

Tales of Meher Baba's Love

By Bal Natu

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By Bal Natu

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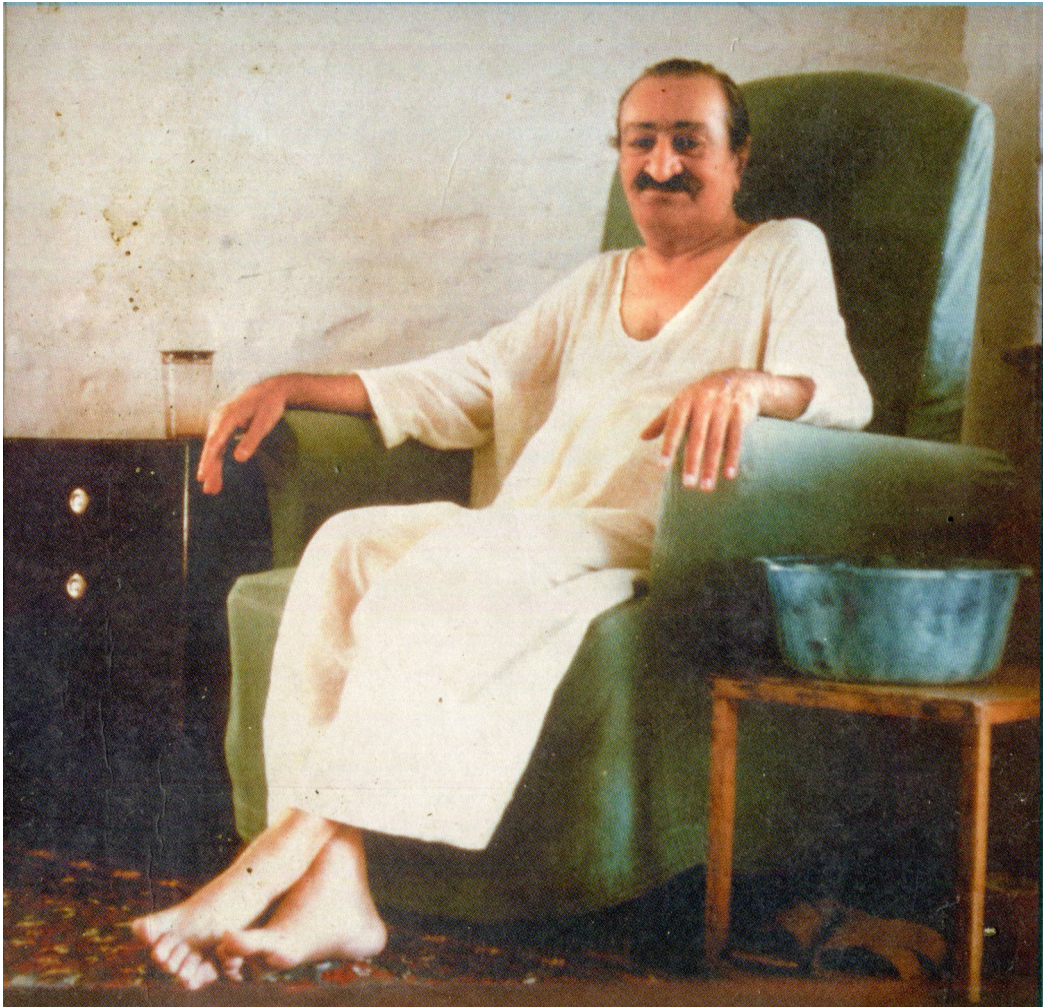
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TALES of MEHER BABA'S LOVE



Avatar Meher Baba

Compiled by Bal Natsu

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Dear

I present this book to you in the glorious memory of the Meher Millennium and in the loving remembrance of The Eternal Beloved, Avatar Meher Baba.

If you feel like sharing these "Tales" with your friends, it may be your participation in Meher Baba's Love-Game. Thanks!

In the silence of His love,

Bal Natsu

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Cover photograph of Meher Baba in Meherazad Mandali Hall in the 1960's by Marvin Campen. ·

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Other books by Bal Natu:

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Vol. 1 (1943-1948)

Vol. 2 (January 1949-January 1952)

Vol. 3 (February 1952-February 1953)

Vol. 4 (February-December 1953)

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Vol. 6 (March 1954-April 1955)

The Samadhi: Star of Infinity, The Tomb-Shrine of Avatar Meher Baba

Conversations with The Awakener

More Conversations with The Awakener

Intimate Conversations with The Awakener.

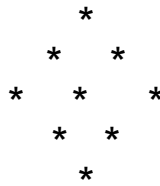
Books compiled by Bal Natu:

Our Constant Companion

Showers of Grace

When He Takes Over

*Dedicated
to
The Glory
of
Meher Baba's
Love*



*The whole universe sprang into being
for the sake of Divine Love;
out of it was it created,
because of it does it endure,
through it will it regain its Source.
Man's supreme goal
is to transmute the timeless love-urge
within him into the
God-essence of Divine Love.*

—Meher Baba

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Acknowledgments

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My most warm and heartfelt thanks to all the contributors, who have permitted me to use their tales to share Meher Baba's message of love. My thanks also to the following authors, editors and publishers from whose books and publications I have used excerpts: W.D. Kain, Prof. AK. Hazra, Dr. C.D. Deshmukh, Dr. G.S.N. Moorthy, John Grant, Ward Parks, Naosherwan Anzar of *Glow International*, the late Filis Frederick of *The Awakener*, Greg and Gay Dunn of *Meherana Messenger*, Alexandra Cons of *Meher Baba Center of Northern California Newsletter*, and also Sheriar Foundation.

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I am immensely thankful to many friends and especially Peter and Kathy Milne who have made it possible to present this edition of the book as a gift to our old and new friends in Meher Baba.

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My loving thanks to Marvin Campen for taking the beautiful

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cover photo of Meher Baba in Meherazad Mandali Hall in the 1960's.

Again, I offer my warmhearted thanks to the "Tales" team—to one and all who have directly or indirectly offered their help in sharing these "Tales." If I have unknowingly forgotten to thank anyone, I apologize.

With utmost appreciation for Meher Baba, the most loving One, this book was made possible. It is all done through His love, to share His love. May His presence prevail!

Bal Natu

Meherazad
March 21, 2001

Preface

I have only love to give, and all I want is love.

—Meher Baba

The subject of Meher Baba's love requires no preface. However, if someone were to ask me about this compilation, "Why *these* tales?" Figuratively I may reply, "I just thrust my hand into the bowl of my memory and came out with a fistful of jewels, each with its own beauty and luster." It was a "Meher Moment" in my life with Baba, like playing dice, it was game of chance. I was so taken by each jewel that it was difficult to decide which ones to include. There are numerous tales not included in this compilation, still shining in my memory which have a remarkable charm of their own.

