it and stay the night in

Over The Years With Meher Baba

the cave.' Eruch agreed, and again was about to go when Baba said: 'By the way, there are many tigers in the valley where the cave is situated. Are you afraid of tigers?' 'No,' Eruch replied. 'That's good,' said Baba, 'I want a tiger. Can you get Me one by the ear if you see one?' 'Yes, Baba.' Eruch thought nothing of the request at the time. He has commented that it showed the foolish over-confidence of youth.

Baba then told Eruch to go, and Eruch has said that he had a good meal at a hotel. a good sleep in the cave, and no disturbing thoughts and feelings. In the morning he returned to Poona and boarded the train for Nagpur. But the moment he sat in the train there was a deluge, a cloudburst of thoughts and feelings of deep concern and panic. What had he done? Would his father agree to his commitment to Baba? What about the large estate with its extensive buildings and all the servants who had been with the family for a lifetime? How to dispose of it all? What about Meherwan's education? What about friends? What about society? What can be said to people generally?

This overwhelming awareness of his predicament went on for two or three hours. Then suddenly the memory of his own words returned to him: 'By Your Grace everything is possible.' Immediately calm descended, all the host of worries disappeared, and Eruch left the whole matter to Baba's Grace. The rest of the journey was pleasant.

When Eruch reached home, the first greeting from his father, hot-tempered as always, was to reprimand him for leaving the car, an imported, late-model one, at the station. 'But I asked the constable there to look after it.' 'Yes, I know it is safe,' replied his father, 'but you should never have left the car like that.' The main thought in Eruch 's mind was: that problem is nothing, wait until he hears my news.

Then his mother came into the room. 'Eruch, you have come so soon. What message from Baba? What happened?' 'Please,' said Eruch, 'let me have a bath and change my clothes first.' So later they all sat in the living room, the whole family, and he related what had happened.

Gaimai immediately responded: 'How blessed we are! How blessed we are that it is He who has the grip over us now! Had we the grip over Him, we might have faltered, we might have had our grip loosened.' She jumped with joy. Again she said: 'How blessed we are that He on His own has hold of our hands!'

So then Eruch turned to his father, the one who had created that extensive property and assets. 'Father, what do you say?' Beheram replied: 'What can I say? All this I have done for you all, that you may have happiness; but if you find greater happiness at His feet, then I am all the more happy.' Eruch knew then that the matter was resolved: his sisters too young to other than go along with their parents, and his brother still but a child.

Then his father said to Eruch: 'But don't involve me in the winding up of the estate, the disposal of the house, the servants and so on. I am too busy, and in any case you are of age now, you are capable of responsibility, so do whatever is necessary and I will sign the papers.'

By then the date was 23rd May and Baba had said to be with Him by 1st August. There was little time to find buyers capable of purchasing such a property. But in the night Eruch suddenly remembered a lady living in Nagpur, who whenever she visited them, would exclaim what a paradise the whole property was, and how she wished she could own such a place. Eruch also knew she was wealthy, so the very next morning he went to see her.

Eruch reminded her of her feelings about the place and of her expressed longing to own it. 'We are going to dispose of the property. You are the first person I have spoken to of this, and we have little time to complete the sale. Would you like to buy it?' 'Are you crazy?' she said, 'what is the matter?' 'Please don't ask me questions now. Do you or do you not wish to purchase?' 'Of course I would like to buy it.' 'All right, it is yours. Now what will you offer me?' She answered: 'Everything that I have in the bank and can collect.' She did some calculations and then stated some ridiculously low figure. 'Listen,' she said, 'I would love to own it, but with all honesty that is all I can afford.' 'Are you sure about this?' asked Eruch. 'Do you only have that amount?' 'Yes, I say this with all honesty.' So Eruch answered: 'Then you can have it, you can have the bungalow, but we will remove the garden ornaments, and the furniture from the house.' But she said: 'The garden is a part of the paradise. Why do you deprive yourselves of all this?' So Eruch told her: 'We are going to Meher Baba. Please do not ask more questions. If you want the place, then have it and live happily.'

Over The Years With Meher Baba

It was a tremendous bargain for the woman, but Eruch's mood was such that any arrangement to fulfil Baba's order was acceptable. She was of course very happy and came immediately to Eruch's parents for signatures on the various papers. The only condition was vacant possession on 1st August 1938. Then she selected the servants she wished to retain.

So in the space of one day a major part of the task before Eruch was completed. The second day the furniture, other outlying bungalow garden ornaments etc were disposed of, and each of the family then began to live out of a trunk and small sleeping bag. There was also the car which Baba had asked Eruch to bring with them, and this with the trunks and sleeping bags came to be the only things they took with them.

Baba, in the meantime, sent a message: 'Tell your father that his retirement is due soon, he should not retire prematurely.' He did have six months to go to retirement, so Eruch found him a cottage in which to stay and servants to see to his needs.

On 1st August the whole family came to Baba as wished by Him, but in one respect Eruch failed Baba's orders, showing Eruch for the first time the impossibility of obeying Him 100%. Eruch did not bring the car for Baba, but arranged to leave it for his father until retirement. Baba was most unhappy about it, saying that this failure of Eruch to obey His order to hand over the car 'had left a scar forever on His heart'. So Eruch was sent back with his father to settle him into his cottage and to obtain another smaller car for him.

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Bindra House continued

The years went by - Blue Bus tours, mast tours, mast ashrams - and through it all Eruch continued as Baba's attendant.

Now the New Life period began. The Jessawala family had of course been settled in Bindra House, Poona, for many years. Eruch's younger brother Meherwan had finished his studies and was earning as a clerk

in an insurance office. So they pushed on in life, happy and contented in Baba's love, but certainly living a distinctly different life from the one they had known in their luxurious home in Nagpur.

After the New Life Baba sent Eruch home to visit his parents. His father, now very old, was very happy to see him, as indeed were all the family. Baba had instructed Eruch to give to his mother token money for the food he would eat while there. After Eruch had told them about the New Life, about salient features of it, he asked his mother if anything special had happened in the household.

Gaimai said, yes, there had been an interesting incident. The woman to whom he had sold the property in Nagpur had come searching for him. Eruch expressed surprise - What did she want? Why was she searching for him? Then his mother told him that the woman had been unhappy in the house, even though she had described it as a paradise before purchase: she and all her family were constantly aware of Baba in every room and there was never any privacy for them. They found Baba in each room they entered. So she had sold the property after only six months of ownership.

Then she confessed that she had lied about the amount of money she actually had at the time of purchase. Her conscience had pricked her and she wanted to make amends before she died. She then opened the large suitcase she had brought with her. It was full to the brim with currency notes. It was the balance of the money she should have paid to Eruch. She pleaded with Gaimai to accept the money so that she could die peacefully. But Gaimai refused, and said that as she had come in vain in search of Eruch with the intention of paying him, she should now in the Name of Meher Baba give it to the needy. Her conscience would then be clear. Eruch praised his mother for not accepting the money.



Remembering Gaimai cooking (as I mentioned earlier), reminds me now of being told she always put a little sugar into everything she cooked. And that led me to remember hearing of the time that Baba was told of this habit of Gaimai's - she was cooking for Baba soon after the family

Over The Years With Meher Baba

had come to live with Him. Baba called Gaimai to Him with others present and on being told 'Yes, she did put a little sugar into every dish', berated her, asking if she wanted to give Him diabetes.

Baba continued sternly and forcefully for some time, and Gaimai wept more and more and tried to assure Him, as it were, again and again of her ever-loving concern for His welfare. After about an hour and a half Baba finally dismissed everyone, those who were critical of Gaimai's cooking apparently satisfied, and as they left Baba quietly gestured to Gaimai to continue cooking just as she had been doing! So another 'domestic' incident was dealt with by Baba: and apart from the touching human elements in the incident shown by God-Man, I also wonder what universal work was being done by Him to spend so much time on what seemed a somewhat trivial matter.

This incident reminds me of another one related by Eruch concerning food which occurred during a period when Gaimai was cooking under Baba's orders for Mohammed the mast. At this particular time, Mohammed wanted green peas every day with his meal. One day no peas were available in the market-place, so Gaimai was forced to cook another vegetable for him. When the meal was given to him, Mohammed refused to eat because there were no peas. Baba then called Gaimai and started to berate her for the absence of peas, and moved as though to beat her. But straight away Mohammed in distress pleaded with Baba to stop, saying: 'No, no! Do not beat her! She is Eruch's mummy! I will eat the food.' And he proceeded to do so.

Again another incident related by Eruch comes to mind. Baba was invited to a wedding within the family of devoted but very poor Meher Baba lovers. With Him were Eruch and Adi Jnr. Baba sat down outside the little hut and the woman lovingly, reverently, brought Him tea in a cup. Eruch, seeing the love of the woman for Baba, did not question her regarding the cleanliness of the cup. But Adi Jnr in Persian said to Baba that He should not have the tea, not knowing about the preparation of it or the cleanliness of the cup. So Baba turned to Eruch and questioned him. Eruch at this point lost his mood, saying he had checked on the woman's wish in the beginning, and anyway to question now was a reflection on her love for Baba and His love for her.

Later, after departing, Baba so beautifully, so lovingly said that the woman was right in all she did for Baba; Eruch was right in his actions; and so was Adi Jnr. Another 'family' incident was, you might say, sweetly resolved by Baba.



Mary Lodge continued

But to return to stories of Mary Lodge, Nagpur. Another one who became a regular, although infrequent visitor to Mary Lodge, was a Jivanmukta - one who is Perfect, retaining his physical body, but without duty in the world. He was observed one day by the college-going Eruch, sitting on the edge of the field watching Eruch play hockey. After the game the Jivanmukta stopped Eruch saying: 'Will you invite me to your home for dinner?' Eruch replied: 'Of course. You are most welcome.'

He came walking down the long driveway and into the house as though he was the owner. He had on only a loin cloth, and his skin was so dry and cracked from exposure to all weathers that it resembled a crocodile hide. Papa was incensed by this cavalier behaviour but was pacified by Gaimai and the family. On this and subsequent visits the Jivanmukta directed that butter be rubbed into his skin, and he would only take food prepared by Gaimai herself and not the cook. In serving him - for example at meal times when the Jivanmukta would sit at the table and see that he was waited on as an honoured guest - Eruch has remarked that he learnt thus to serve Baba as a valet and servant.



In 1926 the Thread ceremony was to take place in Ahmednagar for the two girls Manu and Meheru who were about six and eight years old. This was the first time that Papa saw Baba, and he did not want the ceremony done by Baba, so Baba said it should be done first by a priest and then by Him, so there were two threads for each of the girls.

Over The Years With Meher Baba

Afterwards Baba said the girls were to press His feet - one each - for one hour while He slept.

Then Baba said for the whole family to go to Upasni Maharaj - to go in one day and return in the evening. Upasni greeted them lovingly. He said 'You are Zoroastrians, aren't you?' 'Yes.' 'And your Zoroaster has come again. Stick to Him, do not let go.' He used the figure of the sealing-wax embossed stamp on a cover to illustrate this - even if the whole envelope is torn the embossed stamp remains. Then Upasni teasingly said to them to stay the night, knowing of Baba's order to them. But they excused themselves and returned to Akbar Press, the Satha family home in Ahmednagar.

Baba was also at Akbar Press, and the next day told them to leave the two girls there and the rest to go to Poona and have Babajan's darshan. They went, and Papa wanted to have a fine picnic, but on the way they went to Babajan who was up to that point sleeping against the neem tree, not taking any notice of the people milling around her. Then attendants came and told her that people from Meher Baba had come for her darshan. She immediately awoke and sat up, giving the family much attention. Papa was impatient, but Babajan kept them there. She was given by someone a coconut which she was holding in her hand. All the women present wanted it, but in the end Eruch's Aunt pushed Gaimai's hand forward, and Babajan put the coconut firmly into her hand.

Then Papa and family including the Aunt left Babajan and resumed their sight-seeing and picnic. While they were travelling in their Victoria carriage, Babajan went to Bund Gardens. A feast of tea and rich rava and naan was prepared for Babajan and a crowd with her. But she would not let the food be served, saying 'My children have not come, wait, my children have not come.'

In the course of their journey round Poona, Papa and family finally arrived at Bund Gardens for the picnic, and on seeing the carriage, attendants of Babajan ran to them saying, 'Come, Babajan is waiting for you.' Papa was enraged, the picnic again interrupted, and he grumbled 'This old lady again. Why must we stop?'

But the Aunt with them urged them to at least pay their respects, and the attendants pressed them to come, so they did, and only then did Babajan permit the food and tea to be distributed, saying 'My children have come.' But to Papa she said: 'How dare you abuse me. I gave you birth, and you dare abuse me!' Papa was taken aback, not understanding why she should attack him. The Aunt persuaded Papa much against his will to ask her for forgiveness. So the occasion passed.

The family returned from Poona to Akbar Press, and eventually went home to Nagpur with Meheru and Manu. When they heard of the meetings with Babajan, the girls grumbled that they had had to stay at Akbar Press and therefore missed being with Babajan whom they had not yet seen. Of course it was by Baba's order that they were not taken to Poona.



Papa Jessawala was extremely strict, so much so that the two girls would hide when they heard him come home.

There was a mastani (a woman mast) in Nagpur who was fierce and abusive with others but not with the Jessawala family. She would throw rice and flowers at their house instead of the stones she threw at other houses. She would speak lovingly to the girls. Manu now feels that Baba sent her to them at that time so that they would know what Babajan was like.

Apart from the Perfect One (the Jivanmukta), and of course Avatar Meher Baba, three Perfect Masters came to or had connection with Mary Lodge and the family: Babajan, Upasni Maharaj and Tajuddin Baba.

Tajuddin Baba would hop or jump, not walk normally in going around Nagpur. The Jessawala family were not allowed to go to Him, nor to Babajan. They were only to bow down from a distance and take Baba's Name.

Such are scenes from the early life of the Jessawala family.



Baba Stories From The 1970s

Whenever Meher Baba's Presence is experienced, whenever there is the opportunity to speak about Him to an attentive ear, or the time to listen to others' experiences, memories, or the recounting of His message, these are the treasured times in life.

Perhaps over the last thirty years since Beloved Baba dropped His body, the period that particularly stands out in my memory is the Seventies. Meher Baba's mandali and disciples responded fully over those years to the spiritual thirst of the surge of seekers, mostly young in age, reacting to the world around them and actively seeking a more meaningful one.

What a time that was! Hour upon hour each day during the visits to Meherabad and Meherazad the talk on Baba's life, His message, His mission would go on, the listeners lost to themselves in His Presence. Those times inspired and enlivened a great out-pouring of songs of love for Him, poems, books, films, and paintings; they forged bonds of dedicated service to His Cause; and the love that the seekers experienced in their hearts gradually permeated their world of family, relatives, friends and careers.

The following pages contain some material I recorded from those years. Unfortunately the recording is often fragmented and sketchy, but every effort is made to convey the wondrous pearl of Baba's love that is somehow always there, no matter how small the snippet, the incident, or the commentary from His life, message and work.

There was, for example, the occasion when Eruch was talking to all of us in Mandali Hall, but addressing himself, as it were, to Dr Deshmukh the original editor of the Discourses, who was present. As I recall it, this is what Eruch said:

Dr Deshmukh too has come to this conclusion that we are all God. Yes, Baba has said so. Then what is there left for us to do? To enjoy the bliss of God-Realisation. But Dr Deshmukh was then asked: 'Do we have this bliss?' He answered, 'No, we do not have that.' 'Then why do you say that we are God?' 'Because my mind says we are God. Is there anything other than God? As Baba says, "What is not God?"'

Yes, there is no doubt that we are all God. Baba tells us that. But it is like the sandalwood tree - there are, for example, many sandalwood trees here in this district, but none of them gives out the fragrance of sandalwood. It is only on maturity that the tree gives out its fragrance. The tree has no authority, no right, to proclaim 'I am sandalwood' until it is mature. After about fifty to sixty years, the core of the tree becomes brown and ripe, the bark automatically splits, and through the chink the perfume oozes out. Only when that happens and the tree is mature, does it have the right to proclaim 'I am sandalwood'.

We find now so many on this stage of the world who declare themselves to be God - but so what? When from true maturity you say it, the utterance 'I am God' is an echo of that maturity. To attain that we must have patience, we must be child-like, we must be honest.

Likewise, people may appear to be or say they are in a blissful state, but bliss does not come through posing in these ways. Even a person on the sixth plane of consciousness does not have bliss. Bliss comes in becoming one with Reality. As long as consciousness of the body is there bliss is impossible, because this body is synonymous with the suffering of pain. So people may seem to be blissful, but they are not.

There is One who is Infinite Bliss, but who comes as man, lives as man, shoulders suffering and comforts humanity and puts His bliss aside. God-Man keeps His bliss aside. Then what sustains Him? The knowledge that He is the One. He is like a king who lives amongst His people as one of them in order to help them and comfort them, but who knows always that He is the king. So Baba has said that He does not use His powers, does not use His bliss, but that He uses His knowledge. What is this knowledge? What is the infinite knowledge that Baba has? One day Baba said to us: 'You feel that I know everything. But really speaking I know nothing. That is the secret, that really I know nothing.'

Over The Years With Meher Baba

This is the meaning of all knowledge, that there is nothing to know. Wanting to know something is a poor attempt at becoming it. Become, and then what is there to know? There is nothing left to know! Baba's state is that He *is* everything, so what is there for Him to know?

You all know the book 'The Everything and The Nothing'? 'The Everything and The Nothing' came about because Baba encouraged the Principal of the largest college in India to ask questions of Baba which He would then answer. In time these questions and answers became this book. The Principal was a scientist and he asked Baba very searching and provocative questions.

Well, the book was published, and when the Principal came again to see Baba he was presented with a copy of the book, but he showed no enthusiasm. Baba said: 'Aren't you happy? Now you have a copy of all the answers to your questions.' 'Yes, Baba, the book has everything. And yet, Baba, what can I say? When I last left you I was completely satisfied. You had answered every question I put to you and I was fully satisfied with those answers. But then as I left you and boarded the train, this mind of mine thought of another question. That question has intrigued me during the whole of this college year.' Baba encouraged him: 'So what is it that intrigues you now?' 'Oh, Baba, I hesitate! My heart accepts you as God in human form, but my mind goes on questioning. I hesitate now to say anything.' But Baba said: 'What is it? Say it out.' 'Baba, you say you are infinite consciousness.' 'Yes, I am that. But does that intrigue you?' 'What intrigues me,' replied the man, 'is how infinity can be bottled up in this limited physical frame of yours?'

Baba said: 'You are intrigued by this one little thing! But I am the creator of the whole cosmos, the creator of the visible and the invisible universes, and I Myself am intrigued with My creation. Will you help Me now with this problem?' The man was delighted. He loved problems, scientific problems, and now Baba was asking for his help. So he said: 'Yes, certainly, please tell me what it is.' Baba continued and pointed out through the front door of Mandali Hall: 'What can you see?' The man replied: 'Our sandals.' 'What else can you see?' 'Shepherds and goat-herds. Grass and trees.' 'Is that all?' 'Beyond

that there is a range of hills and beyond that again the horizon. I can see all that, a long, long distance, there is a vastness in this countryside.' 'There,' said Baba, 'that is what intrigues Me. How can this tiny iris of the eye absorb all that vastness? So much in this tiny thing, that is what intrigues Me - how can all that, people, animals, trees and hills, be bottled up in such a small thing as your eye? Please explain that to Me,' concluded Baba. That was the end of the matter for the Principal.



Meher Baba's Humour

From my notes and from my recollections there are a number of stories relating to the concept of God-Man, and of His Godhood, and of His human-ness.

Meher Baba enjoyed jokes and humorous stories, and His own humour could be keen, with underlying spiritual significance, but it was never hurtful or belittling in front of others. He was also always entertained by human foibles where no harm was done to anyone.

An amusing example of this was an incident during one of Baba's many train journeys. Unusually, Baba with one or two of His mandali were travelling First Class, and their fellow-passenger was a short, somewhat rotund man. They had all settled down for the night on the bench-type beds. At one stop on their journey, some men got into the compartment and illegally occupied a bench. Baba's fellow-passenger was incensed at this disturbance. Thoroughly irate, he leapt out of his sleeping bag and standing in his underwear berated the intruders. But his theme was constantly to the tune of: 'Just you wait until I put on my trousers, then I'll deal with you!' This was repeated many times with great force and passion, but he never did put his trousers on.



Over The Years With Meher Baba

There was no doubt about it, an attribute of Baba's perfect manhood was His humour. He thoroughly enjoyed a good joke that harmed no-one, and often delighted us with His quick wit, and was a superb mimic. It seemed to us that even His most casual conversation had many levels of meaning and spiritual significance, and this was so even in His humour.

As an example, Eruch recalls Baba telling the mandali of an incident when He was alone with a mast. It was at a time when He had been fasting for some three or four days, and He was feeding sweetmeats to the mast. As He did so, He became conscious of hunger, and He hoped the mast would offer Him a sweetmeat. The mast then did so, and Baba recounted that He quickly ate it - He always did whatever a mast wanted in order to please him - but also, in this instance, in case the mast changed his mind and asked for it back!

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Even though Meher Baba gave as one of His firm injunctions to mankind that drugs should never be taken unless under medical supervision, I feel sure that He would have enjoyed this little story of how one of His lovers came to Him:

It so happened that at a time when a certain girl was high on drugs, she saw a male acquaintance of hers, whom she had not seen for a while, riding past on a bicycle. He looked and acted extremely happy, casually cleaning his teeth as he rode by. He really caught the girl's attention, and she wondered what drug he was taking to produce such a happy state. She called out: 'What are you on?' and he answered: 'Meher Baba.' She, thinking it must be the name of a new drug, promptly investigated. And that was how in time she was drawn into Baba's orbit.

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Meher Baba's Attributes

Here are other stories to illustrate different attributes of God-Man Meher Baba.

Towards the end of His life on earth, when the body had become very weak and ailing, Baba would say to Eruch that he was not to trouble Baba for replies to letters from His lovers, but to reply to them himself. This troubled Eruch, and later as he sat in his cabin concerned over this new responsibility, a message from Baba was sent to him three times: 'I seem as though I know nothing, but know well that I know everything.' After the last one came Eruch wrote it down and put it on the wall of his cabin.