Most of these tales were shared in the Mandali Hall at Meherazad, before Baba's sofa chair, where He so often met with His resident men mandali. Baba would sit in His chair and have His mail read out to Him and dictate responses through gestures; He would hear news from the English dailies; He would sometimes play cards with His mandali; and on rare occasions He would meet with His lovers and hear devotional songs. Beloved Baba, in His compassion, sometimes allowed me to be present in this intimate setting. In later years, Baba offered me the privilege of staying at Meherazad, where I have met so many of His lovers and heard their tales of Meher Baba's love. Tales that reveal how He, the divine magnet, drew them to Him in a most natural way through chance. meetings and coincidences that have changed their lives. All these incidents have their origin in the periodic descent of God as man, who proclaims Himself as the Avatar of the Age.

I am touched by the way the contributors freely and wholeheartedly offered these glimpses of their relationship with the Intimate One, residing in their hearts. Every tale radiates Meher Baba's

PREFACE

matchless responses to the lovers' questioning hearts, expressing His unconditional love.

I have interwoven these tales alternating between East and West for the interest of all readers. May reading them create a craving in you to hear more tales of the most Loving One.

Baba was once asked, "What is the most difficult thing in spiritual life?" Baba smiled and answered, "To be perfectly human!" On another occasion, with a sparkle in His eyes, Meher Baba conveyed, "The humor of the divine Love-Game is that the One who is sought is Himself the seeker." What Baba meant by these simple yet profound statements, I leave to the readers to find out, but I feel that such quotes open up new horizons in one's relationship with God.

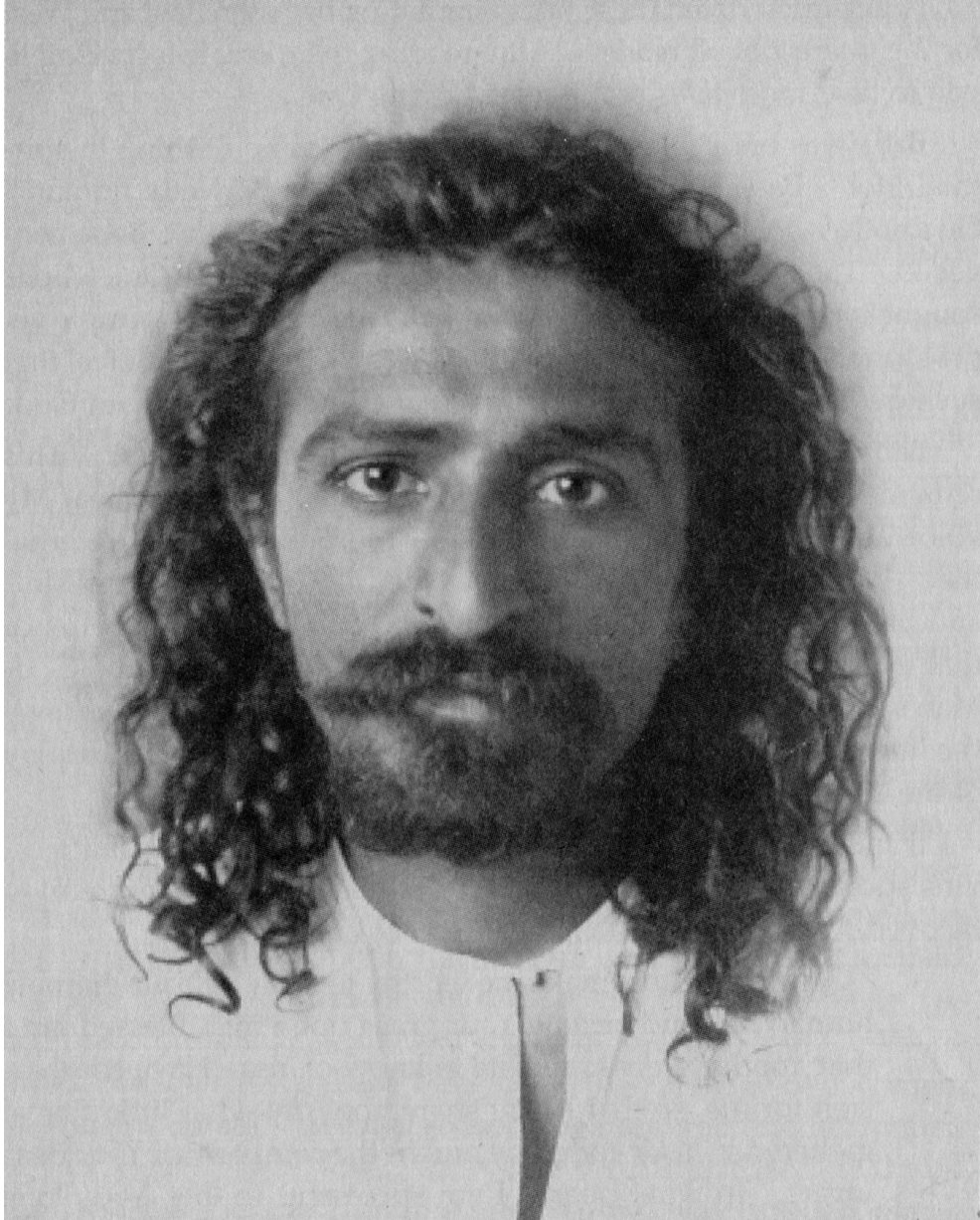
Baba has also stated, "I come for all, but I am for the few." This reminds me of Jesus Christ's words in the Bible, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give them eternal life." Whenever He comes, He gives the call, "Come all unto Me," and blessed are those who hearken to it; and begin to experience that everything that happens is the perfect reflection of the God-Man's love for them. This realization is the thread that will unravel the illusion of the lives of His lovers to reveal the luminous display of the Avatar's omnipresence.

If this compilation reveals to any a glimpse of the Avatar's divine sport, full of love and humor. I shall be immensely grateful to Beloved Avatar Meher Baba, the Ocean of Love.

Oh Meher Baba, make me worthy to write of Your divinely human life, and bestow Your grace upon me! Blessed am I that You have given me life to know of You. Have compassion for me, so that I may share honestly what little I have gathered in Your company and in the company of Your dear lovers. To what degree I am successful in this, You alone know.

Bal Natu

Meherazad
December 25, 2000



The Ancient One
Meher Baba

Avatar Meher Baba

The Awakener of Hearts

Age after age, when the wick of Righteousness burns low, the Avatar comes yet once again to rekindle the torch of Love and Truth. Age after age, amidst the clamor of disruptions, wars, fear and chaos, rings the Avatar's call:

COME ALL UNTO ME ...