Around this time Eruch wrote a letter of comfort to a Baba lover whose husband had died, but later to his horror and apprehension he realised that by mistake he had sent the letter to another woman Baba lover. Some two or three years later, the recipient of the letter suddenly appeared before Eruch and greeted him before he could say anything: 'How wonderful is my Lord, Beloved Baba, that He should get you to write that letter to me. You see, at that time my husband suddenly and unexpectedly left me and I was terribly distressed. No-one knew, but your letter came and truly comforted me with its assurance of Baba's love.'

Then Eruch remembered yet again Meher Baba's words: 'I seem as though I know nothing, but know well that I know everything.'



Eruch joined Meher Baba permanently on 1st August 1938. His early tasks were to accompany Baba on His tours of Meherabad, including up the Hill to the women's ashram. During one walk Baba asked Eruch what the men mandali talked about in the evening. Eruch replied that he did not follow the conversation, that it seemed to involve circles of the Avatar, but he only knew of geometric circles, and so he did not know what they meant by the topic. Baba said: 'Do not pay heed, let the words go in one ear and out the other.'



Over The Years With Meher Baba

One day whilst Eruch was with Baba and they were moving around the grounds of Lower Meherabad, Baba suddenly pointed to a man walking up the Hill towards the women's ashram at the top. This was against the expressed and emphasised order of Baba that no man was to go up the Hill. Baba told Eruch to run to the man, stop him, give him 'a tight slap', and point out that he was disobeying Baba's orders. Then Eruch was to bring the man to Baba.

Eruch did as ordered, and when he forcibly dragged the man to Baba, Baba merely asked him, 'Don't you know no man is to walk up that Hill? How could you disobey Me?' But the man answered humbly, 'Please forgive me, Baba. I was seeking you to have your darshan. I did not know of your order. Please forgive me.' Baba then embraced the man, forgiving him and bathing him in His love. 'What a great fortune it is that in coming to see Me, you get slapped and humiliated!' But Eruch, who was only obeying orders, himself felt humiliated that he had treated the innocent man in such a fashion.



This reminds me of another incident that Eruch spoke of during his talks with pilgrims. A retired Captain who had then become a sanyasin (one who gives up everything and wanders on pilgrimage), would come for Baba's darshan when possible. On one such occasion he brought his wife. There was at the time a large crowd, and in his insensitive efforts to bring his wife close to Baba despite the crowds, he almost backed right into Baba. Just in the nick of time Eruch gave a sharp push to the sanyasin who then collapsed into the laps of nearby women. He was very annoyed, yelled at Eruch, and Eruch tried to explain himself. At that point Baba gestured to Eruch, 'Be quiet!' and then continued, 'Now go and bow down to the man and apologise.' Eruch promptly did as Baba ordered, and the man later boasted to others: 'See! Meher Baba gets His disciple to bow down to me.'

As Baba has said, the ego is hydra-headed - cut one head off and another springs up.



Another man, this one with a number of disciples, came to have Baba's darshan. On entering the hall with his followers he hesitated indecisively between sitting on a chair near Baba or on the floor. At this, his disciples pushed him onto the chair. Well, Baba ignored what had happened and gave them a good talk on spirituality. But later on, after their departure, He remarked that 'the disciples had thrown this man into a ditch'.

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Another guru (teacher), also with disciples, came again to see Baba. He shook hands with Baba and introduced his followers. Baba said how happy He was to see him, and then went on to say casually how He remembered the man coming alone to see Him at Satara, and how he had bowed down to Him. At this the man 'swallowed hard' and bowed down to Baba.

•I•

Meher Baba and a small group of His mandali were travelling during the war years in a special railway carriage. This was permitted by Baba on the request of Jal Kerawala who on all accounts could be described as one who lived for God and died for God. Baba and the mandali had the small carriage to themselves and for a time everything was fine. Then at one station, despite strenuous protests by the mandali, a group of soldiers crowded into the carriage.

Again things settled down and peace descended - until one soldier, asserting himself more and more in the cramped space, pushed his booted feet against Baba's bare feet. Eruch, observing this and fuming inwardly more and more, finally threw the soldier onto the floor. At this bedlam ensued with a terrific verbal row between Eruch, the mandali, and the soldiers. In the midst of it, Baba gestured to Eruch: 'Be quiet. Not another word out of any of you.' So of course the row, without fuel from the mandali, subsided.

But then the same game recommenced with the soldier pushing Baba's feet into a more cramped position. Once more Eruch could not

Over The Years With Meher Baba

contain himself, especially as the soldier was increasingly aggressive and taunting, and he said: 'If you continue, I'll throw you out of the carriage!' But then Baba said to Eruch: 'If you will not be quiet I'll pull the emergency cord and get out wherever it stops.' So all the mandali sat silent and glum - so much so that when the conductor came to check their tickets, he observed their expressions and asked: 'Are you all going to a funeral?'



Meher Baba, said Eruch in recounting another little episode, was comfortable with discomfort, and when travelling He always ensured that everyone was uncomfortable. On this occasion, Eruch said, we were in our as usual overcrowded car, and Baba asked him: 'Which is more beautiful - sunrise or sunset?' 'Sunset.' 'Correct,' replied Baba. 'And which are people more aware of - sunrise or noon?' 'Sunrise.' 'Correct,' said Baba. 'It is like My Advent - with its dawning, people are aware something great is to happen. Yet when I am in your midst, few are aware of Me. But after I drop the body, then there will come the Glorification, and that will be so beautiful and stupendous that many will notice it and come flocking to Me.'



During a discussion on the personality of Meher Baba, Eruch likened Him to a sweet - that type of sweet which is also a jaw-breaker. 'If we sucked it we derived great pleasure from it, but if we took a bite of it we could dislocate our jaws. He was very sweet, very loving, and very firm at the same time.'



Eruch continued to speak in this vein of the Avatar during this period. He said that when Baba was upset with a person or the mandali, He would just keep quiet, with 'a long face' as it is said. The most common thing to upset Him was not obeying Him literally. Up to the point where

He gave an order, then suggestions, discussions, opinions by the other person or persons were in order. But arguments would upset Him.

Then Eruch gave an example: Baba says, 'What's the time?' '4:30.' Baba then says, 'Why has the post not come yet?' 'Well, sometimes it is late.' Perhaps the man has to come a long way on a bicycle, and it was always possible that he had had a puncture or some other problem. Baba would wait five minutes or so, and then say: 'Has it come yet?' We reply, 'It will be coming very soon now.' Perhaps the man would come and that would be that. But perhaps he doesn't come, and now it is 4:45 and Baba has enquired half-a-dozen times. At this point He might say: 'Go on your cycle and find out what has happened.' So we take a cycle and go. But if instead we say: 'He'll come, what need is there for hurry?' this would upset Him.

Then Eruch gave another example. Perhaps we have not slept for three or four days and we are very tired. But it is now full daylight, there is movement and commotion around us, and tired as we are, we would not feel like sleeping. But Baba says to go and sleep. We reply, 'No, Baba, we will go later on. We can have our food, and sleep in the night.' 'No, no,' says Baba, 'go now, take rest and sleep.' Again we may demur, and then Baba would get upset. Realising now that He is disturbed and upset, we keep quiet, 'put our tails between our legs' and go to our rooms.



This reminds me of another story Eruch told years ago. If the connection seems tenuous, at least the reality of Meher Baba is the constant thread.

It happened during a time when Meher Baba was in strict seclusion. The place was Satara and Baba had prohibited anyone from coming to Him. At certain times Baba walked from one building to another, both of them on the main road of the town. On one such occasion a man suddenly greeted Baba with folded hands. This man was a contractor in Delhi and over the years he had become, you could say, quite a close Baba lover. But now he had made the long journey to pour out his woes to Baba: sixteen court cases were against him, people were duping

Over The Years With Meher Baba

him, his contracts were giving him insufficient funds for the family's needs, his wife was suffering from tuberculosis, and his daughter was yet to be married with all its expenses: he was hard-pressed on all sides and so frustrated and helpless that he had turned to Baba, even though forbidden, to seek His Blessings.

No efforts by the mandali could stop him, he insisted on seeing Baba as He walked along the road. Naturally Baba stopped on seeing the man: 'Why did you come? You should not have come.' But the man promptly told Baba of all his problems and hardships. Baba did not turn His back on the man, He would not do that, and now that he was there He would comfort and console. So Baba said to him: 'What is all this, it is just a passing show. Continue to remember Me, don't be nervous and despondent, all this will pass away.'

But the man persisted in seeking Baba's Blessings so that he might be relieved of all his sufferings: 'Baba, I cannot bear it! Bless me, please Bless me!' Baba continued to comfort and counsel that he should face his woes, and that they would in time pass away. The man could not accept Baba's assurances but continued to plead.

Eventually Baba gave in and very reluctantly said: 'So you must have My Blessings? They will relieve you of all problems and suffering, there is no doubt about that - but they will also relieve you of Me and My love.' 'No, no, that is impossible. Baba, you can never be out of my heart - how could it be otherwise? On the contrary I will love you all the more. I will never stop loving you.' But Baba said: 'Listen, I am telling you the dire consequences of what will happen with the giving of My Blessings.' Still the man thought that Baba was not serious, perhaps being humorous or taking him lightly, and he persisted: 'No, no, I want your Blessings.'

All this took place on the main road, and there on that main road Baba said: 'All right, stand there. I will give you My Blessings.' Baba then bowed down to the man one hundred and ten times and said: 'Now go. My Blessings are with you.'

That man never saw Baba again. But years later, long after Baba had dropped His body, the man's daughter and her husband came to Amartithi at Meherabad. From her, Eruch learnt that shortly after the

man returned from Baba, all the court cases were won, his wife recovered, his contracts flourished, he built a large hotel, and arranged a successful marriage for his daughter.

But the Source of love was covered, as it were, in his heart, and he had no further contact with Baba. While we can feel for the man in his extreme predicament, Beloved Baba has told us many times, as He did then, that our sufferings maintain our connection with the Source of love, and become the ladder that takes us to God.



Meher Baba has reminded us of a couplet of Kabir:

*That which has been demanded and forced from God is like blood.
That which has been asked of God, and given, is like water.
That which God gives of His own accord, is like milk.*



One night in January 1967 Baba dictated to Eruch: Blessed are those who stick to truth through thick and thin. More blessed are those who do not laugh at those who sin.



In writing of Baba's Blessing, I am reminded of another story related by Eruch: A husband and wife took every opportunity of seeing Baba when He permitted, and over time they appeared to come close in Baba's love. Baba would tease the husband and say what a lucky fellow he was to be blessed with such a beautiful wife, but that he was neglecting her - there was not even a single piece of jewellery on her or even decent clothes. Baba would tease him quite often.

Then one day the husband suddenly asked Baba to Bless him with wealth. Baba looked surprised, and he said that he wanted wealth so he could give his wife good things to wear such as Baba had mentioned. However, Baba said that He was merely teasing him and that he should

Over The Years With Meher Baba

not ask such a Blessing from Him as it amounted to making Him soil His hands in muck. Despite this, the man was adamant. Baba said: 'Why do you seek My Blessing? You have My love, why ask for a Blessing? Ask for something else: My Blessings are hard to digest.'

But the man persisted despite Baba's obvious efforts to dissuade him from his request, and finally Baba gave the man His Blessing. So the couple departed, the husband apparently happy now.

But on subsequent visits the mandali noticed that the couple seemed to become poorer. The wife wore no bangles, the clothing was cheaper and well-worn. Then the husband confessed that they had lost whatever they previously had, and at this point he pleaded with Baba to take back His Blessing.

Time passed. Then the couple came before Baba again, and this time the mandali noted obvious signs of wealth with the couple. More time passed, and again when they came to take Baba's darshan, the mandali noticed a new car, and even more jewellery worn by the wife and expensive clothing.

Then for a time there was no appearance of the couple. Perhaps eighteen months to two years had passed since Beloved Baba had taken back His Blessing.

One day, in glancing through the Bombay daily paper, one of the mandali found that the man had been arrested for falsely claiming to be a close relative of a high Government official. In this guise he had obtained money from people in the promise he would obtain Government favours for them. He was imprisoned for this crime.



In September 1954 Meher Baba took eighteen of His Western devotees to Sakori to visit the ashram and Tomb-shrine of His Master Upasni Maharaj. During that visit Baba and the Westerners were given lunch in an upper room of the ashram, and whilst they were seated there some of the women disciples of Upasni Maharaj sang the following bhajan:

*The Lord tells His disciples: 'My Name is Bhagwan
Some call Me Ram and some Shyam
In the world I am the object of worship and I am also the
worshipper
At times I am the Giver and at times I am the beggar
I am everywhere and yet I belong to no place. '*



Eruch once commented that as a Man, Meher Baba had settled all debts many, many times over before dropping His body. This reminded me of a little but very touching story of Baba's father and mother's servant. She was a very simple woman, uneducated, but she had a deep love for Baba.

Late in 1944 at Meherabad Baba performed a touching ceremony at the bottom of the Hill to commemorate the names of all His close disciples who had died. In preparation for this ceremony a grave was dug and in it was placed the body of Masaji, Baba's dear maternal uncle who had died in the morning when exercising. Also placed in the grave was the bedding-roll of Chanji, Baba's devoted disciple and secretary who in August had died and been buried in Srinagar, Kashmir.

Baba's message was read out saying that each disciple was to be represented in the grave by a flower. As each name was given, Baba put in a flower. At one point He paused for a moment, gave the servant's name and placed a flower for her also.

Baba had called only Margaret Craske from the women's ashram to be present at this ceremony, and Kitty Davy quotes her description of it in *Love Alone Prevails*:

'Baba, looking radiant and beautiful, dropped rose after rose into the grave while the name of the disciple, represented by each particular flower was announced, and Baba, simply shining with Love, indicated by signs how happy He was to think of the love and service these dear ones had given Him over so many years.'



Over The Years With Meher Baba

Eruch one day recalled this story that Baba Himself had told the mandali: There was a man who supported his family by brigandage, but they did not know this. He waylaid solitary travellers, killed them, and took all their possessions. This continued for quite some time, but gradually the number of murders increased, and so too the weight of awareness of what he was doing. On the 99th murder he was totally overcome with remorse and the thought of the karma he had acquired in the process of his profession. He ran distraught to his family, confessing how he had supported them over the years, and implored them to share his karma as they had shared the fruits of his actions. But they expressed revulsion at what he had done and refused to accept their part in the transaction.

Truly shattered now, the man left his family and, constantly tormented with the realisation of his past deeds, wandered the country. Daily his despair and anguish grew more and more. But God in His mercy came one day in the form of a Perfect Master and allowed the man to pour out his heart, comforting him and assuring him of His Divine help. The Master directed him to go into the jungle to a certain spot and there remain, constantly seeking God's mercy and forgiveness. He was not to move from that spot except to beg for food and to attend the calls of nature.

Years went by. Gradually people began to be aware of him, and respect and reverence for him grew. A village and then a town developed around him; roads were needed, and one must be made where the man was seated. So one day while he was out begging, the town officials finished the road over the man's seat. But when he returned he did not react to the newly-constructed road, and knowing where his spot had been, continued to sit where his Master had said, in the middle of the road.

More years passed by. Travellers were accustomed to the man sitting in the middle of the road, and respectfully let him be. But one day a messenger of the king came by, and he was furious at this figure forcing him to slow down and detour around him. Angrily he got down from his horse, abused the man and laid rough hands on him. At this arrogance, all the man's old sanskaras came to the surface and he fiercely killed the messenger. At that moment he became God-realised.

Meher Baba told this story to show that one's karma is finer than the hair on one's head. It was necessary for the man's salvation to kill the messenger in this case, because the messenger was carrying an order to the king's governor to kill 100 innocent persons whom the king said had insulted him. So by the man killing the messenger he saved the 100 lives, and this precisely balanced the karma he had created with his 100 murders.



One day in Mandali Hall, Meherazad, a Western follower of Meher Baba asked Eruch which edition of Baba's Discourses did Baba appear to like most. Eruch then recalled the following incident with Baba and some visiting lovers of His:

Baba was giving messages and stories here one time, and He noticed half a dozen of the lovers present were scribbling notes. He asked what they were doing, and they replied that they were recording His precious words. So Baba asked each one to individually bring a prepared copy of a particular story the next morning.

The next day Baba had each one read out their version of the story, and to each one Baba gestured His pleasure and His verdict 'perfect'. Eruch and the other mandali were amazed - what was Baba saying, when in each case it was obvious to them that an essential point in the story had been left out.

Later Baba allowed Eruch to raise the point of the inaccuracy of the stories, and Baba replied that He listened to their love, not the words. Baba said: 'Each one had poured out their love for Baba in their writing, and that was all that mattered - their love for Him.'



Krishnan was one of three lads employed by Baba whilst He was at Bangalore, and when asked by Baba what he wished to do after finishing this employment, said that he wanted to remain a night-watchman to Baba. This Baba granted. Consequently he was with Baba for many years.

Over The Years With Meher Baba

The following incident occurred at Dehra Dun. Krishnan was on night duty with Baba, and as always he was not to make any noise or movement. All was well until suddenly a mosquito entered Krishnan's nose. This was too much, and involuntarily he raised his hand to drive it away. Immediately Baba severely reprimanded him, and continued to upbraid, saying Krishnan had no idea how much that disturbance had affected Him, how much He had to suffer through it. But Krishnan could not but wonder how such a noiseless short movement could be so disturbing to Baba: and as Baba continued to chastise him, Krishnan's mind started to think whether Baba was God or the devil! How could the Embodiment of Love be like this!

After a time Baba stopped and all was quiet. But then some hours later Baba suddenly asked Krishnan what he was thinking, and he had to confess that he thought Baba was the devil himself! The thought had constantly come to his mind: 'Baba says He is God in human form, yet He has no pity for those who serve Him.'

At 6 A.M. as Krishnan was leaving Baba, Baba instructed him: 'After having your tea, get a tonga. We will go to Hardwar for mast work.' But when Krishnan enquired about tea he found it was not ready, so decided to get a tonga and then have his tea. He hunted high and low in vain, and finally returned without a tonga. Baba had by this time come to the mandali's place and found that contrary to His order Krishnan had gone for a tonga before his tea. So again Baba was displeased. Krishnan endured the scolding in silence, but it confirmed in his mind that Baba was definitely the devil. From his point of view he had gone for the tonga to ensure they caught the train for Hardwar on time.

While this interaction was going on, a tonga came there without being sought, so it was hired and they left for the railway station. On reaching Hardwar, Baba requested Krishnan to get a tonga to take them some miles away to a particular mast whom Baba wanted to contact. While the tonga travelled about three miles Krishnan continued to brood on the events of the night and morning. Then the tonga-driver was asked to wait, and Baba, Krishnan, and the other mandali walked some two miles cross-country in blazing heat. Baba led the way. Finally they approached what seemed a few huts and Krishnan, peering behind

Baba's back, saw a yogi standing on one leg. His eyes were closed. The yogi would stand on one leg for six months and then six months on the other. Whilst changing legs he would talk to his devotees, otherwise he was in silence.

As Baba came nearer to him the yogi suddenly opened his eyes and looking at Baba, shouted: 'God has come. God has come. Oh, God, I have been waiting for you for so many years and at last you have come.' Krishnan was aware that the yogi had not previously seen Baba, yet he had come out of his trance and pronounced Baba as God. Krishnan began to repent of his earlier thoughts and feelings.

As Baba was about to leave, the yogi fell at His feet and begged that He should relieve him of his body, saying that there was no purpose in his living since he had seen God. Baba and the mandali then returned to Dehra Dun.

A week later Baba gave some flowers and a glass of water to Krishnan and directed him to go and give these to the yogi. On arrival at the ashram Krishnan was stunned to learn that the yogi had died that very morning and preparations were proceeding for his cremation. Krishnan put the flowers and poured the water on the body of the yogi and left the ashram.

Any lingering doubts in Krishnan's mind over Baba's Divinity were by now completely washed away.



One morning in Mandali Hall Eruch mentioned the plaster casts of the feet of Meher Baba which he told us were placed there for the children and for the Indians. It is said in India, in the Orient, that though you may wish to have the Lord, you cannot. He is so big and we are so small that it is impossible to measure ourselves against Him. He is the Lord, He is the Highest of the High, He is beyond the sky, we cannot even see the physical limits of the Universe. To measure the Everything is impossible. Our vision goes thus far and no further. Likewise is our spiritual status absolute nothingness. So in the East it is said, you cannot have Him, you cannot embrace Him, you cannot see Him; but if you have His feet, you have the satisfaction and the comfort of having the

Over The Years With Meher Baba

whole of Him. And in our catching hold of His feet, He stoops down to our level, becoming one with us. It has been said time and again, always catch hold of His feet.

But Meher Baba said: 'Instead of holding on to My feet, hold on to My garment.' What did that mean? If it was to literally hold on to His sadra it would be torn to pieces. It was not that holding, but holding in the sense of total reliance on Him. Just as a child holds on to the mother and goes fearlessly anywhere with total reliance on her, so Baba has told us to hold on to His garment. Rely completely on Him and we will be where He is. Even through our various moods He would say: 'Turn your face from Me if you must, but always remember one thing, hold fast to My garment.' Become childlike and hold completely to Him.

Then Eruch gave this very good story of dependence on the Lord:

There was a Sufi saint who one day decided to go on pilgrimage. He provided himself with only two things, a rope and a bucket, and set off. His long journey took him through mountains and deserts. As he travelled over one stretch of country he became thirsty and searched for water, becoming increasingly desperate. Finally in the midst of that wilderness he saw in the distance a herd of deer drinking from a well. Overjoyed, he ran forward. As he did so the deer fled, and when he reached the well to his amazement and consternation the water-level dropped.