The time is come. I repeat the Call, and bid all come unto Me.

—Meher Baba

In this age, Infinite God descended in human form as the Avatar on February 25, 1894. The son of Zoroastrian parents, Merwan Sheriar Irani, later known as Meher Baba, grew up in Poona (Pune), India. He led a happy childhood, excelling in games, especially cricket. He was a leader of the team and loved by his friends.

One day in 1913, while on his way to Deccan College in Poona, Merwan was beckoned by a very old woman sitting under a neem tree. This was Hazrat Babajan, one of the five God-realized Perfect Masters (*Sadgurus*) of the time. She embraced Merwan, and the effect of this contact lead him to lose all worldly interest. He took to sitting with her regularly for hours, especially at night.

Then one January evening in 1914, Babajan kissed Merwan on his forehead, between his eyebrows, and made him realize in a flash the infinite bliss of Self-realization (God-realization). Merwan lost consciousness of everyone and everything, except the infinite bliss of his own Eternal Existence.

Later, Merwan also contacted the Perfect Masters, Narayan Maharaj and Tajuddin Baba. In December, 1915, Merwan felt impelled to visit Sai Baba of Shirdi, the *Qutub-e-Irshad* (Head of the spiritual hierarchy), who hailed him as Parvardigar—the Preserver and Protector of all—when Merwan placed his forehead on Sai Baba's

TALES OF MEHER BABA'S LOVE

feet. He then felt drawn to visit Khandoba temple nearby, where *Sadguru* Upasni Maharaj, the fifth of the Perfect Masters, was sitting on the steps. As soon as he saw Merwan, Maharaj hurled a stone at his forehead, hitting the exact spot where Babajan had kissed him and also the place where Merwan had touched Sai Baba's feet. This blow drew blood, leaving a mark of injury on his forehead, which later he referred to as the "Avataric mark." This was the beginning of Maharaj's work with Merwan. Over the next several years Merwan continued to visit Maharaj at Sakori, a few miles from Shirdi. Maharaj helped Merwan regain complete consciousness of Creation while retaining His God-consciousness. In December 1921, Merwan became fully established in His role and status as the Avatar of the Age. Baba once conveyed that through His meetings with the Perfect Masters, "Sai Baba made Me assert what I am. Maharaj made Me know what I am. Babajan made Me feel what I am. What I am, I am."

When He returned to Poona from Sakori in January, 1922, the power of Merwan's personality and His overwhelming divine presence attracted a following. Later, out of love and respect these followers began to call Him Meher Baba, meaning Compassionate Father. After brief stays with His close disciples in Bombay and Poona, on May 4, 1923, Baba first visited the property now known as Meherabad, near Ahmednagar. Here, Baba began a life of intense activity, establishing for various periods, schools, hospitals, *dharmashalas* (free lodging) and ashrams. While engaged in these activities, Baba remained inwardly active in His Universal work, which He said was to give a spiritual push to all creation.

As part of His Avataric work, on July 10, 1925, Meher Baba began observing silence. A few days earlier one of His disciples asked Him, "But if You keep silent, how will You teach us?" to which Baba answered, "I have come not to teach but to awaken."

There were many who were puzzled by Baba's silence and repeatedly pressed Him to break it and speak. Once Baba commented, "I am never silent, I speak eternally. The voice that is heard deep within the soul is My voice... the voice of inspiration, of intuition, of guidance. Through those who are receptive to this voice, I speak." At another time Baba remarked, "Things that are real are given and received in silence." And, "If My silence cannot be heard, of what

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avail words!"

In spite of His silence, Meher Baba continued to serve in His own matchless ways the needs of humanity on all levels of life, material and spiritual. Some were bewildered by Baba's method of disbanding the institutions He established when they were flourishing. Baba once explained that, worthy as such endeavors might be, they were only scaffolding for His inner spiritual work, which is the Avatar's perennial mission of awakening people's hearts to the reality of God's love.

Meher Baba traveled extensively throughout India and present-day Pakistan and gave His personal touch to the hundreds of thousands who flocked to Him during public darshan programs. He paid private visits to the homes of many of His close ones. In the 1940s, Baba also went to considerable lengths to contact His "beloved children," the *masts* (those whose minds have become overpowered by their love for God and who are oblivious to their outward surroundings and appearance, live in unclean places, and appear as mad to the world). About *masts* Baba conveyed, "They live in God, with God and for God. The *masts* knowingly or unknowingly work for Me. I help them and they are helpful to Me. They are My beloved children." Under Baba's guidance, William Donkin wrote *The Wayfarers*, containing explanations of the different states of consciousness and traits of *masts*, and Baba's travels to contact them. This major focus for a certain period within Baba's ministry seems to have been unique to this Avataric Advent.

Meher Baba also made thirteen visits to the West, from 1931 through 1958. In fact, He twice completely circled the globe in His travels. In the 1950's, He met with two serious automobile accidents: one in May, 1952, in America near Prague, Oklahoma, and the other at Udatara, near Satara, India in December, 1956. He suffered excruciating physical pain and it was difficult for Him to walk after the second accident. He stated that through His intense suffering and helplessness, He participated in humanity's acute suffering and pain. Yet in such a helpless condition, He journeyed around the globe and His followers experienced divine bliss and love radiating from Him. Isn't this indicative of His matchless sense of humor and compassion? The Avatar's retaining His infinity while suffering the limitations of a finite form, is perhaps His greatest game which He

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plays at His own cost. Francis Brabazon, Meher Baba's intimate disciple and poet from Australia, in the conclusion of one of his books described:

How glorious you are as Man;
how helpless as God:
So helpless that you could not hide your Godhood
Even behind the walls of your pain.
How very Man you are.
How absolutely God.

Meher Baba established two Centers in the West. One of His centers is in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, U.S.A. He stayed at the Meher Spiritual Center for the first time in 1952, and called it His "home" in the West. During His visit to Australia in 1958, He stayed at a property on Kiel Mountain in Queensland, which He named "Avatar's Abode." These two centers continue to welcome pilgrims from around the world who come to remember Him and are awakened more and more in their love for God.

Although Meher Baba observed silence, He communicated by means of an alphabet board (which He used from July 10, 1927 to October 7, 1954) and through lively hand gestures. Through these two mediums, He dictated several unique books and many meaningful discourses and messages concerning one's journey to God, God's Advent as Man and His eternal relationship with humanity. The main books authored by Baba are the *Discourses* and *God Speaks*. The *Discourses*, in several volumes, include enlightening articles on meditation, reincarnation and karma, occultism, *maya*, the formation and removal of the ego, *sanskaras*, and many other subjects. In *God Speaks*, Baba explains the Divine Theme of each soul's journey to God-realization. However, Baba always put more emphasis on loving God than understanding metaphysics. As He explained once to a university professor, philosophy is "a simple thing made difficult."

Meher Baba's followers had different religious backgrounds and Baba did not ask them to leave their respective religions. "All religions are revelations of God," He explained, but He asked them to follow the innermost core of their religions. About Himself, Baba stated,

THE AWAKENER OF HEARTS

I belong to no religion. Every religion belongs to Me. My personal religion is My being the Ancient, Infinite One and the religion I impart to all is love for God, which is the Truth of all religions. If you think I am this form, you have yet to see Me as I really am.

Avatar Meher Baba's biography, in one sense, may be divided into three main phases: the "Old Life" of perfect divinity that placed Him on the altar of absolute Godhood and divine Perfection. It seemingly concluded on October 15, 1949. The next day ushered in Meher Baba's "New Life" of true humility, when the Avatar played the role to perfection of being an "ordinary man" amongst men. He traveled all over India with only a few companions, living the life of total reliance on God. This phase ended in February, 1952, and gave way to the "Life" phase.

The "Life" phase represented the perfect blending of Godhood and manhood. In Baba's words, "This union of the old and new life states has given birth to LIFE: life that is eternally old and new." But in every phase, the central message of Baba's life can be summed up in the words He greeted one of His lovers with when she came to see Him, "Inscribe these words upon your hearts: Nothing is real but God; nothing matters but love for God."

On February 10, 1954, during His visit to a small village in the district of Hamirpur in Uttar Pradesh, Meher Baba in a most significant moment spelled on His alphabet board, "Avatar Meher Baba ki" and raised His right hand as the crowd around Him enthusiastically joined in the "Jai!" (meaning "victory" to Avatar Meher Baba). From that time forward, Baba began to unequivocally assert His status in public as the Avatar of the Age, which He had revealed privately to His early disciples.

Once Avatar Meher Baba was asked, "What is the most difficult thing in spiritual life?" With a disarming smile, He responded, "To be perfectly human." Characteristically, this simple and spontaneous reply is very profound. Perhaps it holds the key to understanding the life of the Avatar Himself. For the Avatar—the God-Man, the Christ—while completely God, is also perfectly human. Meher Baba's perfectly human side, which included a great sense of humor and intimate interest in the everyday lives of His followers, often

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puzzles those who have preconceived ideas of spirituality and spiritual perfection.

The "essence" of Meher Baba's life was His inner work of awakening humanity, in silence, to God's love through spiritual upheaval, which leads to the search for God within. His activities included, not only His service to the poor, the sick, and the afflicted, but also His participation in Eastern and Western music and games of all types, His enjoyment of jokes, skits, outings, and movies, all the while remaining inwardly active in His universal work on "all levels of consciousness."

The first half of the 1960's was a period of golden opportunity, especially for His Indian lovers who were able to participate in Baba's *sahavas* in Guru Prasad, Poona. The East West Gathering of 1962 was one of the most memorable events in the lives of those who attended from far and wide. In 1965, a larger gathering of His Indian lovers was, for many, the last public opportunity to meet and greet Baba in Guru Prasad.

During Baba's summer stays in Guru Prasad from 1966 onwards, He was in strict seclusion and rarely saw anyone other than a few of His close disciples. In 1968, Baba's universal work had taken such a toll on His health that He even restricted His activities at Meherazad, His residence since 1944. In January, 1969, when seriously ill physically, Baba would often gesture to those attending Him, "Remember, I am God. I know what I am doing."

Meher Baba's silence remained unbroken until He breathed His last in His room at Meherazad on January 31, 1969 at 12:15 pm. As wished by Him, His body (which housed Reality) was taken to Meherabad Hill, near Ahmednagar, Maharashtra, India and placed in a crypt inside a small stone structure, designed under His instructions. Over the course of seven days, people flocked to the site for a last glimpse of their Beloved, and finally at noon on February 7, 1969 His body was covered. This small structure is now known as the *Samadhi* * or Tomb-Shrine of Avatar Meher Baba.

Throughout the year people come to visit Meherabad Hill and

* See photo of the Interior of the Samadhi at the close of the book.

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feel Meher Baba's dynamic presence, which is not bound by time. It has become a focal point for those who want to love and follow Him. It is especially possible here to meet the Avatar on a personal level and establish or reconfirm an intimate relationship with Him, which will help clarify the guidance He eternally gives as the Ancient One. It is also possible to experience this communion in your own heart, through wholehearted remembrance of Him, wherever you may be in the world, for as Meher Baba has explained: "Distance is no barrier to Me."

Meher Baba, as the Avatar, descends to the level of each individual and has a unique relationship with everyone. To seekers He is the Goal; to a few He is the Divine Mother; for some the Father; while to many He is the Friend, the Companion; and to His lovers He is the Eternal Beloved. But invariably, He uses the language of the individual's heart to call each one to Him.

As the One who is eternally sought, Avatar Meher Baba has assured all, "Don't lose heart for I am in your heart. Don't worry, call on Me and I will help you." Those who accept this invitation soon find themselves drenched in His unconditional love. For as Baba declares, "I am the Divine Beloved who loves you more than you can ever love yourself."

Avatar Meher Baba has come and has given His clarion call "Come all unto Me." He also stated:

I bring the greatest treasure it is possible for man to receive—a treasure that includes all other treasures, that will endure forever, that increases when shared with others. Be ready to receive it.

Blessed are the hearts who hearken to His call. In them, He awakens love and helps them to lead a life with clarity of thought, honesty of action, and purity of heart. Anyone leading this life, whether a follower of Meher Baba or not, is a lover of God, and Meher Baba as the Avatar of this Age is the internal guiding force in their lives because His love and compassion are unconditional.

All Glory to the Ancient One, Avatar Meher Baba!

Bal Natu

Meherazad
February 25, 2001

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

—Meher Baba

A Lover's Journey to His Beloved's Feet

Robert Dreyfuss

I first heard about Meher Baba in the early winter of either 1964 or 1965. At the time I was a college student in Boston, very interested in pursuing a quest for truth. I was trying to find out what had meaning, what was real. That took different venues, such as yoga, readings in Buddhism, the teachings of Gurdjieff and Ramana Maharshi, and having my heart touched by Shri Ramakrishna most of all. It was also a time of experimentation. Baba had not yet made any public statements about the use of herbs, potions, and elixirs, and there was a lot of excitement at that time over the use of LSD for transcendent experience—supposedly. It was also a time of great stress politically. The Vietnam War was in full blast, the Cuban missile crisis had occurred, and Kennedy had been assassinated. It was a very crazy time. I think Baba was really stirring the pot heavily then.