He had endured much in his love for God, great austerities and hardships, and at the sight of the water subsiding he was overcome with the pain of rejection and cried to God: 'Why do you do this to me?' A voice answered him: 'Your reliance on Me is not as total as the reliance of the deer. Because they have to rely utterly on Me, I see that they have a source from which they quench their thirst. But you provide yourself with a bucket and rope, so use them to gain water.' So the saint threw in the bucket only to find that the rope was too short for the bucket to reach the water. Again he cried out to the Lord: 'I cannot reach the water because the rope is too short.' Then suddenly he realised his mistake and threw the bucket and rope completely into the well. As soon as he did so, the level of the water rose and soon he was able to bend and from his hands drink deeply, quenching his thirst. He then resumed his pilgrimage refreshed.

Later the saint described his experience to Junaid the Perfect Master, who replied: 'What little faith you had. If you had waited longer the water would have risen still higher and you would not have needed to bend.' That is faith, total reliance, a total childlike dependence on the Lord.



There is another story, an incident in the life of the great Sufi saint Rabia, that emphasises total reliance on the Lord. Rabia of Basra was an old lady at the time, living in a hut. Three pilgrims came from afar to see her to pay their respects. They were hungry and Rabia, wanting to offer them something, searched everywhere and finally found one small loaf of bread. She broke this into three pieces and offered them to the pilgrims, who gave thanks to the Lord and prepared to eat.

But as they did so, a dervish, a wandering lover of God, came to Rabia's door and cried: 'Oh, Rabia, in the name of the Lord give me something to eat.' So she took back the three pieces of bread from the pilgrims and gave them to him. The pilgrims were bewildered, saying: 'What sort of person is this saint?!' Rabia just smiled, saying 'Quite.' Well, the dervish was very happy, praised the Lord and departed.

Rabia turned again to the pilgrims and then comforted them: 'At least please take some rest. Here is shade from the sun, be seated for awhile. I can give you cold water, and if the Lord wishes that your hunger be appeased then He will surely offer us something. If He does not, then we will take that as His wish.'

Sure enough, within the hour a woman came to the hut carrying a basket: 'Is Rabia of Basra here?' Rabia answered 'Yes,' and the woman said; 'My mistress has sent this for you.' Rabia accepted the basket and taking off the covering cloth, she counted nine loaves of bread. She said: 'Please take all this away. It is not for me.' The woman left with the basket and bread.

Again the pilgrims thought, 'What is the matter with this lady? Why did she refuse the food? Here we are hungry and she could have offered us three loaves each.' But they waited, and after some time the same woman came again with the basket: 'Rabia of Basra, my mistress

Over The Years With Meher Baba

has asked you to please accept this gift.' Rabia took the basket and counted, this time, ten loaves. 'It is for me,' she said, and distributed three each to the pilgrims and one to herself. They ate and were very happy. They drank water and praised the Lord, and after some rest bade farewell to Rabia.

But before going they asked: 'Please, Mother, tell us the secret of our stay here. You accepted the bread and then sent it back and later accepted the loaves again.' She replied: 'My Lord has promised that if we give one loaf, He will repay ten-fold. I totally rely on the Lord, so when only nine loaves came I said: "You are not from the Lord." '

The woman who gave and the woman who carried knew nothing of the matter; there must simply have been an inner prompting to add one more loaf. But that is how total reliance works. It works, there is no doubt about it.



Eruch commented one day to those in Mandali Hall: A thought now comes regarding my conviction that Meher Baba is the God-Man. You may ask, did I make mistakes in interpreting Meher Baba's gestures? Yes, I certainly did, many mistakes, and it was through those many mistakes that I got the confirmation that Baba was the God-Man. I did not have any experience of Baba's divinity, no vision of His effulgence, but I did get confirmation of His divinity in indirect ways, one of which was in the exercise of His patience. An ordinary man would have killed me for all the mistakes I made in interpreting his gestures; an extraordinary man would have got upset and irritated; but I felt and experienced His infinite patience, and I knew Him to be neither ordinary nor extraordinary, but God-Man.

Anyway, what is important is love for Him and our determination to be His. Once we remain determined to be His, and completely depend and rely on His Grace and Compassion, He takes over from us. So be ever-determined to be His. Be childlike, and allow Him to wind up His game of hide and seek within you. But what we find is that we do not allow Baba to do that.

The trouble is, that it is Baba who is playing the game of hide and seek; it is He who is pretending to be this one or that one. If you permit Him to play His game, then all is well, in His own time He will unveil Himself. There is no need for us to worry. But there is one effort that we must make: the effort of determination to be His. We cannot be just complacent about the game. Through thick and thin, through our strengths and weaknesses, our good days and bad days, remain determined to be His. Allow Him to play His game, and know it to be a game - a game that He plays because of love. That is what Meher Baba has told us.



All this reminded Emch of stories from the life of the Perfect Master Eknath. Eknath was known as Bhagwan Eknath because he was a very great devotee of the Lord. He was an official in charge of the Treasury; and he loved his Lord so much that he carried Him in his heart and mind wherever he went. He was so humble, so unassuming and natural, and he would never get angry in spite of the pressure of his responsibilities. He was so naturally devout and humble that he became the talk and the envy of the town.

So one of the Mohammedans of the town decided to test Eknath. As Eknath returned from the river where he had his bath each morning, the Mohammedan, from the first floor of his house, poured his garbage over Eknath as he passed below. He looked up and saw what had happened. He said, 'Blessed is the Lord, He has given me the opportunity to have another bath in the river,' and he went back. As he returned the Mohammedan family again emptied their garbage on him, and again Eknath bathed in the river. Ten times, it is recorded, this happened, and each time he returned to the river he glorified the Lord more - now my body is cleaned, now every pore, now every nerve, and so on.

Then the Mohammedan family came out of the house to beg his pardon. Not only that, they became his devotees. They changed their religion because of the force of Eknath's devotion to the Lord which touched their hearts.

Over The Years With Meher Baba

Such are the people who truly live a life of devotion. And with them the Lord becomes the slave of His lovers. The Lord Himself descended as a man and worked for Eknath as a menial, drawing water, cleaning, sweeping, working in every way as a servant. Why? Because *He* the Lord wanted to express His love. Love is such that it must flow always, all the time.

So the Lord would want to bestow His love and to serve His loved ones. But if He were to do so as Himself, He would be recognised. We see how Meher Baba used to go incognito to serve His loved ones.



Eruch continued with another story of Eknath. He never became angry, and the people as they gathered in the evening would talk about this and debate just how Eknath could be made angry. As is the way of the world, they believed that he was putting on a show.

It so happened that an old man, a stranger and obviously very poor, arrived in the town. He approached the elders pleading for their help in his poverty and distress. He said he had heard that the town was prosperous and therefore he had come from far off, hoping to be given money for his family's needs and for his daughter's marriage.

Immediately a thought occurred to one of the elders who said: 'Yes, we can perhaps help, but you must in turn help us.' 'How can I help, an old man and weary from the journey? But what is it you want done, because I am desperate.' The elder said: 'There is a man living here in the town who never gets angry. We want you to make him angry.' The old man replied, 'Is that all? Please take me seriously, for I am in sore need.' 'Yes, we are serious. Do that and we will help you.' He agreed, and they showed him Eknath's house.

The old man immediately entered without knocking and noisily rushed into the rooms. The first two were empty but in the third a man was sitting quietly with his eyes shut. The old man guessed that he was meditating on or worshipping the Lord, so he thought this would be a good time to make him angry, and suddenly jumped into Eknath's lap. Opening his eyes, Eknath said: 'Oh, my Lord, now you have come to me! But oh, how tired you are, how much suffering shows on your body!' And he called to his wife: 'Look who is our guest today, the

Lord Himself!' For to Eknath the old man was veritably the Lord because everyone is He. There is no stranger in the eyes of one who sees the Lord everywhere.

So he asked his wife, 'Come and prepare hot water. Let us give him a bath and clean clothes.' The old man began to realise that Eknath was a hard nut to crack, but he continued to play the fool and create as much trouble as possible. However the more he fooled, the more love was bestowed on him. Eknath bathed and scrubbed him, then dressed him properly which he could easily afford, being well-to-do. Then he asked his wife to prepare fine dishes for their Lord, and all the while the old man did anything which might provoke anger. But nothing disturbed Eknath, and the old man became confused and despondent - what could be done to aggravate this man?

The food was now ready, and as is the custom in India the wife personally served it, bringing it from the hearth straight to the plates of banana leaves placed before the two men. In doing this she had to bend or kneel, and the old man decided on one last act that must surely disturb Eknath - he suddenly leaped upon the wife's back as she crouched before her husband's plate, grasping her around the neck as though riding piggy-back. Immediately Eknath called to her: 'Take great care of our Lord. How blessed we are to have Him play with us like this!'

The old man was deeply embarrassed and also deeply touched. He fell down, his head on the ground saying, 'What a fool I am. You have taken me to be the Lord in person, but I am just an old man seeking a reward from the elders after making you angry.'

'Is that so? Why didn't you tell me in the beginning you wanted me to be angry. I would have done this for you, and will now if it helps you.' 'Please do so,' said the old man, 'then I can have money for my family.' Eknath immediately dragged him out of the house pretending great anger: 'How dare you play such mischief in my house!' The watching elders were very happy, and gossiped with the people saying that Eknath was not the saint he made himself out to be.

Yet such was Eknath's devotion to the Lord, that the Lord became man and worked for years as a menial in his house.

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Over The Years With Meher Baba

Eruch began the following story by saying, What a subject love is! A four-letter word, but it contains the universe. There is no end and no beginning to it. Baba said: 'I am love and when I take advent, love is personified and made more tangible.' Everything is because of love, and the universe came into being because of love. When we, the mandali, had quarrels amongst us, Baba would pacify and soothe both sides saying, 'Well, it's all because of love.' Wars are fought and nations created and destroyed because of love.

Eruch continued: But to digress for a moment, there seems to be a difference between East and West in their conception of love. Do you know what Swami Vivekananda did once? There was a confrontation between him and a padre, a church minister. I don't know whether he was English or American but he was a Westerner. They were travelling in a train somewhere in the United States. The clergyman asked Vivekananda: 'You're from India?' 'Yes.' 'Oh,' he said, 'we have heard that India is the land of spirituality.' 'It is so, the land of the flowers of the Lord.' The clergyman replied: 'Do you mean to say that we do not love the Lord here?' 'You do love the Lord. But there are differences between people in loving the Lord. There are people who belittle love because they do not know how to love.' And so the discussion went on and on, whether God is to be loved as the people of India love Him, or whether He is to be loved as in the West where He is more revered than loved and forgotten when there is no need of Him. Vivekananda tried his best to bring out these points with the clergyman, but finally his patience was exhausted.

He opened the door of the moving train whilst it was passing over a long bridge and, catching hold of the churchman, said forcefully: 'Do you believe in what I say or not? If not, I will throw you out of the compartment!' 'What are you doing? Wait, wait! I believe it! I believe it!' Then Vivekananda said: 'That is how the love of God is in the West.'



Some Stories Of Meher Baba's Mandali

Gustadji, one of Meher Baba's earliest disciples who was in silence on Baba's orders, was very fond of cream. He would wake up very early in the morning and skim the cream off the quota of milk that came for the mandali. This was fine until another Parsi, a friend of Jal Kerawala, came to stay with the mandali. He also was very fond of cream and he soon noticed that it was all eaten by Gustadji.

So he rose earlier than Gustadji and consumed the cream. Now the battle was on. Gustadji then rose earlier still, followed by the other fellow beating him again the next morning. The reverse would then follow, and when asked why he had no cream, Jal's friend would answer disgustedly: 'That mute Parsi got to it before me this morning, but we shall see who wins tomorrow!'

The battle for the cream went on for some time, each getting up earlier and earlier until the other mandali wondered exactly what sleep each managed to have.



Gustadji had a large trunk (suitcase) which he guarded by keeping it tied with chain and lock to a post near his bed. To make even doubly sure of its safety he would sleep whenever possible with one leg over the trunk. From this behaviour one would get the impression that it was full of treasure. But little did outsiders know that Gustadji was in the habit of collecting empty cigarette boxes, matchboxes, and scraps of paper, and that it was these that he stored so carefully in it.

One morning everyone was stunned to find that the trunk had been stolen in the night. Gustadji was most distressed. Eventually after a long search it was found open and discarded some distance away. Gustadji was very unhappy, but imagine the unhappiness and disappointment of the thief on seeing the contents of the trunk!



Over The Years With Meher Baba

Meher Baba thoroughly enjoyed such incidents concerning his dear Gustadji. On the other hand, in the following stories told by Eruch, Baba Himself provided the fun:

Dr Ghani, another of the early disciples, was a Mohammedan and therefore relished a diet of meat and fish. Now during the New Life, whatever money we had when setting off was kept by the treasurer, Kaka Baria, for emergency and for the day-to-day purchase of fodder for the many animals that were with us. We begged for our food, but we couldn't beg for that and fodder too. That would have been too much.

The only food we received was what Dr Ghani referred to as 'grassetarian food', that is, vegetarian diet. After more than a year of this, Ghani took an opportunity to point it out to Baba and to plead that, at least for one day, could we have a change in the diet. By that of course he meant meat. Well, Baba accepted his plea and asked Kaka to give him enough money to have a feast in the nearby town. Baba emphasised to Ghani that He wanted him to eat to his heart's content in the best hotel of the town.

Ghani was delighted, and on his return he told Baba and us, the other mandali, every detail of the lavish meal he had had and how he had tipped the waiters, and in short giving a picture of presenting himself as a great gentleman. Ghani was very happy and so was Baba. He said: 'Ghani, it is very good that you had such a feast. We will be staying here for some time and now you know such a fine hotel. What a good idea it would be if you beg at the same hotel for food for all of us!' 'Ah! Baba! What are you saying to me?! All that food has somehow gone as though I'd never had it!'

So Ghani had to return to the same hotel and beg from the same waiters whom he had the previous day tipped so lavishly!



Eruch continued: This story reminds me of another amusing anecdote, again of Dr Ghani and also of another mandali, Dr Nilkanth Godse, known as Nilu. While Ghani was Mohammedan and a meat eater, Nilu was a Brahmin, a vegetarian and extremely fond of cookies

and sweets. Some time after Ghani had had his hotel meal and we were in another city, Baba said to Nilu: 'Today I want Ghani to have a good feast at some restaurant and I want you to go with him.' 'Yes, Baba.' 'You know,' said Baba, 'last time it was very embarrassing for him and all the enjoyment disappeared when he had to beg at the same hotel.' 'Where will we go, Baba?' 'To a non-vegetarian place so that Ghani can enjoy his meal.'

Poor Nilu. He had to go, but he had no taste at all for meat. He said it was like chewing chunks of rubber and that he didn't know how to swallow them. So as Ghani happily ordered this dish and that, Nilu told him to order anything he liked for him too, that it didn't matter what it was, it all tasted like rubber.

So Meher Baba, in serious ways and amusing ways, broke our attachments to this and that.



In the early 1960s Padri had an order from Baba to inform Him whenever it rained in Meherabad. It rained a little bit. And Padri had a little more time on his hands than usual so he wrote his note to Baba with a little more flamboyance than usual, something to the effect that because of the grace of God in all His magnificence etc, it rained today in Meherabad.

Baba got the note and was so angry and so upset at Padri because it had rained at Meherabad and not at Meherazad. So He sent Padri the following note:

*"Everything you cherish will be destroyed.
Everything you worked for will be uprooted,
and your very existence will be crushed out.
Thy utter ruination shall be. "*

Padri got this note and he was so happy, so joyful, that he held it up to all about him as if to indicate that the note was proof from Baba that He would remove the veil that separated him from Baba. Padri commented that if a novice had received this note he would have piddled in his pants.

Over The Years With Meher Baba

For those of us Baba really loves, He destroys everything we cherish, He uproots everything we worked for and He crushes out our very existence. For the things we cherish, the things we have worked for are nothing other than the veils that separate us from Him. For those of us He really loves, He crushes the veil of our own existence that separates us from Him - our own existence being the veil that separates us from Him.



Eruch: One particular darshan here in Mandali Hall, Meherazad, I still vividly recall. The crowd entering was tightly pressing as each person eagerly came forth to greet their Lord. My seat, as usual, was across from Baba near the window, and the chair near the door was the seat of the Lord. Visitors would come through the door at the front, and after having darshan, they would pass out through the gate-door at the rear of the Hall. Sometimes Baba would allow people to sit down in the hall, but many times they would simply be standing with the hall completely packed. A sort of aisle-way would exist in front of Baba, and the queue of people would come in and greet Him, and go on through and out the back.

Naturally, when so many people would be standing like that I could not see to read Baba's gestures. What I would always do in such cases was to stand up in the same spot where I would normally sit, leaning back against the window-sill for support, while craning my head around and over the crowd to be able to read Baba's gestures. Inevitably I would keep my position in that manner throughout any such gatherings.

At one point during this darshan program, I walked an extraordinarily beautiful woman. My gaze, of course, was on Baba at the time, because He was relating Himself, and gesturing to the person who was before Him. Just at the moment this woman entered, however, my eyes turned toward the doorway and fell upon her. I found her to be stunningly beautiful, such a veritable vision of beauty, in fact, that I immediately found myself attracted to her beauty. As she approached and stood before Baba, my mind said, 'My, what a beauty she is - a very attractive

young woman, indeed!' You know how the mind is - it works so fast, and all these thoughts occurred in a blink.

As this young woman stood before Him, Baba was giving His love to her and patting her cheek. She then bowed down and started to leave. Just as she began to move away, Baba caught hold of her hand and stopped her. She looked up at Him and smiled. Baba then turned her face to me and said, 'Isn't she beautiful?' 'Yes, Baba, she is really beautiful,' I admitted. Then again He repeated, 'See how beautiful she is?' and I again responded, 'Yes, Baba, indeed she is.'

The young woman was very embarrassed, of course, with all the crowd standing there hearing this exchange. I looked from her to Baba, and immediately I understood what was going on between Baba and me, with His simultaneously open yet very private response to the thoughts in my mind just seconds earlier. The point He then made, however, was not meant just for me but for us all. And look at the fun of His ways - had it not been for this episode, how could I have the opportunity to recall and relate His very telling and significant statement for you all now?

With the darshan queue momentarily stopped and all attention diverted to this young woman, Baba asked her age. She replied, and it happened that she was only a budding teenager, so coy and shy. Baba once again exclaimed, 'How beautiful she is! But looking at her, people admire her beauty and forget Me, the Creator of that beauty. I am the Eternal Beauty! It is My beauty which is reflected in her. What will happen to her in the years to come? Within sixty years she will be covered with wrinkles and people will pass her by without the slightest interest in looking at her. For the moment, however, all must certainly agree that she is dazzlingly beautiful!'

Baba then turned to us and said, 'I want you all to admire the beauty that has been reflected in each human being, but at the same time, remember that I am the very Source of Beauty, and that it is nothing else but an infinitesimal fraction of My own Eternal Beauty which you admire in others. If you do that, there is no harm in admiring the beauty of My creatures. The beauty of Creation is meant for you all - everything in Creation is meant to serve as nothing less than a constant

Over The Years With Meher Baba

reminder for you to remember Me. If you remember Me through the beauty of My creatures, how wonderful it would be! But if, instead, you dwell on their beauty and forget Me the Source of that beauty, beware!'



There lived in Bombay a family, father, mother, two daughters and a son, who loved Meher Baba very much. One day the wife had a heart attack, and the distraught husband went to Baba and told Him of her illness. Baba comforted him telling him not to worry about it, but rather spend his time being concerned with his own salvation. The wife did fully recover, but later the husband died! This, the wife in her love for Baba accepted, knowing that the ebb and flow of happiness in her life was in accordance with His Will.

Time passed. She educated the children despite very considerable financial difficulties. She even managed to send the son, who was brilliant in his studies and whom she particularly loved, to England for further studies. Their intense love for Baba did sustain them, yet the mother's hopes for the future centred in this son, appearing as he did, to be on the threshold of a promising new phase in life.

Then one day, in London, the son had a severe heart attack. Adi, Meher Baba's younger brother, went to see him in hospital and naturally sought to console and comfort him. But the son replied that he was not worried at all, that he felt Beloved Baba's Presence, and simply asked that Adi convey his love to Baba. Within half an hour he died with his Beloved's Name on his lips.

Adi informed Baba who was at the time in Bombay. Baba called Eruch and said, the mother is not physically strong and in addition she has heart trouble. How will she cope with the news if we just send her the cable? Go to her and inform her very tactfully of his death.

On reaching her home, Eruch talked with her on different topics related to Baba, and in a natural way asked about her family's love for Baba. Yes, replied the mother, they all love Baba very much, she knows that they would not waver in their love, and in the event of her death she is sure they would not cry but would be simply resigned to His

Will. This gave Eruch an opportunity to ask if she herself too was resigned to His Will. 'Suppose one of your daughters dies, will you cry?' 'No,' she replied. 'Suppose all your children die, will you be distressed?' 'Never,' she said. So Eruch felt she was now ready to hear the news: 'Meher Baba has sent me to tell you that your son has died of a heart attack. But his love for his Beloved was such that he died with Baba's Name on his lips. Remember, anyone who dies saying His Name, comes to Him.'

There was pin-drop silence, and after a few minutes, Eruch asked her if she had any message for Baba. She said: Please tell Baba that since my son has died with His Name on his lips and therefore has merged in Him, how can I grieve and be miserable? So Eruch replied: If Baba asks you Himself how you feel, you will be able to say this? Yes, said the mother, it is the truth that I am not miserable.

A few days later Baba did call her, and she did say to her Beloved Lord that she felt no grief over her son's death. But Baba further tested her by saying that if this was so, she should come to a movie with Him that day (He had promised to take the mandali to see *The Ten Commandments*). The mother said, 'I consider myself most blessed to go with you. I had told my children to go to the movies on my death and not to weep.' She went, saw the film, and then returned home without shedding a single tear.

A little later Baba called His women mandali and said that it was not good for her health that she had absorbed the sorrow of her son's death but not shed a single tear. Baba continued that she should be made to weep and so He instructed them to go to her house, talk about the death and cry themselves to lead her to cry. But, Baba said, if she still did not cry, she was to be asked to try and cry! The women did as He had instructed but to no avail. The mother even tried to cry but could not do so.