With all this going on, there was a show at that time at a university just outside Boston called, "We are All One." It was a multi-media presentation designed to overload your circuits. The group was called USCO, Us Company, a collection of anonymous artists from New York, who were touring the country with this show.

They utilized a gigantic screen with a dozen carousels flashing images, with music and much noise. Very loud: trucks in first gear, sitar music, Bach, rock and roll, and every possible sound. Lights were blinking on the stage—NO HERE NOW, NOW HERE OR NOWHERE—and strobe lights, of course. While this was going on, hanging in the center of the curtain on stage, was a day glow poster of Meher Baba taken in 1956 in Washington D.C. It was a

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three-quarter view of His face, wearing a flower garland, and His lovely smile. With the strobe light, His smile was continually blinking on and off. It was all quite amazing. I fell asleep for a couple of minutes in the middle of it; my circuits got overloaded. At the end of the program they were selling posters, day glow posters of Buddha and various Hindu deities, and Meher Baba. I asked who was the face on the stage? They said, "It is a great holy man in India named Meher Baba." And I said something like, "Far out. He looks like a cross between Gurdjieff and Tennessee Ernie Ford," a description which Baba later enjoyed.

At that time Rick Chapman, Allan Cohen, and I had become good friends. We were the only people we knew who were interested in spirituality. One day Rick and I went to visit Allan at his office where he was a graduate student. On the door to his office he had a little card with a quote from Meher Baba. It said:

To penetrate into the essence of all being and significance and to release the fragrance of that. inner attainment for the guidance and benefit of others, by expressing in the world of forms, Truth, Love, Purity, and Beauty, is the sole game that has any intrinsic and absolute worth. All other incidents, happenings and attainments can, in themselves, have no lasting importance.

I stood there, riveted, and read it again and again, because this one short paragraph conveyed eloquently and articulately what life is all about. It exactly summed up the whole purpose of our journey here. I went into Allan's office and he had a photo of Baba over his desk. It was the Universal Message brochure that had been printed for the World's Fair the year before, with the photo of Baba in a *sadra* looking directly into the eyes of those who are looking at Him. I said, "Him again; who is He?" Allan then gave me a quick biographical sketch and I asked if there were any books on Meher Baba. He said, "Yes," and took out a copy of *The God-Man*. I looked through it and saw photos of Baba from when He was a young man until the East West Gathering in 1962, and He always seemed to be smiling. When I heard Allan mention that He was silent, I was very, very struck by it. I thought of the line from Lao Tzu, "He who speaks does not know. He who knows does not speak." I then

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went to the library and checked out *The God-Man* and started reading it.

Less than halfway through the book, it was completely clear to me that Baba could not be anyone else other than who He says He is. The thread of truth I had unmistakably recognized in the teachings of Ramakrishna and Ramana Maharshi was embodied in Meher Baba, and if He declared that He is the Avatar, then that is exactly who He is. He couldn't be anyone else! From that moment, all my energy was directed toward learning more about Him.

It was around that time, in the spring of 1965, that Rick had heard that a film of Meher Baba was going to be shown in New York and asked if I wanted to go and see it. I said, "Of course." So Rick and I hitchhiked to New York from Boston, about 200 miles, to see our first Baba movie. It was at the home of Harry Kenmore, a chiropractor who was blind. We learned then that there was going to be a *sahavas* for Westerners with Baba in India in May of 1965, and another for Easterners at Christmas. Later Baba switched them, so the Easterners were coming in May and the Westerners in December, 1965. I heard that jets were going to be chartered for the ten-day trip; it cost about \$600 for the round trip from New York. I was in love with my idea of India at that time: Indian music, philosophy, and art. So the thought of going to India for only ten days seemed absurd—to spend all that money and just come for ten days!

I decided I was going to go overland, so I could then see all the countries in between and still have enough money to stay in India for a few months. I left the United States in September, 1965, and flew on a one-way ticket to London. Then I put my thumb out and spent the next two and a half months hitchhiking to India. En route there were many challenges and not a few mishaps. As I drew closer to India, the nature of the pilgrimage I was undergoing began to more clearly define itself. Certainly the disparity between my holy books on the one hand and the significant chunk of hashish that I had with me created an interior dissonance that struggled for clarity.

After two weeks in Kuwait, playing music in the streets, asking for money, and getting stoned, the ship that had been detained in Iran due to a cholera epidemic finally arrived. As I finally departed

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for what would be an eight-day voyage, deck class with a thousand Indians and Arabs, this dissonance grew stronger. I knew that when the ship docked I would be in India, en route to Baba's presence. That first night, as I lay on the deck looking up at a million, million stars, I realized how insignificant I was in the vastness of the universe, and that if the ship I was on were to sink, it would make no difference. Indeed, if the speck of dust we call Earth were to disappear, it would make no discernible difference in the vastness of everything. And because nothing mattered, then a higher ethos mandated itself, and that ethos was Love. Only Love, through the expression of service to others, truly mattered. With that, I stopped smoking, gave away my hashish, and got down to the reason I was traveling—to meet and be with Meher Baba.

I spent my first night in India sleeping on the floor of a Sikh temple, arose early the next morning, and left to hitchhike to Poona (now Pune). I flagged down a truck that was fully loaded, carrying furniture covered in tarps and ropes. They told me to climb on top. When I crawled up, I found one big overstuffed armchair, which I sat in all the way to Poona! What a wonderful introduction to India.

When I finally arrived in Poona, all I knew about the city was that Meher Baba had been born there and that He lived there as a young man. I wandered around until evening and then went to a restaurant to have dinner. A young Indian man in a western suit came over to me and started asking questions like, "What is the purpose of your visit?" I was reluctant to talk to him. He asked me where I was going, and I told him Ahmednager. He said, "Going to see a philosopher, is it?" I said, "No."

"Oh, perhaps Meher Baba then?"

Surprised, I said, "Yes." He then told me that there was a new Center in Poona that had been opened by Baba earlier that spring and he offered to take me there. So we went to the Poona Center and then he left. It was dusk and I noticed several men in the little office adjacent to the Center. I walked in and they asked if they could help me. I said, "Well yes, I have come for the *sahavas* program." It was then the middle of November. I knew the *sahavas* had been planned for December, and I thought I might be able to help with the preparations. I realized a lot of work went into putting

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on something that large. The man at the desk said, "What! You have come for the *sahavas*?" with an amazed look on his face. I said, "Yes, I have." He said, "Surely you must be joking. Baba has canceled the *sahavas*!" I said, "No, I am not joking."