Hearing this, Baba then called her again to Him. He said to her with such Love and Compassion that only He can project: 'Your love for Me is truly blessed. Love of this calibre makes Me weep.' Hearing this and seeing tears forming in His eyes, the mother could no longer control herself. Her tears flowed down her cheeks, and one could feel that

Over The Years With Meher Baba

those tears transformed and washed away so much of the cherished desires and shattered hopes centred around the son she loved so strongly. How truly is our Beloved the Comforter of the afflicted!

•I•

Some Letters From The '50s And '60s

Letters to me from Mani and Francis in the '50s and '60s gave so many different pictures of Baba and His ways of working. In this one from Satara on 18th December 1955, Mani spoke of Baba's darshan programmes:

We got here on 11th evening, stopping for the afternoon in Poona at the Jessawalas' as usual when Baba gave darshan to the Bhajan group, blessing with His presence the little room where the first Baba Bhajan was started in Poona. But instead of the restricted number of intimate ones expected, the place was chock full of people who had heard Baba was coming and wanted His darshan - the roads were jammed with crowds and although Baba managed to get into the room it was impossible to carry on the programme of a vast darshan. He came away with a promise to give His darshan later in January. That little spark of a promise has grown into a conflagration and now we hear there will be one lakh (a hundred thousand) people coming - the reception committees are pretty busy with the arrangement of this programme expected to take place on 14th January in Poona.

This afternoon Baba is giving darshan in a village a few miles from here called Bhuinj where all those who are descendants of the great Shivaji will be coming, about 300 of them. (Satara and surrounding places are closely connected with Shivaji.) That was how it began and it would have been a unique darshan, but as usual word reached other surrounding towns and villages and many many more people are expected. Nowadays it is impossible for Baba to have a quiet afternoon anywhere - even when we were in Poona there were many standing outside the Jessawalas', dispersing only after Baba left in the car - but what is one to do when there is only One Avatar, and so many of us! It

Over The Years With Meher Baba

brings to mind the line in the qawali song that says: "There are so many heads bowing in obeisance, and only one Threshold to do it on."

When we got here [Satara] it was evening and we found the place all lighted up with rows of coloured electric lights and gay paper flags everywhere and decorated with banana palms and paper lanterns - the servants' and the poor neighbours' welcome to Baba. They stood with flowers and puja-trays; it was a delightfully festive welcome...

As usual we had come in two cars. During the latter part of our journey Eruch got inspired to recount little episodes during the November '55 Sahavas - little things that showed the intimate side of Baba's working. Eruch told of a young man who works on the farm of the Satha family (disciples of Baba in Ahmednagar), and who was one of those who came to the village of Arangaon for Baba's darshan during the third group. He performed Baba's arti (this is usually sung while waving a small round tray before the Master on which are sundry things like rice, kumkum etc, and pieces of camphor which bum in flames while the arti lasts), but instead of burning the camphor on the tray he did it on his bare hand, singing the arti with great fervour. The next day Baba walked towards the farm, apparently without intention. The boy was there among the others and Baba walked towards him, pointing to his right hand and asking him to put it out. It was swollen and the palm completely blistered from the burning camphor. Baba embraced the boy, and as He left said: "I came here to embrace you because your hand was swollen."



In a further letter from Satara, 27th March '56, Mani mentioned two masts:

Baba has been working intensely for a week before the 20th - for nearly seven hours daily with the two masts and Kaikobad, and has seemed quite exhausted at times when some of us would go over for the short afternoon visit. The other day Bapji (or Ali Shah the mast brought over from Meherabad) came to the window asking where "the big Boss" was. He could not tolerate being parted from Baba for even a while and also at nights would walk out of bed asking for his beloved "Boss".

Well, when Baba went over to the window the little mast looked fit to burst with happiness, and chattered away in two languages - obviously it was a joke between Baba and himself (we could get nothing beyond the words that never somehow made a sentence) for Baba nodded, smiling most happily and the mast gave one of the heartiest chuckles I've heard. He has the most soulful loving eyes and I shall always carry a very lovely picture in my mind of this sweet old mast.

Baba never tired of telling us about them whenever we went over, and the other day gave a delightful action-picture of the Rishikesh mast Neelkanthwala's sudden transitions from vigorous action to supreme inaction. In the latter phase he lies or sits in complete immobility, often with eyes shut. When Baba would suggest something (a bath for instance) the mast would leap out of bed and stride to the bathroom for the bath Baba would give him. When it was over, back to his place and instant immobility. Suggestion for food, and he'd rush to the kitchen. He cooks his own food (except for days together when he will not partake of anything), and certainly what he cooks is tasty though invariably half cooked - he has no teeth and gobbles enormous morsels with no digestive disorders of any kind as a result. Food over, and back to his seat in a posture as serene as a statue.



Francis has given another description of this very special mast in his letter from Meherazad, September 4, 1960:

The great Neelkanthwala (neel, blue; kanth, throat; wala, of: the one who comes from Neelkanth, an Himalayan peak) has been taken back to his cave by Kumar who is a farmer at Dehra Dun which is in the foothills. He was one of the merriest of men, and as inconsequential in his talk as a child; yet he had an authority about him that would make any President or Prime Minister a child before him. It was simply a great joy to see him. He used to come out onto the verandah every evening and hold forth, chuckling all the time in his own dialect of Hindi, interposed with Sanskrit couplets, to anyone who was near - including myself! I just used to chuckle too, and whenever he said something that *sounded* as though some comment was expected from

Over The Years With Meher Baba

me, I would say "Ha!" very emphatically, which seemed to entirely satisfy him, for he would give a fresh chuckle and continue with his "narrative".

He was Baidul's special charge, and Baidul was as happy as a hen with a chick. The two of them would spend about two hours every morning preparing his daily meal, Baidul doing all the work, with Neelkanthwala squatting opposite chuckling and chattering and giving Baidul orders.

The approach of his departure was indicated by the increasing occurrence of place-names of his district in his talk, and by his repeated appearance dressed ready for travelling - which dress consisted of one strip of cloth tied around his waist which didn't cover his nakedness in the least, another strip tied around his head, a shawl thrown over his shoulders and a waterpot in his hand.

*He was a ruddy man
naked and smooth-skinned as a boy by a waterhole,
but his beard and foam of hair showed his seventy years,
and his eyes, though laughing, ruled all,
so that none spoke first in his presence.*

*He was talking to us, quoting from the Sanskrit of Valmiki,
"Then shy-in-beauty Sita garlanded Rama," (that was
after He had broken the bow that the other suitors didn't
even bend)*

*and commenting, as though by way of explanation,
"Then the thief stole my waterpot." And I read into it:
"It was then that thirst came upon me for those lips
that dropped soft words into my ears like music,
for those eyes brighter than a thousand suns
that shed moons within my spirit."*

*At that time he was living in a cave
by the Blue-throated Mountain (named after Siva
whose act of compassion was to drink the world's poison
whereby His throat became blue-coloured)
lying on his side for days, for weeks together*

Some Letters From The '50s And '60s

without sign of life or movement.

*Then he would stir, and one from a village
who had come with food would offer it
and he would swallow a few mouthfuls, and go back to God.*

*And God knows what God spoke into his ears
that parched his throat,
or what drink it was that turned his soul to dust —
dust of gold singing the line of His lips
and a ringlet of hair wanton in the dawn wind,
God the faithless Lover who turns a man crazy
and leaves him naked on a slab of stone.*

*(Ah, how the lines of our poets, the best of them,
tramp like wading boots squelching out words
that rise as bubbles in a swampy evening.)*

*Then Lord Baba found him; and bathed him,
pouring water over him as a mother her child
talking all the time glad foolish talk, and dried him
and dressed him in fresh, clean clothes; and fed him.*

*After this, the song began to be articulate
through his limbs, and he would get up in the night
and run down to the icy river and stand in it up to his neck
singing, and the waters would shout around him
and carry his song down to nourish crops and lives.*

*And now he was standing here on the verandah at Meherazad
naked and glowing in the evening light
quoting deathless Ramayan, while his quick eyes
burned messages of lightning in the skies.*

*Set sail, set sail —
if You can **find** the floodway, if
You can build a keeled ship and launch it!
Sainthood is your heritage — if you dare.*

•I•

Over The Years With Meher Baba

From Guruprasad, Poona in 1966 Francis wrote of two interesting incidents which again give glimpses of Beloved Baba's love and compassion:

A Sanskrit research scholar attached to Deccan College (which Baba as a youth attended and which, then, was a general college but now is a language school alone) has been coming regularly. One morning sitting on the verandah here, he wrote a letter in Sanskrit to a scholar-friend in Madras. Before sending it he showed it to Baba. It was translated into English by Dr Deshmukh:

I have had the Darshan of Shree Baba of Great Glory, the most worshipful One, now for a fortnight.

Before this only His Name had come to my ears and I knew nothing of His life story.

When I came face to face with the most worshipful Baba of ascendant greatness

There arose in my mind an inexpressible joy.

The kind of peace which, according to the scriptures, enlivened the forms of Nara, Narayana and others,

Exactly that kind of peace is experienced here.

The Truth of the kind that Shree Krishna gave the gopis through Uddnava,

*"My separation from you is not from the viewpoint of universal Self
Is being witnessed by me here.*

The Lord is not separate from all, nor are any separate from the Lord.

Shree Baba of ascendant greatness is one with all things and is the abiding Joy which is the essence of all things.

This is my firm faith. This is enough.

Now when he came into the assembly and sat down, someone was reciting in Sanskrit some frivolous verses to Baba. After a few moments he rose, bowed before Baba and left.

The next morning he sat down as usual near Baba after greeting Him. Baba asked him why he had left abruptly the previous day.

Some Letters From The '50s And '60s

He said that he had had some work to do.

Baba said, "Did you feel disturbed because of the recitation? However much one is disturbed, one should try and remain calm."

Scholar: No, I was not disturbed - nothing like that, I left because I had to bid goodbye to some guests.

Baba: Did you feel hurt because of the recitation? Did you feel it was an insult to Sanskrit?

Scholar: I didn't like it, but that was not why I left early.

Baba: Even if you felt it was an insult to the language, you should not be affected. I am God, and I am insulted every moment, yet I never fail to respond with love.

Scholar: I am trying to learn to tolerate things that are not to my taste.

Baba then gave some words of encouragement.

Later, the scholar said, "Ah, Baba must really love me, otherwise He would not have taken the trouble to correct me."

There has been a curious fellow coming. He wears the saffron robe of the mendicant, and all over it is printed "Shree Mata" (Holy Mother). Somehow it tickled my irreverence and I nicknamed him "dear Mum". Now he has gone to Bombay and writes a lot of letters. Eruch says to me, "Here is another letter from Mum." He has developed a burning zeal to go to darkest Africa and convert it to Baba. Baba looked so innocently relieved and said to Eruch, "Encourage him to do that."



Meher Baba And Miracles

I did not record the origin of the following stories but they are again touching examples of Meher Baba's love for His lovers. Yes, His love is always there, supporting, guiding, nourishing us whatever our condition in life, but sometimes He intervenes and responds to our need. Call them miracles if you wish, but I remember His response when 'a miracle' was related to Him: 'I do not perform miracles; whatever happens is due to your love and faith in Me.'

Kumar, one of Meher Baba's close lovers, once said in the course of casual conversation that Baba did do miracles, despite His denial, and used as an example a time when Baba fed numerous people from one rice pot and at the end it was still half-full. But Baba said: 'Why do you regard this as a miracle? You love Me?' 'Yes, Baba.' 'If you were to see that I needed something, wouldn't you try to get it for Me?' 'Yes, Baba.' 'Well,' said Baba, 'I have so many lovers: not just those on this planet, but lovers on all planes of existence. All these lovers try to help Me just as you would. When they saw that there was not enough rice to feed all the people, they refilled the pot, doing so until all were satisfied.'

But there is another interesting incident involving Kumar. During the early years when he spent considerable periods of time with Baba he was like a child in his intense devotion to Him, and would ask Baba for all manner of miraculous things. Baba finally told Kumar that even if he broke his head into pieces in his fervour, He would not grant him any of his wishes. But then He added: 'After My passing, whatever you ask for at My Tomb from the bottom of your heart, I will give.'

Many years later, after Beloved Baba had dropped His body, there was a time when Kumar's grandson had an accident. The boy was not

only paralysed from the waist down, but it also appeared that he would soon die. The family were in despair: there seemed to be no way to save his life. It was then that Kumar remembered his Beloved's words. As the father of the child was about to leave Dehra Dun for Ahmednagar to escort his sister to visit Baba's Samadhi, Kumar told his son to lay his head and heart at Baba's feet in the Samadhi and pray for the life of his grandson. Beloved Baba granted his wish, for at the very instant he bowed down the boy not only lived but suddenly recovered from the paralysis and began to run around the house, and was the first one to come running to welcome his father and aunt when they returned home from Ahmednagar.



I was told on another occasion of a very poor but devoted Baba lover with a large family who was unexpectedly left a large inheritance. But the inheritance was apparently not legally water-tight, and relatives of this man took him to court claiming the inheritance for themselves. The case did not look good for the Baba lover, yet his lawyer was positive that somewhere in the mass of legal cases was one that would give a winning answer to his exact case. But try as he might, he could not find the case. The Baba lover also spent countless hours helping the lawyer to go through volume after volume of legal cases with their court decisions. They had no success, but the Baba lover remained resigned to his Beloved's Will.

Then one night he had a dream in which Meher Baba told him the volume in which the case could be found, and even the exact page. It was of course as Baba had said in the dream. Everyone was astounded, and wondered how he could have obtained the information. He only answered: 'My Master told me.'

So he won the case. After doing so he settled something on each of his relatives, and to the time when I recorded this story, he had each year contributed to Meher Baba's Trust in India.



Over The Years With Meher Baba

This story concerns a married woman Baba lover who developed what was said to be a tumour in the stomach. As she and her husband were close in Beloved Baba's love they informed Him, and said they had been advised that she should undergo an operation. Baba said to them: 'No operation.' Even though her stomach continued to grow as though she was pregnant, and friends and neighbours expressed wonderment, she did nothing - she and her husband continued to obey Baba in full faith and love. But as the comments of neighbours grew more and more critical of their Master's order, the husband wrote again to Baba simply to inform Him that people were talking against Him, but that he and his wife would continue to obey Him. Baba again replied that there should be no operation.

That night the wife had a dream in which Baba Himself came and performed the operation. I was told that in the dream Baba came through the window with a stretcher, knife and bowl, and proceeded to remove the tumour. In the morning the size of her stomach was normal, and no scars were visible. That is the story as it was given to me some twenty years ago.



I also recorded another story which forms an interesting contrast to the above. It concerns a family of Baba lovers. They had one son who as a child became very ill. The doctors advised an operation, but Baba, when asked by the parents, said: 'No operation.' Despite the agitation and concern of neighbours and certain relatives, the family continued to obey Baba. But after a time the social pressure became for them unbearable, and they agreed to the operation. He was cured and grew into a young man.

Years later the mother of the boy was at one time with Baba, and she confessed to Him that she now realised it would have been best if the boy had died. He lived an absolutely dissolute life, one which brought much shame and suffering to his mother particularly.

It was his fate, no doubt, that events had worked out as they had, but Beloved Baba in His compassion and love for the family, had tried to save His lovers suffering and anguish.



All suffering is man's labour of love to unveil his own infinite Self.

This statement of Baba's on suffering reminds me of a Baba lover in Dehra Dun, northern India. Some of his friends told me that he was an extreme asthmatic - so much so that he longed for relief in death. He was told that Meher Baba was God in human form, and was so deeply moved in longing to see Him that he somehow managed to be included in a Poor Program given by Baba in Dehra Dun, even though he was wealthy.

When he came before Baba, Baba in His compassion allowed the man to express his wish that He should take him in death, or take his asthma. But Baba said to him: 'Do not worry. Be happy. Think of Me more and more. Love Me more and more. I am with you.' The man was profoundly moved and left happily.

When he was asked by friends about his asthma and they expressed sympathy, he responded that his asthma was in fact his greatest friend because it had brought him to the Lord of his heart, Avatar Meher Baba.

Every day he would pray before a photo of Baba, and, I was told by his friend, such was the fervour of his love for Baba that Baba would come down from the frame and sit before the man.

Years passed by. One day, two of the man's friends were talking in a room in which there was a photo of him with Meher Baba. Suddenly, for no apparent reason the glass of that photo cracked, and while a discussion ensued between the two men for the reason of the cracking and of the need to replace the glass, news came from another friend that the man had died.

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Meher Baba's Journeys

Eruch said that three incidents stand out in his memory from the years he was with Baba on the mast tours - that is, journeys which Baba undertook to contact masts, those men and women drowned in their love for God and unconscious of themselves and of the world.

One was when he was driving Baba in the early dawn hours. As they drove through a town they could hear the sound of singing and Baba gestured to Eruch to stop. Then Baba walked down a lane and came to a broken-down mosque. In the mosque Eruch could see three youngish men with their eyes closed chanting 'Allah Hu'. Eruch said it was most beautiful - the dawn hour, the absorbed, self-forgetful repetition of God's Name, and God listening to it. Baba stood there listening for about five minutes. Eruch said again how beautiful and moving was that singing.

The second incident was when Baba visited a Tomb-shrine and Eruch saw a whole community of masts, men and youngsters, living together in that Shrine. What Shrine it was Eruch does not remember. Baba commented that the community was there because of the effect of the Place.

The third incident was Baba's contact with Bansi Baba. It was on Eruch's birthday in October 1945. Before they left on the final part of the journey on foot across paddy fields, (Bansi is in the far north-east of India) Baba directed that food should be ordered to be ready for their return to the railway station. I quote now from William Donkin's account of this contact with Bansi Baba in his book *The Wayfarers*:

"Bansi Baba. An adept yogi of great age. Baba and His party underwent a deal of trouble to reach his village, which is some miles

from Bansi, and for the final two miles they had to walk through rice fields which, when flooded as these were, are heavy going.

Bansi Baba lives in an upper room, and an old woman known as "Mai" (Mother) serves him. Every day, scores of people come from surrounding districts for Bansi Baba's darshan, which is given at particular hours. Eruch, however, found Mai at the back of the house, and she interceded with Bansi Baba that they might be allowed to see him at once. On all these mast tours, one must remember, Baba's real name is never given, and the mandali refer to Baba as their elder brother, and they play the part of a group of brothers or friends who have come from Bombay to visit saints and masts.

They were taken upstairs to a very dimly lit room, of which the darkness was the first thing that struck them. At one end of the room, Bansi Baba was sitting on a kind of throne, one foot resting on a footstool. He seemed very bright in that dark room, and there was an overwhelming feeling of peace and love which those with Baba felt strongly. He was naked to the waist, and wore a brown turban, a short dhoti, and costly sandals. People in Bansi do not know his age, but he is believed to be about 250 years old. He sits quite still on his throne-like chair, as if he were a statue. He is very, very thin, mere bone and integument, but there are no wrinkles on his fair skin, so that Baba, in describing him, said that he looked like wax. His aspect was most kingly, for his presence dominated that dark room, and the bliss and peace that he radiated made him a memorable personality. Baba said that they had seen a really good soul that day, and that the trouble taken to reach him was amply justified."

In speaking of this incident, Eruch commented that Bansi Baba was fair in complexion, absolutely withdrawn, with a radiance, a shining lustre to his skin. Baba told Eruch and the other mandali to bow down to him. After doing so, they left Baba to have contact with this adept yogi.

On returning to the railway station they found the food terrible, and Baba grumbled and criticised Eruch all through the meal. Baba reminded Eruch on a number of occasions of Bansi Baba.



The Blue Bus Tours

Meher Baba has said that His work came before all other considerations, even saying 'My Work is greater than God.' This was certainly true in respect of the innumerable journeys that He undertook in the course of His Work. In impossibly crowded railway carriages of the lowest class, tortuous unsprung bullock-cart rides over miles of fields and unmade roads, travelling by camel, crowded buses, tongas, or on foot, Baba never spared Himself, His mandali, or the instruments of travel.

Such was the case in the period known as the Blue Bus Tours. The Blue Bus was a 4-cylinder Chevrolet built to carry fourteen passengers plus one or two drivers. During these tours throughout India, it actually carried up to thirty passengers, plus bedding-rolls and luggage piled so high on the roof-rack that a small ladder was needed on the roof of the bus to arrange the top layers.

The following account of one of the journeys during this period is taken from the diary of Chanji (F. H. Dadachanji, Meher Baba's disciple and secretary for twenty years, who died in 1943), and includes a write-up by Nilu (Dr Nilkanth Godse, Meher Baba's disciple, a medical doctor who died in Baba's second car accident in December 1956), as well as recollections of Eruch Jessawala recorded in recent years.

In the early hours of 25th February 1941, with the stars still shining and a cold wind blowing, the bus began a journey from Jaipur to Quetta via Agra, Delhi, Ambala, Ludhiana, Jullunder, Lahore, Montgomery, Mooltan, Fort Munro, Rakhni and Loralai. The bus was already old, worn, and loose from extensive earlier trips. It was laden as usual on top, and inside were twenty-eight persons of various dimensions, plus additional luggage and two spare but worn tyres. Eruch was driver and Nilu his assistant. On this particular journey Baba and some of His women disciples, with Elizabeth Patterson driving, travelled in an American car (a Buick), provided by Elizabeth.

After arrival at Agra around noon Baba ordered Eruch and Nilu to take down the bedding-rolls, have lunch, a short rest, tea, and then for Eruch to search for masts, and Nilu to do shopping for necessities. This

rough pattern of endless hours of travel; then searching throughout each city and town for masts; attending on Baba; fitting into this routine the servicing of the bus, loading and unloading luggage, with little or no time for meals and rest - all this, as Eruch recounted lately, had such an effect on his health that after arrival in Quetta he actually passed out on his feet while taking down dictation from Baba. He just fell down, and came to in bed.

Eruch said: 'During the journey, apart from driving, I fixed by hand any punctures that occurred; then after arrival attended to the cleaning, filling with petrol, servicing of the bus. I made arrangements for meals, and then for example, during a stay of perhaps a few hours on an early stop, Baba would send me out seeking locations of masts in that city, then come back and take Him to them. Then in the night I would clean out the bus, wash and tidy it; and later during the night sit as night-watchman for Baba. So it went on for some months, a long time, and it took a toll on my health. And this journey to Quetta was the worst.'

After a day and a half in Agra, mostly spent in mast work with Baba, the journey was resumed. Baba woke the party at 3:30 AM, and Eruch and Nilu carried the bedding-rolls and luggage to the bus, the cold numbing their fingers so much that they had great difficulty in securing the ropes around the luggage. They set off in the faint light of the early morning.

Eruch drove at 40 miles per hour, and the Buick with Baba and six women disciples travelled at 60 mph. After about 60 miles and crossing the railway lines, the bus had a tyre blow-out. It took Eruch and Nilu nearly an hour to change the wheel. A few miles on, there was a second puncture and the exhausting experience of changing another wheel. Baba had waited further along the road and they explained to Him the cause of the delay. But He insisted Eruch drive faster despite the condition of the tyres. A few miles from Delhi they had another blowout.

Finally arriving in Delhi, Eruch and Nilu had a hurried lunch and were then sent out mast-hunting and marketing. They pleaded with Baba to buy new tyres and tubes but He refused, although eventually

Over The Years With Meher Baba

agreeing to having the punctured tyres vulcanised. Eruch located only one mast in Delhi, but secured a list of them in the various places they were to visit en route to Quetta.

With instructions from Baba to Eruch to maintain 45 mph, they set off for Jullunder 250 miles distant. The early happiness of the journey as the sun rose on mile upon mile of beautiful green wheat-fields was soon shattered by a blow-out. Again with difficulty the wheel was replaced with one of the spares.

By noon they reached Ambala, and despite only a short stop-over of two hours Eruch was sent out on a mast hunt. He roamed the city but could not locate even one mast. Baba seemed much displeased.

They resumed the journey to Jullunder, 20 miles from Ambala a blow-out; another 40 miles and again a puncture. With no spare tyres left they were forced to stop. But Baba took Eruch immediately on a mast-hunt in a tonga. Later with great difficulty Eruch located a tyre-repairer, and while the burst tubes were being mended, Eruch again sought masts. He did find one, and Baba was delighted.

Eventually, around midnight, Jullunder was reached. It was very cold, but still they all slept without bedding because of the short stay there.

So the journey went on - to Amritsar, Lahore, Montgomery, Mooltan - with a continuing pattern of punctures, mast-hunting with little success, and Beloved Baba displeased with the constant delay and the effect on His work. Over the distance of some 330 miles there were six punctures.

But the worst part of the trip was still to come - Mooltan to Quetta, roughly another 350 miles. At last with earnest and detailed pleas from Eruch and Nilu, Baba agreed to purchase two new tyres and tubes. Shortly after Mooltan the bus had to cross a railway bridge which because of its construction tilted with the weight of the bus, the wooden planks heaving and rattling. At dead-slow speed it took twenty minutes to cross. Then lay ahead the bed of the great river Indus stretching for eight miles. Through this bed of sand ran a solitary track made of grass, earth and sand, bound down firmly with wire mesh; and throughout this expanse various streams of the river were crossed with boat-bridges

- that is, planks laid down over a series of boats tied together. Vehicles of more than two tons were forbidden to cross, and the bus weighed five tons. Amidst shouts of protest from the guards, the bus crossed with much agonised movement of the boats, and as Eruch said later, he could hear each plank cracking as they passed over. Never, Eruch believes, did everyone take Baba's Name so fervently! After crossing there was not a single plank remaining!

Other aspects of that journey included one whole day spent travelling 75 miles in 1st or 2nd gear, such was the state of the tracks over the mountains - not roads, but tracks meant for jeeps! There was another stretch through an area called No-Man's Land because there were no settlements, only bandits who lived by robbing travellers. The women were forbidden by Baba to get down at all from the bus during that stretch.

On one tortuous narrow part of the road with breathtaking curves and steep ascents and descents, both the car and bus were stuck in mud. With great difficulty, the efforts of almost all the occupants succeeded in pulling the vehicles out. Again on the dangerous section of the road between Rakhni (where they took on two military escorts who sat on the mudguard and steps of the bus) and Loralai, frequented by bandits, the bus was stuck in mud. It was eventually pulled out by the Buick. At Rakhni Baba was entertained by a horse-race organised by the people there. Baba gave Rs 5/- to the winner. Loralai was reached late in the evening, and the next morning they left for Quetta - the end of journeying for about a month.



Thinking of the endurance of Eruch over that journey reminds me of an intriguing incident related by Kumar, one of the mandali with Baba at another time. Kumar remembered that no-one in the car with Baba was allowed to sleep, and they drove for 36 hours. During the journey they travelled through a fierce storm. Eruch was the driver for the entire time. Seated in the back of the car and watching Eruch, Kumar marvelled at his ability to continue to drive without sleep.

Over The Years With Meher Baba

Then while quietly contemplating this, Kumar suddenly thought he could see Baba, seated alongside Eruch, with His hand on the wheel. Yet when Kumar looked again closely, he could see both Eruch's hands on the wheel; and once more as he relaxed he was aware of Baba's hand there, not Eruch's. Kumar realised anew that Beloved Baba was truly the Sustainer.



A minor example of the severe hardships of some of these journeys in the bus was a journey from Rishikesh to Dehra Dun. The distance is 28 miles, but it took 12 hours of continuous effort to cover it. Four times the bus was stuck in soft mud, with monsoonal rains pouring down, and four times the bus had to be completely unloaded in the open road, then with all the mandali pushing, the empty bus with immense difficulty was taken to firmer ground. Then all the luggage was carried 200 to 300 yards and re-loaded securely on and in the bus. All this was, as said, carried out in torrential rain.



To digress for a short while from the subject of journeys, a very beautiful incident which occurred during the stay at Rishikesh is well-worth recounting. Again this has been taken from the diary of Chanji.

Eruch was on his way to meet Baba, and passing through the woods known as The Abode of Sages because of the Yogis and Rishis who live and meditate on God in their little white huts. As he hurried along, Eruch's attention was drawn to a figure lying in one of the huts, a hut in a very dilapidated state with no roof. To his surprise he realised the figure was of a fine-looking boy about fourteen years of age.

Remembering Meher Baba's continued search over the years for an ideal boy, Eruch spoke to Baba about this boy and strongly pleaded with Baba to at least see him. Baba agreed, and on arriving at the hut He had Eruch ask the boy what he was doing there. It emerged that he had always had a longing for God, and impelled by his inner urge he had left his parents and home far away and travelled to the Himalayas

to meditate and seek God. Eruch asked him if he had a Guru. The boy replied: 'No, I have no Guru. They all talk too much. I want a Guru who does not talk.'

At this Eruch said that he knew of a Guru who had not spoken for eighteen years, and that His name was Meher Baba. The boy quickly replied that he knew of Meher Baba, that he had heard, too, that Meher Baba was staying somewhere in the area. 'But,' continued the boy after some silence, 'Meher Baba is too great to accept me as a disciple.'

Then Baba's identity was revealed, and the boy was overcome with joy at being in His presence. Baba now conveyed that He Himself would be the boy's Guru; that this meeting was for the first and last time, and that he would never see Baba again physically. But the boy must obey four specific orders of his Guru, and if he did so he would one day find Baba in his heart.

The four orders were:

1. He should be free from lust and never touch a woman during his whole life.
2. Instead he should always think of realising the Divine Beloved.
3. He must never touch money, and must beg for his food.
4. As a sacred mantra or words from the Master, he must repeat, night and day, God's Name of his own choosing.

Without the slightest hesitation, that remarkable boy accepted these conditions. Baba left, and there the boy remained amidst those woods famous for black scorpions, numerous snakes and occasional tigers.

The next day, Baba sent to the boy a photo-medal of Himself, a book of His life, a mat, and some flour, all as Guru-prasad - a gracious gift from the Guru.



In contrast to that story of the young seeker of God finding his Master-Guru, there is an amusing one reported by Chanji in his diary of a sanyasin (one who has renounced the world) who was in Beloved Baba's presence yet didn't find Him.

Over The Years With Meher Baba

This sanyasin, wandering throughout India and visiting places of pilgrimage, came before Baba's house in Rishikesh specifically for His darshan. As he arrived, he passed Baba sitting at the time on the pavement dictating notes to Chanji, and coming to the gate, asked that he have Baba's darshan.

It was explained that Baba was in seclusion and therefore at present not giving darshan, but that the sanyasin's very presence at Baba's door was equivalent to having His darshan. The man began to argue, questioning that he should receive such a denial, boasting of his dedicated pilgrimage around India; and the more attempts were made to explain and to pacify him, the more argumentative he became, quoting passages from Hindu scriptures.

Eventually he departed in high moral indignation, loudly proclaiming a couplet: 'Where dost thou seek Me, Oh dear devotee! I am always near and with you!' Repeating this in a loud, dramatic voice, eyes cast heavenward, the sanyasin again actually passed by the side of Baba without seeing Him. Baba sat there smiling throughout this one-act play, and as He would have said: Still, he is blessed to have been in My presence.

•I•

Prophet Mohammed

On reading of the life of Prophet Mohammed I was struck by the similarity to Meher Baba of His physical appearance and characteristics. Also, stories and anecdotes from Mohammed's life so closely reflect those of Meher Baba's life that I thought it would be of interest to readers to include some in this book.

Ali, Mohammed's right hand, said of Him: 'He was neither too tall nor unduly short but of normal height; His hair was not too curly nor lank but definitely curly; His face was not fat nor rounded, it was white tinged with red; His eyes were black, fringed with long lashes; He was firmly knit and broad-shouldered; the hair on His body was fine, thick on hands and feet. When He walked He picked His feet up smartly as though He was going down hill; when He turned He turned His whole body. Between His shoulders was the seal of prophecy. He was the most generous of men, the boldest, most vivacious, most faithful to His undertaking; the gentlest, with easy manners, the noblest in social intercourse. Those who saw Him for the first time were overcome with awe; those who knew Him well loved Him. Neither before nor after Him have I seen His like.'



Other contemporary observations have been recorded about Prophet Mohammed:

'Mohammed was of a height a little above average. He was of sturdy build... The hair of His head was long and thick with some waves in it. His forehead was large and prominent, His nose sloping. He had a

Over The Years With Meher Baba

pleasant smile. His eyes were large and black with a touch of brown. He was fair of complexion and altogether so handsome that Abu Bakr (one of His closest mandali) composed this couplet on Him:

*"As there is no darkness in the moonlit night,
So is Mustafa, the well-wisher, bright."*

'His gait was firm and He walked so fast that others found it difficult to keep pace with Him... His face was genial, but at times when He was deep in thought there were long periods of silence... His laugh was mostly a smile. He kept His feelings under firm control - when annoyed He turned aside or would keep silent, when pleased He would lower His eyes... Whoever saw Him for the first time was awed, but with greater acquaintance would start loving Him.'

'He was always the first to greet another and would not withdraw His hand from a handshake till the other man withdrew his... He did not like people to get up for Him... He avoided sitting in a prominent place in a gathering, so much so that people coming in had difficulty in spotting Him... He had forbidden His companions to tell Him about anyone's weaknesses and used to say: "I wish that when I leave this world I should go away with a good opinion of everyone." ...He never lost His temper over a personal matter... But if anyone opposed what was just and right He used to get angry and would relentlessly support the right cause.'

'He often sought solitude and on one occasion said: I envy the man who lives in a solitary house and prays in the joy of meditation... no-one knows him, he is not pointed at with the finger... he dies without cares, leaving no succession and none to cry over him.'

'His house was but a hut of unbaked clay and a thatched roof of palm leaves covered by a camel skin... His own apartment contained only a rope cot, a pillow stuffed with palm leaves, a skin of some animal spread on the floor, a water-bag, and some weapons... These were all His earthly belongings... Even when He had become the virtual king of Arabia, He lived an austere life bordering on privation... His blanket had several patches. He had few spare clothes, but kept them spotlessly clean... His wife Aiysha says there was hardly a day in His life when He had two square meals... While on His deathbed He remembered

that a few gold coins were lying in the house. He ordered that they should be given away in charity, saying: "Will Mohammed meet His Lord while some gold coins remained in His house after Him?" ...He invariably invited people, be they slaves, servants or the poorest believers, to partake with Him of His scanty meals... If there were not enough provisions in the house He and His family would forego their meals, but would feed the guests... There was no type of household work too low or too undignified for Him... After the sermons were over, He would talk genially with the people, enquire about their welfare and even exchange jokes with them... He was never annoyed if anyone interrupted Him during the sermons for anything.'



Sayings Attributed To Prophet Mohammed

The Messenger of God said to me (Anas), 'Son, if you are able, keep your heart from morning till night and from night till morning free from malice towards anyone;' then he said, 'Oh! my son, this is one of my laws, and he who loveth my laws verily loveth me.'

I asked Lord Mohammed for the most excellent spiritual exercise, and he said, 'To love him who loveth God, and turn away from him who turns from God, and to keep your tongue employed in repeating the name of God.' What else? He said, 'To do unto all men as you would wish them to have done unto you.'

Acquire knowledge. It enableth its possessor to distinguish right from wrong; it lighteth the way to Heaven; it is our friend in the desert, our society in solitude, our companion when friendless; it guideth us to happiness; it sustaineth us in misery; it is an ornament among friends, and an armour against enemies.

Feed the hungry and visit the sick, and free the captive if he be unjustly confined. Assist any person who is oppressed whether Muslim or non-Muslim.

Over The Years With Meher Baba

If ye rely upon God as He ought to be relied upon, He will provide you as He provides the birds; they go out empty and hungry in the morning and come back big-bellied at eventide.

He who knoweth his own self, knoweth God.

He who believeth in one God and the Hereafter let him speak what is good or remain silent.

Charity is a duty unto every Muslim. He who hath not the means thereto, let him do a good act or abstain from an evil one. That is his charity.

You will not enter paradise until you have faith; and you will not complete your faith till you love one another.

He is true who protecteth his brother both present and absent.

Whosoever seeks refuge in the name of God, give him refuge; and whoso asks in the name of God give him; and whoso calls on you, respond to him; and whoso does good to you, return the same to him; and if ye do not find anything in return to him, pray to God for him, until ye see that ye have made him an ample return.

He who helpeth his fellow-creature in the hour of need, and he who helpeth the oppressed, him will God help in the day of travail.

What actions are most excellent? To gladden the heart of a human being, to feed the hungry, to help the afflicted, to lighten the sorrow of the sorrowful, and to remove the wrongs of the injured.

This life is but a tillage for the next, do good that you may reap there; for striving is the ordinance of God, and whatever God hath ordained can only be attained by striving.

All actions are judged by the motives prompting them. Whatsoever mishap may befall you, it is on account of something which your hands have done.

Thus saith the Lord, 'Verily those who are patient in adversity and forgive wrongs are the doers of excellence.'

Speak to men according to their mental capacities, for if you speak all things to all men, some cannot understand you, and so fall into errors.

Help the friends, whatever their 'guise'! One day, you will hear: I was needy and you did not help Me. Those who have helped My friends have helped Me.

I found this inscribed on the hilt of the Prophet's sword: 'Forgive him who wrongs thee; join him who cuts thee off; do good to him who does evil to thee, and speak the truth although it be against thyself.'

Mohammed said, 'My Cherisher hath ordered me nine things:

1. to reverence Him, externally and internally;
2. to speak true, and with propriety, in prosperity and adversity;
3. moderation in affluence and poverty;
4. to benefit my relations and kindred, who do not benefit me;
5. to give alms to him who refuseth me;
6. to forgive him who injureth me;
7. that my silence should be in attaining knowledge of God;
8. that when I speak, I should mention Him;
9. that when I look on God's creatures, it should be an example for them.



Stories And Anecdotes From The Life of Mohammed

I went out with Mohammed on the raid of Dhat al Riga of Naktl on a feeble old camel of mine. On the way back, the company kept on ahead while I dropped further behind until Mohammed rode up to me and asked what the trouble was. I told Him that my camel was keeping me back, and He told me to make it kneel. I did so, and the Prophet made His camel kneel and said: 'Give Me this stick you are holding.' I handed it to Him and He prodded the beast a few times. Then He told me to remount, and off we went. By God who sent Mohammed with the truth, my old camel now kept up with the rapid pace of His camel!

As we were talking, Mohammed asked me if I would sell Him my camel. I said that I would give it to Him, but He insisted on buying it, so I asked Him to make me an offer. Playfully, He said He would give me one dirham (a few shillings only). I refused, saying that would be cheating me. He continued in this playful way, next offering me two

dirhams and I still refused. He went on raising His offer until it amounted to an ounce of gold. When I asked Him if He was really satisfied, He said He was, and so I told Him the camel was His.

Then Mohammed asked if I was married; and was she a virgin or a woman previously married? I told Him she had been married before and He said: 'No young girl so that you could sport together!' I told Him that my father had been killed at Uherd leaving seven daughters, and I had married a motherly woman who could look after them efficiently. He said 'You have done well. If God wills that we come to Sirar, we would order camels to be slaughtered and stay there for the day and she would hear about us and shake the dust off her cushions.' I said, 'But, by God, we have no cushions.' He told me, 'But you will have. When you return, behave wisely.'

When we got to Sirar, Mohammed ordered camels to be slaughtered and we stayed there for the day. At night He went home, and so did we. I told my wife the news and what the Prophet had said to me. She replied, 'Look alive and do what He tells you.' In the morning I led the camel away and made it kneel at Mohammed's door. Then I sat in the mosque nearby. He came out and saw it and asked why it was there, and I was summoned to Him. He said, 'Oh son of my brother, take away your camel for it is yours,' and He called Belal and told him to give me an ounce of gold. He did so, and added a little more. And by God, all continued to thrive with me.



Mohammed's kindness to women, children and slaves also extended to animals. He forbade men to hit horses or donkeys on the head, or to cut off their manes and tails. He greeted all His visitors with kindness and usually with smiles. He was even known at times to play little practical jokes on His intimates. Although He smiled frequently, He never laughed loudly.

He was profoundly devoted to His two grandsons, and was never happier than when playing with them. When He prostrated Himself in prayer, they would climb on His back, and He, with no signs of impatience, would put them quietly down and continue His devotions.

His house was often filled with little relatives or cousins; He always enjoyed playing with them.



When Mohammed chose a man of Taif to teach his fellow-citizens how to pray, He secretly enjoined him to keep the prayers short. 'You should measure men by their weakest members,' He said, 'for there are among them old and young, sick and infirm.' 'God has not ordered us to destroy ourselves,' He would say, in opposing asceticism and self-inflicted hardships.



Three Muslims confessed they had not gone as ordered on an expedition. In punishment Mohammed issued orders that no-one was to speak to these three men. Such, it appears, was His power that no-one, not even the members of their own families, would address a word to them. After forty days an additional order was issued, telling them to separate from their wives and to send the women back to their parents, though without divorcing them.

On the fiftieth day of the boycott, after praying the Dawn Prayer, Mohammed turned to a group of men beside Him and told them that God had forgiven the three offenders. Three men galloped off at full speed to find them, while others shouted at the tops of their voices: 'Good news! Good news! Mohammed says that God has forgiven the three men! They can be spoken to now!'

One of the three offenders has described what happened. 'Then I set off to find Mohammed,' he used to say when telling the story. 'Men met me by the way, told me the good news and congratulated me on God having forgiven me. When I asked Mohammed, His face shone with joy.'

'This is the best day of your life. Congratulations on the good news,' He said to me. 'From you or from God?' I asked. 'From God, of course,' He replied. When He told anyone good news, His face used to

Over The Years With Meher Baba

shine like the moon... 'I sat before Him and told Him that as an act of penitence, I would give away my property to God and His Prophet.'



A man came to Mohammed and complained of hunger. Just then the Prophet had nothing in hand or in his home to feed him. He asked, 'Would anyone entertain this person tonight on My behalf?' One of those present answered: 'O Prophet of Allah, I will do that.'

He immediately took the man to his home and, calling his wife, said to her: 'Look here, this man is a guest of the Prophet. We will entertain him as best we can, and won't spare anything in doing so.'

But his wife exclaimed: 'By Allah! I have got no food in the house except a very little - just enough for the children.' Her husband replied: 'You lull the children to sleep without feeding them while I sit with the guest over the meagre meal. When we start eating, you must put out the lamp pretending to set it right, so that the guest may not know that I am not sharing the meal with him.'

The scheme worked out according to plan.



Elegy by Fatima, Mohammed's daughter, who loved Him intensely and who died six months after He dropped His body:

*It is not wondrous that whoever
Smells the fragrance of Mohammed's tomb
Will never smell another perfume.
Destiny hurt me with a bereavement so sad and so dark
That if it had fallen on the days,
They would have been turned into eternal nights.*



Mohammed, the Messenger of God, was asked who was the most deserving of men. He replied: It is the believer who fights in the way of God, expending himself and his goods.



An emissary was sent by a neighbouring king to assess Mohammed and His followers. On returning to his royal master he reported: 'I have visited Chronoes, King of Persia at his court, then Roman Caesar in Constantinople, and also the Negus of Abyssinia in his country, but never have I seen a king treated by his subjects with the veneration which Mohammed receives from His companions. I believe that these people will never forsake Him for any reason whatsoever.'



It is said that the mosque that Mohammed constructed in Medina represented His heart. When Mohammed spoke in this mosque, He formed the habit of leaning against one of its palm-tree columns.

But as the years went by it tired Him to stand for long periods of time, and a craftsman who noticed this, constructed a bench for Him out of tamarisk wood. At the moment when Mohammed sat on this bench for the first time, the palm-tree against which He had been accustomed to lean, broke with a sound that was like a human cry.



Mohammed said: He is not one of us who is not merciful to our younger people, nor honours the old among us.

At another time He said: Righteousness is not turning your face toward the East or West; righteousness is believing in God and the Last Day, in angels and the Book and the Prophets. It lives in one who with love gives to his kindred and to orphans, and to the poor and the wayfarer, and to beggars and slaves; and who is faithful in prayer and gives alms; and keeps his given word; and is patient in poverty and suffering and time of war.