It turned out there had been a circular sent out on September 4th, in which Baba had canceled the program. I had left the country on September 1st. No one knew where I was. I had not gotten any mail, so I had no way of knowing about the cancellation until that moment in Poona. My response to him was, "Surely you must be joking! I have come half-way around the world to hear you say that Baba has canceled the *sahavas*!" He said, "Yes, He is in strict seclusion and is not seeing anyone." I heaved a sigh and then said, "Well, I must try. I must see Him."

I was on fire with longing to see Baba, but the man told me, "It is impossible. Baba is not seeing anyone." I think they didn't know what to do with me, so they sent me over to Baba's brother, Jal, who was living at Baba House. Jal took me to Babajan's tomb and we discussed my dilemma for some time. In the morning he said, "Why don't you go to Ahmednagar and see Adi K. Irani."

The next morning I got up very early and went to Ahmednagar. I got lost on the way, but finally made it to Adi's office. Adi took one look at me, a disheveled young Westerner with a beard and knapsack, and said, "Why don't you clean up and we'll have some tea." Adi was always direct. The mandali weren't used to seeing this kind of Baba lover. As we sat there having tea, he began asking me about how I had come to be there. I began telling him my story, and while doing so I looked outside and noticed my backpack being tied on the back of a motor scooter. I asked Adi what was going on. He replied, "Well, since you have come so far and Baba won't see you, the mandali want to meet you." He had sent a note to Meherazad, and they replied that I should be sent out, as they wanted to meet someone who had come so far and in such a manner. The next thing I knew I was on the back of a motor scooter going to Meherazad.

As we came down what I refer to as Lover's Lane, the approach road, there was no clinic or other buildings or side road, as currently exists. The only entrance was through the green gates. The thought

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that went through my mind was that if Baba wanted to see me it would be wonderful, and if not, it would be His will. I would stay in India and wait until the door opened. Also an image from Zen Buddhism came to mind as we approached the gates—that these are what are referred to as the "gateless gates," through which you pass and leave yourself behind.

I was brought over to a little bench in the shade on the men's side. The bench is still there next to Falu's room. I was told to sit there and I put my knapsack on the ground. A few minutes later Eruch came over and sat down beside me and said, "Hello, my name is Eruch. What brings you to this bench? How do you come to be here?" So I told him my story. He said, "Ah, I see," and asked me to stay where I was and rest awhile. He had some papers He was taking to Baba. A few minutes later Eruch returned with a big smile on his face and said, "I have wonderful news for you! Baba will see you in the morning. He wants you to stay here tonight and sleep in the Blue Bus." I responded, "Oh my, how wonderful! Thank you Baba!"

Then Eruch brought me over to his cabin. When Baba was in seclusion, the mandali were in seclusion. A visitor was a big change from the norm. A number of the mandali, including Mani, Goher, Rano, Francis and several of the other men, came over to see who the visitor was. They all wanted to hear how I had heard of their Beloved. So, once more, I began telling my story. When I got to the part in my narrative where the letters LSD came up, Eruch said, "Oh yes, what is that stuff?" He asked me to wait; then he jumped up and went off. He returned in a few minutes with a letter that Allan Cohen had written to Kitty Davy when he was on LSD, saying that he was on the sixth plane, wasn't it fantastic, and where did LSD fit into the spiritual panorama? Kitty had no idea what to do with this letter, so she had sent it to Eruch. I thought, "Oh my God!" So being very clear that I was narrating my own subjective experience, I explained that LSD were pills that you took and that in Boston, at the time, we called them "reality capsules." At that point Goher cracked up laughing, saying, "Only in the West, only in the West—take a pill and twenty minutes later—Oneness."

I had the feeling that a big karmic snowball was rolling down

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hill and was about to engulf me. Eruch, who had stepped out for a minute, returned and looked at me very sweetly and said, "Baba wants to know if you would like to see Him now?" As if I would say, "No, I'll wait until tomorrow!" He said, "Okay, then come this way," and we walked along the men's side, by the gates, and along the side of the little house to Baba's bedroom. The door was open and Baba was seated on His bed. His *sadra* was up to His waist as it was hot. There were a couple of people in the room, but to this day I have no idea who they were.

We stopped at the bottom of the three steps outside Baba's room. Eruch was at my side. Baba just beamed at me, and what I saw was this extraordinary light emanating from Him, this effulgence that was so brilliant—with His face at the center, beaming. The tears streamed down my face, which was a physiological response to the intensity of the light, as well, of course, as a response to being in His presence at last. Baba started gesturing, with Eruch translating.

Baba first gestured, "I am happy to see you." I remember thinking, while my mind was still working, "He's happy to see *me*?" He gestured that I looked tired and dusty and should have a hot bath and then read the section in *God Speaks* on *Fana* and *Baqa* that afternoon before the sun set. He was very specific. I was to have a good dinner and a good night's sleep in the Blue Bus, and He would see me in the morning.

I hadn't said a word all this time, and of course Baba hadn't either. Eruch was the only one speaking, so it was really a dialogue in silence. Eruch then turned me around and led me back over to the men's side where I set about following Baba's instructions. It was my first hot bath in many weeks. I had been traveling on very little money and cold water was all that was available, when I could find even that. Then I sat down in the courtyard to read the section in *God Speaks*. It was another example of Baba's perfect timing: there was exactly enough light left in the day to finish the last sentence, of the last paragraph, of the last page in that section, and no more.

Afterwards, I had dinner with the men mandali. Francis was really amused by the story of my coming here, and he said it was like the tortoise and the hare. The tortoise came overland and the hares were going to fly, but never made it. He looked at me and

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said, "Robert, *you* are the 1965 *sahavas*." That night I went to sleep in the Blue Bus. The only thing inside the bus was the cot that Baba had used when He was in seclusion in 1949 before the New Life. I had not slept on a bed for weeks at that point, only on stone floors and the deck of the ship. So the first bed was Baba's own!

Early in the morning Eruch woke me. Remember there was no electricity—only kerosene lanterns. Eruch said, "Come on brother, let's wash up and have breakfast." When I had finished he said, "Come on, it's time for your darshan." So we went over to Mandali Hall. Baba's seclusion at the time was such that He would come over early in the morning and sit in His chair. The mandali would be seated in their places, and they would discuss with Baba whatever the business of the day was. Then He would go back to His room and stay there for the rest of the day, in strict seclusion. I went into Mandali Hall and sat on the floor opposite Baba's chair. The mandali were in their places, and Baba came in through the large doors from the garden. He was in His *sadra* and had His hand on Francis' arm. His habit was to walk the length of the hall two or three times for exercise before He sat down. As soon as I saw Baba, I immediately stood up and He waved to me to sit down. As He passed by Baidul, Baba reached over and gave Baidul's beard a little tug. And He pinched Pendu's cheek. It was the sweet give and take of love amongst His dear ones, who had devoted their lives to Him. He then came and sat in His chair.