This story of Jesus Christ also comes from the Mohammed tradition:

A stray neglected dog had died and was lying on the roadway. Such was its appearance and the stench and distortion of death, that all passers-by drew aside, held their breath and hurried away, exclaiming how ugly

and unpleasant it was. But when Jesus walked by He paused awhile, and gazing upon the animal said: 'How white are its teeth!'



One day when Mohammed was seated with His close followers, a mother came to Him with her small son. 'My Lord, please tell this child to stop eating green dates. I cannot stop him eating them, and he is spoiling his health. He is my only son. Please help me.'

Now a person, once he has had a green date, cannot resist having another and another and another. But they are very harsh on the stomach. So this mother thought that if she were to take the child to the Prophet, He would say something that might impress the boy.

Mohammed looked at them both and said, 'What you say is right. But please come back after a month. It is better if you come then.' The mother folded her hands, bowed down, and left the place.

After a month, true to her promise and despite the immense difficulties of journeys in those days through the desert, she came again with the child. Mohammed received them, petted them, made them sit down, then asked them how they felt and what was the reason for their coming to Him again. She repeated the whole thing. And the Prophet then of course tried to bring home to the boy how dangerous it was to eat a lot of dates. 'One, two, three a day is all right. But that is enough. No more than that. I also am fond of dates,' Mohammed went on, 'but I don't eat so many. It is not healthy to have a lot. So will you give Me a promise not to eat more than a few a day?' The child promised, everyone was happy, and then they left.

They were soon out of sight, and the people with Mohammed felt very intrigued that He had not said the same thing when the two had come earlier. Finally someone asked Mohammed about this. 'It was impossible,' He replied, 'to give advice about dates when My fondness for them was worse even than the boy's. Unless and until I desisted from dates, how could I give any advice to him? So I had to call them to come again after a month, and for one month I never ate, never touched a date.'



The sections in this chapter have been compiled from the book now long out of print

NOT WE BUT ONE - Meher Baba on Life Living and Love.

Spirituality Is Everyday Life

Meher Baba:

Divinity is not devoid of humanity - it lifts 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 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.

Eruch Jessawala:

Do you all know the story of the worth of a kingdom? It is a very fine, very touching story that throws light on many aspects of our life. Meher Baba has told us there are only five Perfect Masters on earth at any one time. This is something very great, but to have such a Master in an emperor's kingdom is priceless - and especially so to one who knows the worth of a Perfect Master.

It so happened that the emperor of a certain country came to know that such a Master was in his kingdom, and exclaimed: 'What a

blessedness this is. I must go to him and pay my respects.' He set off with a large retinue, but knew that no amount of wealth, pomp and splendour would ever gain the attention of a Master who is only drawn to one who is humble, natural and loving. So five miles from the Master's village the emperor left his horses, tents and servants, and walked the remaining distance with his courtiers. Near the Master's dwelling the watchman stopped the party, asking who they were. 'I am the emperor of this country, and we have come to pay homage to the Master. Please seek his permission on our behalf for us to see him.' And the emperor with his courtiers waited there.

When ushered in, they all remained standing and were introduced by the emperor. The Master was very happy, asked them to be seated, and then talked to them about all sorts of mundane things. Here Eruch commented that Masters never talk of spirituality; they are not the ones to teach from a pulpit, but within their informal talk there is often a dissertation - they may for example ask you about your health, and while doing so, some sentences may not strike you personally but 'the cap will fit' the others who are listening and everyone feels happy. The Master asked about the emperor's wives, his children, his last war, the economic condition of the country, and the journey to him. Naturally the emperor answered politely, although he had come with the wish to pay the Master homage and to hear spiritual advice. The Master went on, but soon said 'Now it is time for you to go back.' This was his order, so all rose, and the king with folded hands asked for some parting words of advice. In reply the Master said 'Some advice? I'll tell you a story. You are a hunter, I believe?' 'Yes.'

'This story is of a king, a great hunter. On one occasion it so happened that the whole day was spent chasing a prey. The king would not give up. He became separated from his courtiers, his steed finally fell dead from exhaustion, and the king found himself alone in a desert, far from his kingdom. The prey had escaped, the king was exhausted, did not know where he was, and now was faint from thirst, moved with difficulty, and continually fell. Thinking he saw water at a great distance he crawled and crawled towards it, but it was only a mirage. Extremely weak and distressed, he was about to die.'

'Just then,' continued the Master, 'I appeared with a pitcher of cool water, and offered it to the king, but said he would have to pay a price for it. 'Anything - ask what you will,' gasped the king, 'but please give me water.' I told him, just half your kingdom. He readily agreed, was given the water, soon regained his strength and began to return homewards.' The Master resumed the story: 'But now another crisis occurred - the king became unable to pass water and eventually suffered such agonising pain that again he felt near death. I appeared once more, bringing a remedy but saying that the price is the other half of the kingdom, and he gladly gave it so that he might live.'

The Perfect Master now looked at the emperor and said: 'That story is my parting advice. Remember, rule over your subjects honestly, do everything possible for them, but at the back of your mind remember that half your kingdom is worth having water inside your system, and the other half is worth throwing it out of your system.'

Dr Ghani Munsiff:

Four travellers - a carpenter, a tailor, a goldsmith and a spiritual mendicant - became associated with each other. As their journey lay through a dangerous tract of country infested with wild animals, at nightfall they decided to camp by the roadside underneath a spreading tree. It was also arranged that each one of them should keep watch a part of the night against possible danger.

The first watch fell to the carpenter, who just to kill time took a twig from the tree, and using a few instruments with him began carving out a human figure. By the time he finished the job his watch for the night ended, and waking up the tailor he retired.

Witnessing the fine craftsmanship of his companion, the tailor too felt like doing something to while away the time. He could think of nothing better than to give an exhibition of his sartorial art. The result was a fully draped figure of a beautiful doll.

The third watchman, the goldsmith, could not help being impressed with what the two had done. With a few beads and pieces of wire, he adorned the figure round its neck and arms with what looked like jewellery.

Over The Years With Meher Baba

The last one, the fakir, was greatly amused on seeing the beautiful piece of art, to finish which every one of his companions had contributed. At the same time he felt depressed at the thought of them looking down upon him because he was not able to contribute. In this frame of mind he began to pray ardently, saying: 'Oh, God, my honour and shame is in your hands; don't make me look small in the eyes of my companions. Deign to put life into the image; you are Almighty and Powerful.'

The heart-felt prayer, rendered in humility and helplessness, was answered; the figure was miraculously transformed into a damsel, transcendently beautiful. In the morning a battle royal of fists and wits ensued amongst the companions, everyone claiming her for himself. The carpenter asserted priority of his claim on the originality of the idea; the tailor and goldsmith based their claim on the development and beautification of the theme; the fakir flouted everyone on the ground of his miracle. To end the impasse, they all decided to approach the kazi (magistrate) for a decision. What a maze they found themselves in. Struck by the unsurpassable charm and beauty of the damsel, the kazi himself wanted to possess her. He denounced the claimants as impostors and declared she was his maid-servant who had been missing since morning.

There was nothing left to do but approach the king, the final tribunal of justice in the land. The heavenly glamour of the beauty before him disturbed the impartiality of the king. He declared the damsel was one of the wives from the harem and threatened everyone with punishment for molesting her. This was more than they had bargained for and a tumultuous uproar ensued.

A sage happened to pass by and enquired as to the cause of the trouble. Taking in the situation, he suggested that all should go to the place where the matter had first developed and where, perhaps, even the tree itself might suggest a solution. No sooner had the king, kazi and all led by the sage approached the spot, than there appeared an opening in the tree and the phantom of their fantasy disappeared in it. Thus eluded, the claimants, one after another, sulked away, crestfallen.

Such is the predicament of man on earth. No sooner does he become 'grown up' than all sorts of impostors and claimants crowd upon him

for recognition. The parents demand filial duty for his upbringing, the teachers insist upon respect to them for his education, the wife and children claim his love, the community his services, the country his patriotism, and the Church its dues for saving his soul from damnation. Distracted and torn by different passions, to escape it all he takes refuge in death, but the remedy proves worse than the disease. Thus caught up in a vicious circle of births and deaths engendering hopes and disappointments seemingly eternal, he at long last comes across a master mind, who gives him the Knowledge of his Real Self. No sooner does that part of him - the individual self - become one with the whole, the Real Self - than the various claimants to his body, mind and soul, namely kith and kin, community and country, teacher and preacher, all vanish into the air.

Meher Baba:

Everyone is unconsciously tired of this life, because everyone seeks happiness, but knows not how to get it. But life is so beautiful. It is meant to be happy. I will help you. Then things will appear changed. You will see it. It is always the outlook that counts, and not the object. Today you feel tired, upset, seeing nothing beautiful in the things around you in life. If tomorrow you do not feel bored but cheerful, the same things that appeared black yesterday will seem changed. It is all due to changed mentality and outlook. The easy way is not to make much of things. Take them lightly. Say to yourself, 'I am meant to be happy, to make others happy,' and gradually you do become happy yourself and make others so too. Don't suggest to your mind, 'I am tired, haggard, depressed.' That will make you feel worse. Always say, 'All is well and beautiful. I will be happy.' I will help you spiritually. *[From an interview]*

Dr Ghani Munsiff:

Once Avicenna, an Arabian physician and philosopher (AD 980-1037), hearing of the spiritual fame of Abel Hasan Khargani, visited the Master at his home in Khargani. At the time the Master was absent, having gone to the nearby jungles to fetch firewood at the request of his

Over The Years With Meher Baba

wife. When his wife was asked by Avicenna where the Master was, she replied hotly: 'Why do you wish to see that lunatic and impostor? What business have you with him?' And she went on at length, criticising and belittling the Master, and disparaging his spiritual status. Avicenna was greatly perplexed. What she said contradicted what he had previously heard, and he felt disinclined to continue his search for him. However, seeing he had come so far just to see the Master, he finally decided to do so. On going towards the jungle, he was astounded to see the Master returning with a great bundle of firewood loaded on the back of a tiger. The philosopher, after paying respects, enquired of the Master the meaning of and difference between what he had been told by the wife and what he had seen. The Master replied: 'There is nothing amazing about it. It is a mere equation of labour. When I put up with and bear the load of suffering from the wolf (wife) in my house, then automatically this tiger from the jungle carries my load for me.'

Dr William Donkin:

I have tried to give an idea of the trials and hardships of the preliminary journeys, but these are leisurely and frivolous holidays in comparison with the final tours with Baba, when the real work is done. Travel can be fun, and hardships have something stimulating about them, if one is allowed to renew one's physical and nervous forces by adequate food and sleep. But this one can rarely do on a mast journey with Baba. After two or three days of work from dawn to dusk with little or no food, and after two or three nights with little or no sleep, the world simply becomes unreal, and one lives a kind of reflex life in which the parts of one's body move and work; but the zest for living, and that sense of well-being, dependent, one supposes, upon a nervous system refreshed by sleep, and upon tissues nourished by adequate food, are simply no longer there. But mast tours do not last just two or three days, they go on for two or three weeks, and this tempo of work goes on and on, Baba ever spurring those with him to the very limits of their powers. On one of the tours in 1946, Baidul estimated that in eight days, they had a total of fourteen hours sleep, which is an average of about two hours sleep a day. Finally, add to all these things the infliction

of a tropical climate, and the drain on one's vitality through constant perspiration, and you will get an approximate answer of what a mast tour is like.

Meher Baba:

Try to be always happy. Never think 'life is dreadful,' 'I am tired of life.' Such thoughts really make life miserable. But if you think 'life is worth living,' all difficulties will appear insignificant. I will help you try to develop love. Never think 'I am alone,' 'I have so much to do,' 'I am poor,' and so on. All are poor. The whole world is poor. Even millionaires are poor because they have greed and want more. Love someone and I will help you. Do not worry, My blessings. *[From an interview.]*

Dr Ghani Munsiff:

Khawaja Shamshuddin dedicated himself to the service and company of the spiritual Master Ali Ahmed Sabu. After a period, he was given true knowledge. He was later advised to take leave of his Master and at the same time to seek service in the cavalry of the Sultan. When the Master had said this he also remarked, 'The day you happen to work a miracle, that will be the day of my departure from earthly life.' Khawaja Shamshuddin became a cavalryman in the service of the Sultan.

When the Sultan sought to capture the fortress of Chitodgarh and failed to do so after much effort, he searched for a saintly personality to intercede for him in the matter and pray for his success. In his search, he met an advanced spiritual man who said to him, 'Why are you wasting your time wandering hither and thither? In your own service there is a cavalryman who is a Perfect One. If you prevail upon him to pray for you, the fortress will immediately fall. The truth is that God has decreed the fall of this fortress to be dependent on the words to be said by him.' 'How am I to recognise such a one?' 'At midnight a great wind will pass over the camp of your army extinguishing all the fires and torches but one. A lamp will be found burning despite the high winds and that will be the pointer to the man you seek.'

Over The Years With Meher Baba

It happened as the holy man had predicted. A cyclone wind developed, and the king found all lights extinguished except one. Approaching that place, the Sultan found the saint deeply engrossed within himself and the lamp flickering before him. When the saint raised his eyes, he found the Sultan standing before him, and immediately knew the worst - the consequence of the Sultan's presence foretold the death of his Master. However, he received the king respectfully and asked why he had come at such an hour. The Sultan apologised for the intrusion and expressing his ignorance of the real state and stature of the saint, requested him to pray for the fall of the fortress. The saint did his best to put the Sultan off, saying that the king was misguided and misinformed but he found the king adamant in his request. Ultimately the saint said: 'I shall have to pray for your success but on condition that you immediately pay my salary and accept my resignation. Six miles from here I shall pray as you desire, and early the next morning you are to attack the fortress. It will fall to you. This means that my Master Ali Ahmed Sabu will bid farewell to his earthly life today.'

The king did as requested, and the saint prayed at a point six miles from the camp. The fortress fell to the attack of the Sultan the next morning.

Reaching Kalyar, Khawaja found that the Master had indeed died, and that through lack of other attendants, the body was guarded by tigers and other wild animals. On his approach, they departed and left him to attend to the burial of the body of the Master Ali Ahmed Sabu.

Dr William Donkin:

It is unfortunate that scant justice has been done to the general atmosphere of this ashram, and to that subtle quintessence of love which pervades everything that Baba does. His physical presence and the brilliance of his leadership have that impossible quality of the philosopher's stone, that, by their magic touch they transmute the base metal of the most commonplace routine into a treasure of living service. This is perhaps an ornate way of describing something that is at once so real that one might think it easy to describe quite simply, and so transcendental that the spirit of it eludes the grasp of words. But this

magic, this imponderable something, weaves itself like a golden thread into the fabric of everything that Baba does, and when the factual details of a phase of Baba's life are buried so deep in the ashes of one's mind to be almost forgotten, the memory of this splendid thing is there still.

Meher Baba:

One can by reading books and having theories, get some intellectual understanding of Truth, but that is not real understanding. One must experience Truth, live Truth, realise Truth. It is very easy to do this – if one takes it to mind. But people make it so complicated that it seems a gigantic task. I will help you. Think much of others and very little of yourself. When you have a scarf and this other lady needs one, spare your scarf for her. Even if she has more and you nothing, don't feel that. This is an example, don't take it literally. It is also simple. Think less of yourself. I will help you spiritually. *[From an interview]*

Dr Ghani Munsiff:

Once Harun-ar-Rashid, the Caliph of Baghdad, was celebrating a royal occasion. He ordered a grand display of all manner of jewellery and artwork for it, and invited not only courtiers and nobles but many commoners also.

At the height of the celebrations the Sultan developed a magnanimous mood, and all of a sudden he ordered every person present to touch any article they liked, and that article, no matter how precious, would belong to that person. No sooner was the royal command given than a rush was made to possess the costliest thing within reach.

A beautiful slave girl, remaining composed and serene by the side of the throne, asked the Sultan to reaffirm his command. On hearing it, she immediately touched him on the arm, saying, 'Why should I run after secondary things when the primary object is here?'

The Sultan never bargained for this, but in admiration of the high standard of discrimination shown by the girl he complimented her and said: 'Now that you possess me, the whole of my kingdom is yours. Greater than all these hundreds of men, you have shown high moral courage and discrimination.'

Over The Years With Meher Baba

Meher Baba:

Spirituality sought apart from life, as if it had nothing to do with the material world, is a futile search. Creeds and cults emphasise some aspect of life, but spirituality is totalitarian in its outlook. Spirituality is an enlightened attitude to all of life. It includes the whole of life.

Eruch Jessawala:

Some young people in the West say they want to go back to the country and live in a more simple, more primitive way. But what is the primitive life? Is our present civilisation 'primitive', or is a simple, frugal existence in the country 'primitive'? It all depends on the values one attaches to life. If one can tolerate the city life it is all right, otherwise one can go to the country.

But Meher Baba would always want us to stay where we are, knowing fully well that He is everywhere and that He can be lived and approached through the very station in life that we hold or occupy. There is no need to leave anything and go out anywhere - He wants us to approach Him from where we are. And if we study what He Himself did, we find that He selected spots not too far from the city and yet not in the city.

Meher Baba:

Outwardly, the average man may seem to have equanimity, but his equanimity is only apparent and not real. When he gets profoundly dissatisfied with his uncritically accepted pattern of actions, he struggles to achieve a standpoint which would be unfailing under all types of circumstances and which would ensure for him unbroken peace and fulfilment. Purely intellectual understanding of the world and its experience fails to provide him with such an unfailing standpoint. He therefore re-examines his previous assumptions and ways and makes intelligent and new experiments in his own life, in order that he may discover and obtain 'within' his own being, a reliable directive.

Eruch Jessawala:

We have free will to the extent that we choose to remain separated from our true being. You exercise your freedom either to become His slave or to remain a slave to yourself. That's the only free will you have.

Ramakrishna, a Perfect Master of his age who lived in Calcutta, once gave his disciples this figure on free will: a frog lives in a well, has the freedom of it, and thinks it is the whole world. He says to himself, 'I am the Lord of this place, the possessor of all, and can do whatever I wish in this world of mine.' But he does not know that his world is only just a little hole.

So we have our free will, but Baba says it is to the extent and limit of that moment when we either consciously seek to realise our true Self, or continue to remain separate from it - that is, to remain separate from Him, our true Self.

Meher Baba:

When a man is confronted with great suffering through his desires, he understands their true nature. When such suffering comes it should be welcomed. Suffering may come in order to eliminate further suffering. A thorn may be taken out by another thorn, and suffering by suffering. Suffering has to come when it is of use in purging the soul of its desires; it is then as necessary as medicine to a sick man.

Not all suffering is bad. When suffering leads to the eternal happiness of desirelessness, it should be regarded as a blessing in disguise. Just as a patient may have to suffer an operation at the hands of a surgeon in order to free himself of persistent and malignant pain, the soul has to welcome the suffering of renouncing desires in order to be free from the recurrent and unending suffering caused by them. The suffering which the soul has in renouncing desires may be very acute, but it is endured because of a sense of greater freedom which comes when desires gradually disappear from the mind. If a swelling on the body is opened and allowed to drain it gives much pain but also much relief. Similarly, the suffering from renunciation of desires is accompanied by the compensating relief of progressive initiation into the limitless life of freedom and happiness.

Over The Years With Meher Baba

Meher Baba:

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 appears; and when such love is experienced God is attained. So you see how art can lead one to find the Infinite. *[From an interview.]*

Meher Baba:

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In such moments of true forgetfulness there is a mental detachment from all material surroundings in which the poet allows his imagination to soar. An artist, when he gives form to an ideal in which he completely forgets himself and all irrelevant surroundings, creates a masterpiece. The best of philosophy is uttered when a man surveys the problem of life without reference to the ups and downs of his purely personal circumstances; and some of the greatest scientific discoveries have been made in this same frame of mind. Such manifestations of genuine spontaneity of forgetfulness are very rare indeed, and although it is said that poets, artists and philosophers are born and not made, these fleeting phases of real forgetfulness are the result of efforts made in past lives.

In an attempt to make life bearable some people develop a feeble kind of stoicism - a sort of 'who cares, anyway' outlook - and others plunge recklessly into epicurism. The former is the apathetic acceptance of defeat, and the latter the effort to forget defeat in the arms of pleasure. Neither is true forgetfulness. But when a man acquires the true forgetfulness, he enters the spiritual kingdom and passes through different degrees of forgetfulness until the Goal is reached. 'Forgetfulness of the world makes one a pilgrim; forgetfulness of the next world makes one a saint; forgetfulness of self means Realisation; and forgetfulness of forgetfulness is Perfection.'

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Intelligent Action

Meher Baba:

All action except that which is intelligently designed to attain God-realisation, creates a binding for consciousness. It is not only an expression of accumulated ignorance, but a further addition to that accumulated ignorance.

Eruch Jessawala:

How hard should one work? Baba always wanted us to remain occupied and work very hard, trying to forget ourselves in our work whatever it be, and while doing so to keep constantly in the back of our minds that the work we are doing has been given by Baba Himself, and our part is to do that work well.

Baba has given us the example of a person who is on the stage and has to act his part well. In his daily life he may be a beggar, but he is given the part of a king and has to play his part so well that he really becomes a king for the time being, making the audience feel his authority. Likewise, Baba wants us to know that this whole world is a great stage erected by Him, and we are to play our role in it. And we will play it well only when we remember that it is but a role which we must act out to the best of our ability.

Dr William Donkin:

Baba's work - His visible and external work - was to shave, bathe, clothe and feed each inmate as soon as He arrived, and each day to scour the ashram latrine, and to bathe and sit in seclusion with a certain

Over The Years With Meher Baba

number of the old inmates. In this way He would throw every ounce of energy into doing every sort of menial task, and was, in very fact, Master of all, and servant of all.

The inmates were given every liberty, except that of stepping outside the extensive limits of the ashram garden. Whatever they asked for would be given them, and their paunches were better filled with wholesome and nourishing food than most of them had ever known before. There was, perhaps, nothing unusual in ministering faithfully to the physical needs of such people, but Baba's work did not stop there, and, indeed, that side of it was the least important of all. What Baba did was to give the human and the divine touch to the most uninspiring chores. Like the fragrance of a garden by night, the essence of His selfless love permeated the darkness of these broken and distorted minds. The men came to feel this and in their own queer ways would reciprocate the love that Baba gave them, and many came to worship him as a Divine Incarnation.