Baba looked at me and made a gesture that Eruch didn't have to translate—which was to come and embrace Him. I stood up and went to His chair, knelt over and Baba put His arms around me and my arms were around Him. He kissed me on both cheeks and I kissed Him, and He motioned for me to bow down to His feet. I knew that this was something extraordinary, because there had been a long period of time when Baba wouldn't let anyone touch His feet. It was a special privilege to be doing so. While resting my head on His feet, out of the corner of my eye I saw the hem of His *sadra*. What came into my mind was, "Hold fast to My *daaman*." So while I had my head on His feet for those few seconds, I reached up and grabbed hold of the hem of His *sadra*.

Then Baba gestured for me to go back and sit down. Eruch was

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sitting just to the side, so he could read Baba's gestures and translate them. The first thing Baba conveyed was, "I am in strict seclusion and am not seeing anyone; you are blessed to be here." He asked me how I had slept and how my health was. At the time I was having some digestive problems, which I mentioned. Baba motioned to Dr. Goher. She went out and came back with a pill and put it in Baba's hand, and Baba gave it to her to give to me to take.

I had a few weeks growth of beard and Baba looked at me and gestured, "Why haven't you shaved?" I said, "Well there I was, hitchhiking across the deserts of the Middle East, shaving with cold water, and I thought, 'Who am I shaving for—the camels?' So I stopped." Baba conveyed that it was okay. Then He asked me if I had read *God Speaks*. I said I was reading it. He gestured, "Good, very good. You should read *God Speaks* again and again until you feel it." He made a gesture by running His finger along the veins of His forearm, "Until you feel it singing in your veins." He asked if I had read *Stay with God*. When I responded, "No," Baba motioned to Francis, who ran out, and I shortly found myself with an autographed copy of *Stay With God* in my hands.

After this Baba explained that there were four types of conviction of the existence of God. First was intellectual conviction, which one could attain by reading *God Speaks*. Then there was conviction through sight, which one receives by seeing God face to face, which is the experience of the sixth plane. But the only real conviction is conviction through union, where one knows oneself to be God as God. "And how does one gain this conviction? By leaving everything at My feet—all your thoughts, words, and deeds—good and bad—leave them at My feet. And don't worry, I will help you. One day you will see Me as I really am." Unfortunately I didn't ask when. So I'm waiting—like we all are.

I must have been fidgeting a little bit. There were none of these beautiful carpets and cushions, so my ankles were bothering me. And Baba gestured, "Put out your feet." I knew from my studies in classical Hinduism that you never put your feet toward the master. It's the biggest insult, but He gestured again, "Put out your feet, be comfortable, be free." I was "free" for a few minutes and then I felt uncomfortable with my feet out toward Him, and so I put them

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back. Then Baba gestured, "The whole universe and all its affairs are nothing but a huge joke. It's nothing into nothing." Eruch said this was nothing squared.

Then Baba's face grew grave and He asked, "Are many young people in the West taking drugs?" I said, "Yes, Baba, many." Of course it was almost nothing at that time, the tip of the iceberg, compared to what it has become. Baba conveyed that many would come to sickness and early death if they persisted in this abuse. He gestured, "Drugs are harmful mentally, physically, and spiritually." I knew they could be harmful mentally and physically, but at that time of craziness, my attitude was: so what? It was just part of the risk; life was filled with risk, especially if one was draft age and the Vietnam War was happening. But Baba's emphasis that they are harmful spiritually touched a very deep chord in me, because of who He is and His authority, and if He was saying they are harmful spiritually, then it meant I should pay attention. Baba looked at me, and if silence can be in capital letters with exclamation points, the message was, "NO DRUGS!" Baba gestured, "Drugs are delusion within illusion." He stated that many people in India smoke marijuana and take *bhang* (a drink made from marijuana) and that they temporarily forget all their problems, but that everything is there waiting for them when they come back down. They see bright colors, but it means nothing. It hampers their progress spiritually.

Actually, the first thing that Baba conveyed to me was to go back to the West, because what I was looking for I wouldn't find sitting in a monastery or wandering around the Himalayas, which is exactly what I had intended to do but had not expressed. Baba gestured, "You will find it in society with people, by being of service to them and loving them.". Then Baba looked me in the eye and asked, "Is there anything you want to know?"

I felt like I was on live radio, that I had to answer immediately.

I said, "No, Baba, there is nothing I want to know."

He smiled and made His circle of perfection gesture, "Good, you have had enough of words." Which was true, as I had degrees in literature and philosophy—plenty of words. "Then is there anything you want?" He asked.

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Again there was no time to think about it. I replied, "Yes, Baba, there is something I want."

He gestured, "What is it?" This, of course, was from the Creator. What do you want when the Creator asks you—planets perhaps, the solar system—you can have anything you want.

I said, "I want to see You in everyone and everything always, and to love You as You should be loved, for the sake of others."

Baba gestured, "That is a very good want. That is the want that will end all other wanting. And how do you get this *prema*, this deep love that you seek? By giving everything to Me, laying it at My feet. And I will help you to attain this." Then He gestured, "Go back to the West and tell the young people there My message of love and truth and My statements about drugs. If God can be found in a pill, then God is not worthy of being God." My first response was this horrible thought of standing on a soapbox in the middle of Haight Ashbury in San Francisco with a picture of Baba and a sign which said, "STOP TAKING DRUGS." Fortunately, Baba worked a little more subtly than that. Thank goodness!

Baba asked me what kind of work I had been doing in the West. When I replied that I had been working in a locked ward in a mental hospital with chronic schizophrenics, Baba gestured, "Good, when you return to your place, go back and work in that hospital on that ward with those patients, and I will work through you with them." When I finally got back to Boston several weeks later, I called the hospital and was informed that someone had quit the day before, and I was asked if I would like to come back and start the following day!

Baba then emphasized, "Do not go to visit yogis or saints or go to tombs or shrines, now that you have found Me. I am God. My word is truth." I stood up to embrace Him again. Eruch and I came out of the hall. Fortunately Eruch had a photographic memory, because we sat and wrote down everything word for word. Eruch then went back into the hall and came out after a few minutes and told me, "Baba wants you to stay here again tonight and sleep in the Blue Bus, and then leave tomorrow." I was, of course, thrilled. Then Baba sent me to Meherabad in His car. He wanted Padri to

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give me a tour of Meherabad and to show me particularly Baba's Tomb-Shrine, the Samadhi, which, of course, was empty. At the time I wondered why Baba wanted me to see it. I knew of its historical significance, which Padri explained to me, but it was only when I came again for the '1969 Darshan' and saw how Baba filled it with His presence that I realized Baba's purpose in sending me there.