Eruch Jessawala:

Charity is anything you give without any thought of self. Charity can be given through your feelings, or words, or in cash or property, but without thought of self. That is what we have gathered from Meher Baba. If words and feelings are imparted just to help others, then they will help. And that can be equivalent to another donating a million dollars. But you can't weigh charity. It can only be weighed, as it were, in how far it is selfish and how far it is selfless.

Meher Baba:

The established codes of religion and morality are to mankind as is the general advice given by a father to his son. They are for its well-being. But when one may have the advantage of living wisdom, it should be accepted in preference to these established codes.

As stated by a Seer, wealth may be sacrificed for health, wealth and health for self-respect, and all these (wealth, health and self-respect) for one's own religion, but to gain God, everything including religion, should be sacrificed without hesitation.

Eruch Jessawala:

The cardinal principle of business is that one party gains and the other party loses. Business demands that you higggle-haggle, bargain, be shrewd. That is not being dishonest. But our values of honesty and dishonesty are quite different - we consider it dishonest to tell a lie. But in business that is the role we must play.

Of course if there are business partners, then there should be honesty and give and take between them. Dishonesty should not creep into the relationship. Let us digress a little so that we understand what we have gathered from Baba.

A lawyer once came to see Baba. You know the profession of a lawyer, its noted disregard for actual truth. Meher Baba conveyed to him: You will be honest and truthful in trying to defend your client irrespective of his guilt or innocence. You have taken a brief, and you would be doing a disservice if you did not defend your client forcefully and without regard for the traditional code attached to speaking the truth. You must defend him to the end, using whatever techniques of your profession are appropriate.

Again, if you are an accountant you are duty-bound to tell your client how to avoid taxes - not how to evade taxation, but avoid it through legal loopholes, as it were, in the law. One has to pay taxes in order that the government should run properly. But it is your duty to advise your client on minimising taxes; you will be dishonest if you do not do so.

Baba says that we are all playing a game on a great stage and each one should play his role to the absolute best of his ability. Honesty demands that. This reminds me of myself. From childhood I was taught by my parents to speak the truth. I tried to stick to that, and when I came to Baba I took pride in doing so. I would be critical of others, despising them when they did not do likewise. In the early course of my life with Baba I hurt the heart and feelings of so many people around that one day Baba took up the issue and called me to Him. He said, 'Come here and sit down. You feel happy when you speak the truth, don't you?' 'Yes,' I said, 'I feel proud that I adhere to truth.' 'But do you know what truth is?' Baba asked me. 'When you speak anything

Over The Years With Meher Baba

which helps others, that is speaking the truth. The motive behind the speaking is the truth.'

Then Baba told me this story: After Prophet Mohammed dropped His body, it so happened that His close disciple Ali was one day sitting outside a prayer hall, on one side of the entrance. Suddenly a man came running up and cried out to Ali: 'Help me, my enemies pursue me, please help me!' Ali told him, 'Get inside the hall.' The man did so, and Ali then moved his seat to the other side of the doorway. Shortly the crowd pursuing the culprit arrived and asked if he had seen the man pass by. Ali replied: 'No, not since I have been seated here.' He was not speaking an untruth. When you speak what you must in order to help others, you speak the truth.

Meher Baba:

All life is an effort to attain freedom from self-created entanglement. It is a desperate struggle to undo what has been done in ignorance, to throw away the accumulated burden of the past, to find rescue from the debris left by a series of temporary achievements and failures. Life seeks to unwind the limiting impressions of the past and to obtain release from the maze of its own making so that its further creations may spring directly from the heart of eternity and bear the stamp of unburdened freedom and intrinsic richness of being which knows no limitation.

Eruch Jessawala:

Should one try to amass more wealth than one needs to live on? I am reminded of a little thing Meher Baba said one day: 'Who is a really wealthy person? Wealthy is he who knows how to spend his wealth well.' Of course, it is good to amass wealth - so that it can be spent well. And the one who knows how to spend well, knows not that he spent it. Baba used to tell us, when you give with your right hand, don't let your left hand know what the other hand is doing.

There are different sorts of spendthrifts. Some like to give out a lot of money because of their attachment to giving it and gaining recognition from the world. But Baba has clearly said that only he is wealthy who knows how to spend his wealth well, so it is necessary to earn a lot in

order to be able to serve many. And in such an act of service one forgets oneself.

The secret of spirituality is to forget your false self so that you realise who you really are. But we search for the truth, we try to *find* our true self, our Real Self; and this is the reason for the frustration, the bewilderment of aspirants, because we are searching for that which was never lost.

So Baba says: 'Stop the search, don't seek. All you have to do is to lose your false self.' And Baba comes time and again to help us drown ourselves in His ocean, and know ourselves in the infinity of His Divinity. That is the secret of spirituality. And service is one of the little secrets through which you can lose yourself, if you serve selflessly. Begin to do so. The thoughts of self are there, but they will gradually become fainter and fainter until they fade out.

Meher Baba:

When the individual truly loves humanity he longs to give all for its happiness. When he truly loves his country he longs to sacrifice life itself without seeking reward and without the least thought of having loved and served. When he truly loves his friends he longs to help them without making them feel under the least obligation. When he truly loves his enemies he longs to make them his friends. True love for parents or family makes him try to give them comfort at the cost of his own.

Eruch Jessawala:

The emperor of India was a Moghul, and was very interested in metaphysics, philosophies, love for God, the relation between God and His creation, and so forth. His prime minister was a Hindu and the emperor would ask this minister many questions concerning the things that interested him.

One day the emperor said to him: 'You say that your God is all-powerful.'

'Yes sire. But your God and mine are one. They are not different.'

Over The Years With Meher Baba

'I know you say that your God and my God are one. We too only know of one Allah. But why is it that our God is so powerful that He does not need to descend on earth to protect or to awaken His children? Our God is so powerful that wherever He be, His wish is enough. He can control His creation without descending on earth. Whereas your God has to descend on earth in order to awaken and help the creation. Don't you think that your God is a little bit less powerful than our Allah?'

'Oh, no!' said the prime minister. 'You are absolutely misinformed about this.'

'Then why is it that our God never descends on earth? If, as you say, He is the same God, why is it that He has to descend?'

'My lord, your question is such that I need some time to answer it. I must have a vacation from the court.'

'Yes, have your vacation and then give me solid proof of what you say about my God and yours.'

After some time the prime minister returned and the emperor and he were overjoyed to see each other again. The minister suggested that the emperor take the whole court for a holiday, an outing by boat on the river. The emperor had a deep respect for his minister and readily agreed to a day of relaxation in each other's company. The prime minister had made all arrangements, the boats were ready, and also the prince, the emperor's son, was to go with them in one of the boats.

They set off and it was very pleasant on the river. Suddenly there was a commotion and a shout, 'The prince has fallen overboard!' The emperor jumped to his feet and began taking off his coat. But the minister said, 'Why do you go in? There are so many here. See, they are jumping into the water.' 'Leave me alone. He will be drowned. I must get to my boy,' exclaimed the emperor, and jumped in. So of course the prime minister had to go with him. They floundered around and were eventually pulled out, the shocked emperor crying out, 'Where is my prince?'

Quietly, the minister answered: 'Pardon, sire, but there is no prince.' 'But I saw him in that other boat. Where is he?' 'Sire, the prince was not here at all, there was only a wax replica of him. It was all to show you the answer to your problem.' 'What do you mean? Where is the answer?'

'You are the emperor, sire. A word from you and a million people would have jumped in to save your son. But you were not satisfied - you yourself wanted to plunge in, in order to save your own. You didn't feel satisfied, contented, unless and until you yourself plunged in to save him, retrieve him, redeem him. That is why the Hindus believe in the descent of the Lord. The Lord descending into form is known as Avatar - Reality descending into illusion.'

The minister continued: 'But how can Reality and illusion go hand in hand? They cannot. This act of compassion is so unfathomable that, although He is Reality, He clothes Himself in the body so that as Reality He does not shatter illusion. He wants to awaken us to the nature of illusion, but not to shatter illusion. If illusion is shattered, the whole game is over. He does not want that. How can He awaken us to the illusion? He clothes Himself to such an extent that the light of Reality is not shed into illusion, and yet the warmth of that Reality is felt.'

'So in His descent there is that warmth, giving us the feeling that Something is there. The Avatar comes in our midst, allows illusion to remain, and yet gives us the feeling that it is illusion. He awakens us.'

Meher Baba:

True religion consists in developing the attitude of mind which should ultimately result in seeing One Infinite Existence prevailing in the universe; when one could live in the world and yet be not of it, and at the same time be in harmony with everyone and everything; when one could attend to all worldly duties and affairs and yet feel completely detached from all their results; when one could see the same divinity in art and science and experience the highest consciousness and indivisible bliss in everyday life.

Eruch Jessawala:

To return to the question of wealth.

Baba has indicated that one may amass wealth, draw upon the bounties that are around, but to avoid becoming attached to it you must spend it. So the amassing and spending go hand in hand, and that is the right way.

Over The Years With Meher Baba

But what is wealth? Not just the worldly wealth! In amassing wealth and spending it you simultaneously amass a treasure of blessings of the many people who glorify the Lord, the Giver of the bounties.

Baba Himself showed how this is to be done. There was a phase when Baba wanted us to find families who were once wealthy but reduced to utter poverty and had nothing to live on. So we went out in search of such families. Mind you, they wouldn't put out their hands to receive anything! It was only with great difficulty that we were able to persuade them to accept anything, and we were not to disclose Baba's identity to them in any way.

Whenever we did reach such families, what did we hear from their throats and hearts? 'Blessed be the Lord!' They glorified the Lord for having reached them with timely help.

That is the treasure that one continues to amass when wealth is earned and spent well. If you can't glorify God, become instrumental, so that others through you are able to glorify the Lord! A person who earns a lot and knows how to spend his earnings well, will be instrumental.

Meher Baba:

Yes, it can be done - to achieve what one wants materially and make it last. What does perfection mean if it does not include material life? It is easy and practical. One has only to adopt that life which keeps materialism and spirituality in balance. How to do that? Lead a worldly life, attend to all your worldly duties, but for some moments in the day, long for something that is beyond life. This longing will increase gradually and that will make you free and detached from material results. I will help you spiritually and you will know how to do it. *[From an interview]*

Eruch Jessawala:

You ask if we should have faith in the Lord providing for our dependants after our death rather than we ourselves providing for them.

But why be a burden on the Lord when He has given us the energy and stamina to provide for ourselves and our families? He wants us to be practical. He wants us to earn our daily bread with the sweat of our

brow. The traditions tell us this. The Masters time and again tell us this. The Ancient One who comes time and again tells us: Toil, toil, earn your livelihood! You are the one responsible for bringing your dependants into the world, so it is your responsibility to see that they are provided for, even after you die. You could take an example from Baba's own Trust Deed where He made provisions for the livelihood of those close to Him.

Suppose there are two persons - one a devotee living as a destitute in a poor hut, and the other a rich man, living in a palace rolling in wealth. Meher Baba said a nice thing: Who is the richer of the two? In the eyes of the Lord, the poor one living in the hut, but rich in love for the Lord, is richer than the person rolling in wealth in a palace. That person is really poor, but because of the law of karma he is very wealthy. And he will later take the place of the person in the hut, and the poor one will go to the palace. This is the law of karma.

But if the poor one utilises his poverty and makes his life rich by remembering the Lord all the time, then of course it is something sublime. When he enriches his poverty-stricken life in that way, then there is no need for the law of karma to operate. He gets over the impressions of poverty and wealth because he is so contented. He creates no impressions from his neighbour's riches; so he has not to undergo a transition from his hut to the palace. He is already in the palace of the Lord.

There is a story of Saint Tukaram. He lived in a hut with his wife and children, but with no means of livelihood. Yet his poverty was enriched by the Name of the Lord and the love of the Lord. The ruler of the time, Shivaji, tried to provide Tukaram with wealth, sending a platter of jewels to him, which his wife received and was very happy. But when Tukaram returned to the hut he said: 'What are you trying to do? Do you want to become poor by possessing this?' And he snatched the platter and threw it in the river saying, 'No, no, our wealth is something quite different! These jewels are pebbles, they are sands! What will you do with these things? The treasure we are holding is something much more. This platter will reduce you to poverty, whereas our poverty is making us live in the palace of the Lord, in His presence all the time!'

Over The Years With Meher Baba

From a worldly point of view it can be asked: Why is it that this man who is such a great lover of the Lord lives in a hut, and this other person who never repeats the Name of the Lord is rolling in wealth! To us it appears like this, but to the person living in the hovel and remembering the Lord, the hovel is his palace.

And if at all the lover of the Lord has a thought about wealth, then his love lacks something. If his love is not complete, his mind is bound to say: 'Well, my neighbour is rolling in wealth, and I am praying to the Lord!' If he prays for wealth, he is bound to get it, but of what use will that be? He is bound to get it because the Lord is the One who gives anything you ask for. But at the same time the Lord tells us: 'Remember, I warn you, how to ask and what to ask for.'

Meher Baba:

How can one be a good doctor and use science best? It is very simple. Through love. If you love your work you can do it with love, and anything that is done with love has perfect results. To be a good doctor, always have in mind that to you all patients, good or bad, big or small, are equal. Treat a beggar with as much care and interest as you would a millionaire, and in case you find you are not paid the price, you must not for a moment think of refusing. It is simple and practical, and yet a good many doctors don't observe this simple rule. Only if a doctor realises that the One Infinite God is within all, can that doctor work like a saint! I am a doctor of souls. To Me, good and bad, all are lovable, and I help each according to the need. But although it is simple for you to be a good doctor, it is very difficult to practise this rule. So many things interfere, reputation, name, money, society, circumstances and so on. Is it clear? You can be a good doctor if you take it to mind. You are such a fine soul. I will help you. *[From an interview.]*

Eruch Jessawala:

We have no right to impose our understanding and beliefs regarding materialism or anything else on another person. All one can say regarding this material world, is what Baba said to us - be very natural, loving, kind, face problems and try to overcome them rather than try to

escape them. But we have no right to say a person should not live luxuriously. A person may be living in a very expensive locality, or a luxurious apartment, and yet at the same time he can be completely detached from his wealth and comfort. He is of greater use to others than you think he is.

But then, say there is a person, an artist, who is married and has two children. I am a bachelor and have a regular means of livelihood. The artist is my neighbour and I find that his family is not properly looked after because he is too absorbed in his art. It is my duty as his neighbour and friend to say to him: 'You have responsibilities to your family, take your art as a hobby if you want to, but earn something for your family.'

Or again there is one who works hard to earn a lot of money at the cost of his health, and there is one who works less and earns less. But this latter person is in a position and capable of advising the other that he is neglecting his health through his pursuit of material wealth.

Meher Baba:

The fundamental link between spirit and matter can be seen in the necessary connection between ideas and deeds. Mere playing with spiritual ideas without putting them into action is as unproductive as emphasising the material at the expense of the spiritual. The simplicity of the real solution to all problems makes that solution increasingly baffling. The real solution lies in the elimination of all *self*-interest; this makes man practical in the truest sense of the word and gives him strength to face the facts concerning body and soul.

Eruch Jessawala:

Returning to the man who lives in luxury and is completely detached from his wealth, I am reminded of the story of Janak. He was a famous king who was also a Sadguru or Perfect Master. Outwardly he was a great monarch, and never let it be known generally that he was a Sadguru. Only those who could recognise him inwardly knew him to be such.

In his kingdom there was a seeker who had intense spiritual longing. He was as restless as a fish out of water, could not sleep, could not eat and had grown very lean; but still he had an ego. However, he sensed

the spiritual perfection of Janak and sought to see him and learn from him. The guard refused to admit the seeker, but the king heard him and through a servant asked from inside the palace, 'What do you want?' He said to the guard, 'Tell the king that I am so and so.' Again Janak heard from inside and called out to him: 'Come when you have left yourself behind.' The man could not understand, repeated who he was and why he had come. Once more Janak replied: 'Leave yourself behind and then come.' Still he could not understand. Finally he fell at the feet of the guard and asked him to explain the meaning of the king's message. 'Drop your "I", and say "your slave has come to see you." Keep your "I" aside.' The man did so, and the king allowed him to enter.

He found Janak fully attired in his royal robes, wearing his crown, and seated with his courtiers at a state banquet with much merrymaking going on about him. And the seeker on seeing Janak living in such luxury, thought, 'How can Janak be a Sadguru?'

Janak, who read his thoughts, ordered a cup of milk filled to the brim. Then he called his ministers aside and ordered that throughout the town a great celebration should be held with music, drums and merrymaking everywhere. After this he called for two executioners. When they arrived he turned to the seeker, handed him the cup full of milk, and ordered him to carry it through the town without spilling any of it. 'If you spill as much as one drop, these two executioners will cut off your head at once,' and he ordered them to do so.

So they set out, the man holding the cup of milk, and one executioner on his right, the other on his left. Through the town they made their way, and all around them were crowds of people celebrating. Bands were playing, drums beating, people singing and shouting. Noises of all kinds were going on. But the seeker's mind was so concentrated on the cup of milk that he did not know what was happening around him. He did not even hear the noises.

Finally they returned to the palace. The king asked the executioners if the man had spilled any milk and they said no. Then he asked the seeker, 'What did you see all around you?' He replied, 'I saw nothing, I heard nothing. I saw only the cup of milk.' Then the king said: 'So am I all the time engrossed in the Infinite, and pay no attention to outer things.'

The man threw himself at Janak's feet, his thought being only of Janak as his Master and seeking to be accepted as his pupil. Later the king became publicly known as a Sadguru.

Meher Baba:

Above all else be content with your lot, rich or poor, happy or miserable. Understand that God has designed it for your own good, and be resigned to His Will. Remember the present in the frame of the past and the future. You eternally were and always will be. You have had innumerable forms as man or woman, beautiful and ugly, strong and weak, healthy and sickly, powerful and helpless, and now you are here again in another form.

Until you gain spiritual freedom you will be invested with many such forms, so why seek temporary relief now which will only result in further bindings later? Do not ask God for money, fame, power, health or children, but seek His Grace and it will lead you to eternal bliss.

Eruch Jessawala:

From mythology there is also another good story about wealth.

It is said that one day there was a tussle in the heavens between Shankar the Lord and his consort Parvati. She was being reserved and silent, and the Lord asked why she was cross with him. She said: 'How indifferent, how callous you are to your devotees! And this has made me think - is your love for me so very great or are you also callous with me?' The Lord replied: 'What's the matter? How can I be callous? Everyone is well looked after, everybody is provided for.' (As Meher Baba Himself said once: I dare not care not for My lovers.)

Parvati continued: 'I assure you that you are callous and indifferent to your closest devotees.' 'Why, what has happened?' 'Come and see,' she said. 'There is a devotee of yours who spends every day chanting your name, and living only on what people give him to eat. He has left the world, he has nothing to provide for his family, he has dedicated his life to you.' 'Well, that is his lot. And that's how it should be; it will promote his progress on the path to Me.'

But she said: 'No, I don't believe in that. You must provide him with some worldly means because he is wholly and solely yours.' 'What

Over The Years With Meher Baba

do you want Me to do, further than what I have already done in My omniscience?' 'I would like you to give him a lot of wealth.' 'All right, I will give him a lot of wealth because you want it that way.' It seems that even God has to submit to the wishes of the consort!

Well, the devotee used to take a regular path from his hut to the market-place where he would beg, and throughout the day and night he would chant the name of the Lord. So while he was on his way to beg that day, a thought came to his mind: I am getting older and the world seems to be changing; there doesn't seem to be the same compassion and pity in people as previously. I shall have to do something different in order to draw upon their compassion. What if I were to pose as being blind? Then they might give me more.

So on this very day when the Lord throws down from the heavens a sack full of gold onto the path which the devotee always takes, the devotee decides to practise blindness. He shuts his eyes and walks with them closed so that he can draw upon himself the mercy of mankind - and he walks right past the gold lying there. The Lord looks at Parvati and says: 'See, that is the law of karma. According to what is determined as your share in life, that much is yours and no more.'

Meher Baba:

The life of the reincarnating individual has many events and phases. The wheel of life makes its ceaseless rounds, lifting the individual to the heights or bringing him down from high positions. It thus contributes to the enrichment of his experience. Ideals left unattained in one life are pursued further in the next life; things left undone are finished; the edges left by incomplete endeavour are rounded up; wrongs are eventually set right. The accounts of give and take between persons receive renewed adjustment by the repayment of karmic debts and the recovery of karmic dues. At last, out of the ripeness of experience and through the dissolution of the ego-mind, the soul enters into the sole unity of Divine Life. In this Divine Life there is neither the binding of giving nor the binding of taking, because the soul has completely transcended the consciousness of separateness or duality.

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Love

Meher Baba:

Love cannot be born of mere determination; through the exercise of will one can at best be dutiful. Love has to spring spontaneously from within; it is in no way amenable to any form of inner or outer force. Love and coercion can never go together, but while love cannot be forced upon anyone, it can be awakened through love itself. Love is essentially self-communicative; those who do not have it catch it from those who have it. True love is unconquerable and irresistible. It goes on gathering power and spreading until eventually it transforms everyone it touches.

Eruch Jessawala:

Meher Baba told us the following story many years ago. And I was reminded of it recently by a beautiful young girl, a Baba follower, who had come on pilgrimage here.

One day, after she had been here some time, she was in a mood to speak out her heart. She said she had been inspired to gather all the information she could about Baba so that she might put it into her life and live that life and try to be an inspiration to others. But she had a dilemma. She said, 'Eruch, when I try to share this great treasure with the boys on campus, I feel embarrassed.' 'Why should you feel that,' I said. When she blushed and hesitated, I asked, 'What is it? Tell me.'

'They get involved with me.' 'In what way?' 'They come too close to me. They fall in love with me. It's my beauty that comes in my way!'

Over The Years With Meher Baba

I said, 'Why should it come in your way? On the contrary, use your beauty as your great strength for Baba!' 'Oh, Eruch, you don't understand my position. I am young; there are so many students; when I tell them about Baba most of them are very eager to hear about Him, they want to know. But then they fall in love with me. And I don't know what to do!'

Immediately the story that Baba had told me of the great saint Rabia of Basra came to my mind. She was considered one of the most beautiful damsels living on earth at the time. Her youth and beauty were unsurpassed. Now it happened that a young man from Shiraz in Iran came to Basra, travelling and sight-seeing. He was vigorous, handsome, and very successful in his business which took him from place to place, from country to country. He enjoyed sight-seeing, so on arrival in Basra and while having tea or food he asked whoever he met, 'Are you from Basra?' 'Yes.' 'Is there anything out of the way, anything special here?' 'Well, we have fine gardens, fountains, and things like that.' 'Oh, I have roamed many countries and seen a number of big cities where there are similar beautiful things. But is there anything here in Basra that is out of the way?' 'Yes.' 'What is it?' 'The most beautiful woman on earth!'

He is young and handsome, and youth is always attracted towards beauty, but he says 'Oh, I have seen thousands of beautiful damsels. Can there be any more beautiful than those in Iran?' 'Well, that is what I tell you,' said his informer. Again the young visitor goes sight-seeing, and again asks people 'Isn't there anything *special* to see here?' They all mention various sights, and finally tell him: 'There is nothing better here than Rabia of Basra. Her beauty surpasses all beauty.' 'How can that be? What makes you say that?' And they reply: 'Those who are starved of beauty will learn when they confront that beauty.' 'All right, where can I find her? How does one see her?' 'She is in a brothel!' 'Oh, that's a common story - we have many prostitutes in Iran too!' 'Ah, but this is different, Rabia is very different!'

The young man goes to various places in the city, but keeps on hearing the name of Rabia from those he meets. Gradually he realises that this whole city is somehow different from other cities he has visited.

It is charged with such an atmosphere that they talk freely about the beauty of this woman, and yet there seems no trace of carnality or vulgarity in their talk. He thinks, 'Who could she be? What makes her so beautiful and at the same time approachable to all? Oh, that is because she is a beautiful prostitute!'

After some days he decides to visit Rabia even though she is in a brothel. He is from a different level of life and not used to frequenting such places, but he emboldens himself to go there to see for himself what he has heard from so many people. He finds out about the place and the time Rabia will be available. Somebody leads him there in the evening. 'Go up the stairs and a matron will see you and ask you to pay a fee.' 'She takes fees?' 'She doesn't, but the matron asks for them. Without that you won't be able to go in.' 'Oh, I have enough money!'

So he slowly climbs the stairs, and all the time his mind is full of this beauty he has heard of, and of the time he is to pass with her. When he reaches the top of the stairs the matron is there and says to him, 'What do you want? Are you a stranger in this land?' He replies, 'Yes, I am a stranger and I want to see Rabia of Basra.'

'What do you mean, you want to see Rabia of Basra? Is she an exhibit in a zoo or something?' 'Well, is she not approachable?' 'Yes, but you have to be with her, not just see her. And you have to pay a fee.'

'Yes, I want to spend time with her.' 'All right, but the fee is exorbitant.' He says, 'I don't mind whatever it is.'

So he pays her and she takes him to the suite, ushers him inside and closes the door. But he finds that the room is vacant. There is nobody there to wait upon him. Then he gradually ventures further. There is a side-room and in it a figure is praying. A prayer carpet is spread and the figure is kneeling, absorbed in prayer. What beauty she has! He has never seen such beauty! Oh, how could she be here? How could she allow men to live with her? He sits and gazes upon her beauty and loses himself. Yet his passion is aroused and he waits for her to be finished with the prayer.

She prays and prays; an hour passes by. Gradually there is an ebb in his passion. He is attracted by her beauty, and at the same time by

her purity. After another hour or so she finishes her prayers and looks at him; and at the very sight of her it is as if lightning has struck him! She apologises to him and says, 'I am so sorry. Pardon me for keeping you waiting so long! I was absorbed in prayers. You must be hungry.' She claps and her maidens come. She orders them 'Spread the feast for him, he is our guest tonight.' She asks him, 'Would you like to drink something? What type of liquor do you like?' 'Well, I am from Iran...' And he thinks, 'That's good, she is not too absorbed in prayers; she offers me food and drinks also. And it is true what people say - she *is* truly beautiful!'

So then he takes an interest in conversing and opens out his heart. He tells her his whole story and she listens; and as he talks, he just gazes - he feeds upon her beauty. She joins in the conversation, enquires about his well-being, about his tours and his work. 'You must have visited many places and seen many fine sights. Did you visit Basra properly?' He says, 'Yes, I have almost finished my visit to Basra, and everywhere I have heard of your beauty. So I wanted to be here with you.' She tells him, 'You are most welcome. But after all, what is this beauty of mine? It is a passing show! Very soon I will get old and will become wrinkled. Age will tell upon you, and age will tell upon me.'

And she takes up the thread from there. The talk of God and Truth and beauty starts, and goes on into the early hours of the morning and she leads him to the point where he becomes a real devotee.

(It is as Meher Baba has said: The best of all forces which can overcome all difficulties on the way, is the love that knows how to give without need to bargain for a return. There is nothing that love cannot achieve, and there is nothing that love cannot sacrifice. There is nothing beyond God, and there is nothing without God, and yet God can always be captured by love. All other essential qualities will come to the aspirant if he follows faithfully the whisperings of the unerring voice of love that speaks from his own heart, shedding light on the path.)

The young man says to Rabia, 'What a discourse you have given me tonight! I now begin to realise what real beauty means, how one

should behave in life, how one should seek the eternal beauty that never perishes.' She replies, 'Yes, that is so. That's how it is.'

Now he feels it is time to go. He says, 'I am your slave. Tell me anything, anything in this world that I can do for you.' She answers: 'I have one little request.' He says: 'Anything. Ask for my wealth, ask for me, ask for anything you want.' She continues: 'There is just one little thing, if you could do it.' 'What is it?' 'Never tell anyone what you have heard here. Allow the people to come to me. This beauty is but a trap set for them. So that it gives them strength and the right understanding and the right perspective in life, God has placed me in this little hole here so that I can do His work and tell people about true beauty, true love. Promise me that you will never tell others of what you have experienced here tonight.'

'Oh!' he exclaims. 'So this is the secret of this city! The whole place clamours about your beauty. Yet nobody tells me about his experience.' She explains, 'I extract the same promise from them. My beauty is my strength to fight in the cause of my Lord.'

So Baba says: 'Every Baba lover who is beautiful can use her beauty as a great strength to lead many more hearts to Me. But you must be as stable as Rabia!'

When a woman is determined to be strong, nothing can harm her - nothing, nothing! Women can be very strong. Warriors have fallen before them. So a woman, even though she is not married, can yet be of great comfort to men and help them towards their emancipation. If fate determines that she live by herself, yet she can be of great comfort to so many children, to so many men, young men and old men - provided she is strong, and exercises her inherent strength.

And Baba said: 'It took a long time after that for Rabia to become Babajan, the Perfect Master who awakened Me to My own Divinity!'

Meher Baba:

What is Love: To give and never ask.

What leads to this Love? Grace.

What leads to this Grace? Grace is not cheaply bought. It is gained by being always ready to serve, and reluctant to be served.

Over The Years With Meher Baba

There are a number of ways to achieve this Grace:

Wishing well for others at the cost of one's self.

Never backbiting.

Tolerance supreme.

Trying not to worry (Trying not to worry is almost impossible, so try.)

Thinking more of the good points in others and less of their bad points.

What else leads to Grace? Doing all the above.

When Christ said 'Love your neighbour,' He did not mean 'Fall in love' with your neighbour.

If you do *one* of these things perfectly the rest must follow, then Grace descends.

When you love you give - and when you 'fall in love' you want. Love Me in any way you like, but love Me. All ways are the same to Me - love Me. I am the source of purity - so I consume all weaknesses in My fire of Love. Give your sins, weaknesses, virtues - all - to Me; but give. Even if one of you 'fell in love' with Me, I would purify, but when you fall in love with anybody else, you cannot call it Love.

Love is pure as God. It gives and never asks; that requires Grace. Yogis in the Himalayas with their long eyebrows and long beards, sitting in meditation, in Samadhi, they do not have this Love.

It is so precious....

The mother dies for her child - a supreme sacrifice, yet it is not Love.

Heroes die for their country, but that is not Love.

Love. You know when you have Love. You cannot understand it theoretically - you have to experience it.

Majnun loved Laila. He saw Laila in everything and everywhere. He never thought of eating, drinking, sleeping without thinking of her, and all the time wanted her happiness. He would gladly have seen her married to another if he had known that that would make her happy; or he would have died for her husband if he had thought she would be happy in that. At last it led him to Me. No thought of self, but of the

beloved, every second and continually. You would not be able, if you tried, to do that. It requires Grace. But trying leads to Grace.

What is God? Love. Infinite Love is God.

Dr Ghani Munsiff:

Once the Perfect Master Hazrat Nizamuddin Auroliya was attending a musical concert and the singers were giving a feast of songs on Divine Love. At the height of the performance the Master developed an ecstatic mood, and waving his handkerchief aloft he cried, 'Alas, I have not equalled the washerwoman's son in this respect.'

The disciples and attendants around the Master, out of respect for him, did not ask him about his exclamation. But a few days later the great disciple Amir Khussoo had an opportunity to tackle him on the matter. The Master related this story in reply:

A washerwoman's son, doing laundry work for the royal household, fell deeply in love with the princess without having seen her physically. The youth would pass his days in dreaming of her celestial beauty, and his sole occupation became one of washing and ironing her clothes in all manner of artistic and loving care .

For some time the youth continued to hold this love for the princess in secret, and the world had no inkling of the agonies of separation he was suffering in his innermost heart. But his health in consequence began to deteriorate, and eventually his mother came to know the real cause of it. She was greatly frightened; this love of a menial for a royal princess could be a matter of life and death. It could not in any form be confessed, nor could it continue to be suppressed if the youth's health was to improve. The washerwoman therefore finally decided upon a trick which she hoped would succeed in wearing out her son's love for the princess.

One day after returning from the palace wailing and crying and with beating of the head symbolic of great distress, she told her son the sorrowful news that the princess had died. The young man paused for a moment in silent grief, and then with a painful cry dropped down dead. Imagine the thoughts and feelings of the poor mother! She never dreamt that her action, meant for the best, would produce such a result.

Over The Years With Meher Baba

But she could not share the secret of her son's death with anyone, and so continued to suffer greatly and alone.

One day on her usual visit with laundry to the royal household, the princess very casually remarked to her, 'Oh, woman, of late I find your washing not very neat and tidy, and it does not smell of love as usual.' At this the washerwoman could not control her hidden grief any longer; she wept and related to her the whole story. The princess heard the sorrowful tale very gravely, and requested the woman to show her the place where her silent lover lay buried. So one night the princess stealthily slipped out of the palace accompanied by the washerwoman. When she beheld the grave, the young man's love kindled her own latent flame and miraculously the grave opened and the princess interred herself alive.

The king was shocked at the news, and ordered that the grave be opened to be sure of the real facts. It was so. The king and his courtiers saw the two lovers fused, as it were, into one body with only the heads entirely separate. The king ordered the grave to be closed again and said, 'Thus has Divine Love joined them, and we should not disturb them in any way.'

After recounting this tale, the Master remarked, 'It is this type and quality of love which brings about the state of Divine Union.'

Meher Baba:

Every human relationship is based on love in one form or another, and endures or dissolves as that love is eternal or temporal in character. Marriage, for example, is happy or unhappy, exalting or degrading, lasting or fleeting, according to the love which inspires and sustains it. Marriages based on sex attraction alone cannot endure; they lead inevitably to divorce or worse. On the other hand, marriages which are based on a mutual desire to serve and inspire, grow continually in richness and beauty, and are a benediction to all who know of them.

Eruch Jessawala:

Man and woman, husband and wife, each is an individual, but as husband and wife they are, above other things, co-sharers. And to be

co-sharers in the sacred bond of marriage, as Baba has pointed out, the individuality of each must be there. The bond of marriage, the bond of partnership for life, is a sublime one where each is secure and safe, fighting together the battle of life behind a great fort.

Meher Baba:

The spiritual value of married life is directly related to the nature of the factors which determine its daily course. If it is based upon shallow considerations, it can deteriorate into a partnership in selfishness aimed against the rest of the world. If it is inspired by an ideal, it can rise to a fellowship which becomes a medium for the two souls to offer their united love and service to the whole family of humanity.

Eruch Jessawala:

Man and woman are equal in the eyes of the God-Man, and from the point of view of reincarnation, a man of today may assume the form of a woman in the next incarnation and vice versa. However, the role of a woman-form is unique, for it alone can deliver to the world the most immaculate man-form in the God-Man.

The role of the wife is to see that the husband and the children are properly looked after, physically and mentally, and the husband's thoughts and emotions soothed and comforted when needed. When the wife does this, the husband can devote his time to earning for the household, and also see to the spiritual side of the family - according to tradition, he has that responsibility. And the wife's responsibility is to create such an atmosphere that enables the husband, after the daily material activity, to devote time towards his spiritual emancipation. And through that he also gains it for the close ones of his family.

So the role of the wife is to create harmony, to keep peace in the house and give comfort to the thoughts and feelings of her husband. She is a comforter, and he is a provider.

The role of a wife brings to mind another good story. A police officer and his family became very close followers of Baba. They would bring offerings to Him, prepare food for Him; their children would play around Him and the baby would sit on His lap.

Over The Years With Meher Baba

But then it so happened that Baba expressed His wish to be in seclusion for a long duration for His universal work, and informed all that He would not see anybody, not even His close ones, for years on end. So the wife decided to remain in communion with Baba in her own way. She created a room for Him, and in imagination housed Him there. She did everything to make Him comfortable, happy and contented, as though Baba was actually there. She would sing bhajans to Him and serve food to Him. And the husband and children were very happy that she was so devoted and so drawn to Baba.

But as time passed, that very happiness in the wife's way of life came in the way of the whole family's happy life and devotion to Baba. The husband would wait for his wife to come out of Baba's room and attend to his needs before going to the office; but the meal was first served to Baba, and she would take time in feeding Him before bringing the dishes back to the dining table. She would become absorbed and forgetful of time. And the children too were neglected. They had to attend school, but would go without having food. The state of their clothing and health deteriorated, as also did the husband's health and general well-being. Where it was formerly so good and happy an atmosphere in the house, now the family were not looked after. Naturally they were happy because of her devotion to Baba, and would join her after their office and school hours, but she did not properly attend to them. Her health also was affected because of her absorption in her duties to Baba.

After some years, the Lord deemed it fit to call His close ones to Him again, so of course the police officer and his family came. While all were gathered around Him, Baba's attention was drawn to the family and He was very concerned about them. The All-knowing, seemingly ignorant of what was happening, asked them, 'What is the matter with you people? Is there any tragedy in the house? Why is your health affected like this? Are you sick? Have you lost your job? What has happened to you?'

Nobody cared to say anything because the Lord Himself was indeed the cause of their plight. But finally, after Baba had asked all of them, the husband said, 'Baba, you are the matter. You are the cause of this

misery with us.' 'I am the cause of the misery? Why should I be that?' asked Baba in surprise. So the husband recounted what had happened. Then Baba said: 'Yes, that shouldn't be the case.' And turning to the wife, Baba continued: 'You have done your duty to Me. You have clothed Me in this form and I am well pleased with you. But at the same time, I am neglected in the form of your husband, your daughters, and your sons. You neglect Me there. You take Me to be God. That is right. I am. Therefore I am everything, and I am in this form and in all forms. You have pleased Me in this form, but displeased Me in these other forms. So please Me in their forms too.'

The duty of the wife is to be of help and service to her husband and her children, and in such a way that she is serving and looking after her Lord. The duty of the husband is likewise. He discharges his duty by seeing that Baba's forms are well-provided for, well-clothed, well-fed, and well-protected.

Meher Baba:

The psyche of the soul retains the gathered experience of male and female incarnations. Since the soul identifies itself with the body, the psychological tendencies which are characteristic of the opposite sex are ordinarily suppressed into the unconscious part of the psyche, because they do not harmonise with the sex of the body and find the medium of expression obstructive. When the soul takes a female body, the male tendencies are, so to speak, held in abeyance and only the female tendencies are released for expression. In the same way, when the soul takes a male body, the female tendencies are held in abeyance and the male tendencies are released for expression.

Eruch Jessawala:

Should the man be head of the household? Yes, he should be. But who is a man? Are we men because we have a moustache and short hair and different bodily organs? Yes, all these bodily features make a difference - but are we really men? There are men in the garb of women and women in the garb of men. So a man must be head of the

Over The Years With Meher Baba

household. Whether the form be male or female, the one who is the man of the household should be the head of the household.

But if there are two men in the one household, who should be the head? According to what we have gathered from Baba, the responsibility should be given to one only. There may be subdivisions of responsibilities, but then there must be one over all. So it was with Baba and His, as it were, household. He gave responsibility to various disciples; for example a woman as a housekeeper for the women, and a man in the same position for the men, and so on. And Baba would not interfere in these duties that had been distributed; but He would keep Himself informed of what was being done. So, it is advisable to have an overall head, but he should not interfere in the details of the work. He should be keenly aware about the reports that he receives, and should give help if necessary, stop this, or encourage that.

Meher Baba:

All growth is gradual, and it is only through slow and gradual stages that man truly begins to 'grow up' and discover his true Self, and to relinquish the childish playthings of hate, greed and anger through selfless service and love.

Meher Baba:

Love means suffering and pain for oneself, and happiness for others. To the giver, it is suffering without malice or hatred. To the receiver, it is a blessing without obligation.

I am always with you. You may feel that I am now going away, but you should never find that I have gone away. It is for you to hold on to Me now and forever. On My part, I and My love will never leave you - here or hereafter.



Books Dictated by Avatar Meher Baba

God Speaks
Discourses
Life At Its Best
Beams from Meher Baba on the Spiritual Panorama
The Everything and The Nothing

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For these books, information, and other material written
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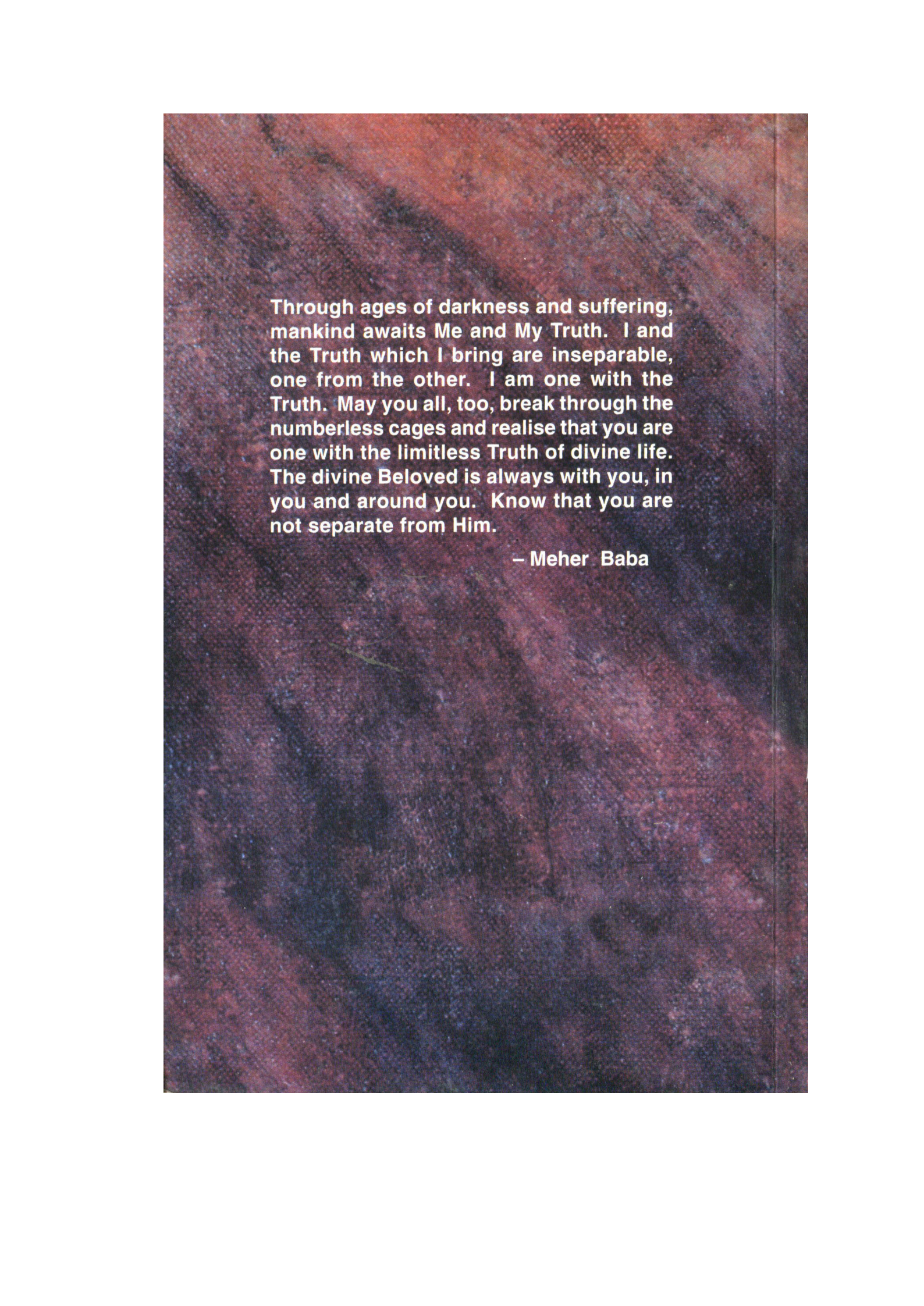
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Through ages of darkness and suffering,
mankind awaits Me and My Truth. I and
the Truth which I bring are inseparable,
one from the other. I am one with the
Truth. May you all, too, break through the
numberless cages and realise that you are
one with the limitless Truth of divine life.
The divine Beloved is always with you, in
you and around you. Know that you are
not separate from Him.

– Meher Baba

Register of Editorial Alterations

Page 120, para 1, line 3, apologies changed to apologises