Later that afternoon, after I returned to Meherazad, Mani came skipping over; she was only in her late forties then. Mani said, "Baba would like to know what route you took to come here." I had my maps with me, so I drew a line through all the countries and cities through which I had traveled, and she went happily off with them over to Baba's house. She returned a few minutes later with a handkerchief that Baba had just used to wipe His face. It was still damp. She said, "Baba wants you to have this." She told me that she had taken the maps and spread them out on the floor in the living room with Baba and Mehera and the other women. She traced the route with her finger and said; "Baba, he went here and he went there." Baba gestured, "Very good. Tell him I was with him all the way."

What I think of now is that Baba is with each of us all the way on our journey to Him. Jai Baba!

From a talk in Mandali Hall, Meherazad, August 1999.

"Be My Living Garland"

Dr. G.S.N. Moorthy

I was born into an orthodox south Indian Brahmin family. When I was a teenager I was initiated and began studying as a disciple of Swami Sivananda Saraswati of Rishikesh. I studied "Yoga-Vedanta," practiced *asanas*, *pranayam*, and *mounadhyana*, and repeated my mantras. I also had won first prize in a *Bhagavad Geeta* competition held by the Ramakrishna Mission.

I was an ardent believer in the supremacy of Hinduism and felt that within its scriptures lay the answers to life's problems. My father was the editor of a magazine dedicated to the Perfect Master Ramakrishna and had a vast library of some 5,000 books on spiritual topics. He also used to exchange complimentary copies of his magazine with other editors, so he had copies of *Meher Message* and *Meher Baba Journal* in his library, as well. I was passionately determined to read every book in my father's library. The first book I picked up happened to contain a beautiful picture of "Hazrat Meher Baba." The inviting love-looks of Baba in that particular picture had a special irresistible charm. In fact, the picture produced a hypnotic spell within my being. There was a small caption in the margin, "The Silent *Sadguru*." This further tickled my soul into a state of self-forgetfulness. When I became normal, I found myself possessed with the desire to study Meher Baba's literature.

Thereafter, I started reading *Meher Message*. Periodically I would find quotes from Baba which seemed to suggest solutions to the metaphysical conundrums and spiritual difficulties which I experienced in my intellectual quest for knowledge and my personal practices in daily life. I became increasingly drawn to Baba, so much so that at one point I began to worry that this was undermining my relationship with my own guru. I was relieved therefore to come

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across Baba's assertion that He was not a teacher, that He had come not to teach, but to awaken.

At the same time I remained devoted to the *Geeta* and used to organize a *Geeta Jayantee* Celebration each year on a large scale. I used to write to a number of spiritual figures asking for their blessing or for a message which I could print in my annual report. In 1941, I wrote to *Sadguru* Meher Baba. In reply Chanji wrote:

...Meher Baba has been in seclusion since July 1940, and it is not possible to have any message from Him.... However Meher Baba has attested His signature under a message which had been personally dictated prior to His seclusion...

The message was:

The greatest need of humanity today is Love—Love Divine which is pure and selfless, which awakens man to the proper sense and understanding of his real duty in life, to find true happiness in giving, not receiving, in serving, and not in being served, and in willingly participating in the suffering of others more than in their happiness. My Mission in life is to kindle that divine spark of Love in all.

Signed M.S. Irani

After this, I continued in my efforts to spread the message of the *Geeta* and in my personal pursuit to find the spiritual answers which I was seeking. In 1955 Dr. C.D. Deshmukh visited Kharagpur, where I was stationed at the time, and we became close friends. He invited me to attend the 1955 *sahavas*, but I declined. In November I received a second invitation by telegram from Deshmukh asking me to attend along with the Maharashtrian group. Still I hesitated. It was only when Deshmukh wrote me an express letter saying that Beloved Avatar Meher Baba asked him to invite me to the *sahavas* that I finally relented. But it was mostly out of my respect and love for Deshmukh that I went.

Deshmukh met me at the railway station and took me to Meherabad. The next morning I stood in the long queue of His lovers waiting for Baba's arrival at 7:00 a.m. I was not a Baba lover at that point, and I was the only person in the queue who did not have a garland to offer Baba. Although I had found Baba's words inspir-

"BE MY LIVING GARLAND"

ing, I was much against the idea of His Avatarhood. I was quite willing to accept Him as a Mahatma, or a saint, yet I was not inclined to accept Him as an Avatar, like Rama or Krishna.

I was wondering how Baba would communicate, since I knew He was silent and had given up writing as well. While I was thus deeply absorbed, Baba's car arrived and stopped near the *dhuni* platform. All eyes were on Baba as He got down from the car wearing a pink coat. His face was emitting golden rays, and I was amazed to see two most brilliant star-like eyes twinkling from His face. For a moment I was totally lost in the radiant beauty of Baba, which I had never seen before.

Baba was slowly and majestically passing by the queue moving towards me. It then occurred to me that I must also have a garland to offer Baba. I saw a small flower stall under a nearby tree. I thought it would take Baba at least five more minutes to reach me because I saw Him receiving garlands as He came. Baba was gesturing to His lovers and Eruch was interpreting.

I turned to the flower stall and was just about to dash over when I felt someone's touch on my shoulder. I looked back and was utterly surprised to see Baba holding my shoulders and looking into my being. I was so overwhelmed with Baba's divine beauty that I became almost speechless. At the same time, I was repenting in my heart of hearts for not being able to offer a garland to Baba.

At that very moment Baba gestured, "I am the Ancient One. I know everything. Tell me honestly, why were you looking to the other side when God Himself was approaching you?"

I became nervous and said, "No Baba. It's nothing like that. I only wanted to buy a garland for You."

"But why did you not buy a garland before coming to the queue as the others have done?" Baba asked.

I had no answer. I felt upset about being put in an awkward position. How to tell Baba that all the time I had been thinking against Him? I didn't know what to say. Then the thought occurred to me, "If this person Baba is really God, how nice it would be on His part to leave me without further interrogation." And lo, just as my thought ended, Baba gestured, "Well, I forgive you. Don't worry."

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A few seconds after that, drawing my attention to the few garlands that were still hanging on His hand, Baba gestured, "Look at these garlands. These flowers will fade away. They are bound to be destroyed sooner or later.... But I want you to be My living garland."

I could not follow what Baba meant by "living garland" and I simply stared at Baba with vacant eyes. Baba then held both my hands in His and put them around His neck, saying, "Now, do you understand?" I felt myself practically hanging around the bosom of Baba like a child.

Giving a soft slap on my cheek, Baba pointed to my body and conveyed, "Yes. This is the living garland. But I want you to become a real living garland." Baba then gestured, "I know everything. Love Me and I will help you."

I next saw Baba at the great *sahavas* of 1958. Although I started believing in Baba as a *Siddha Purusha* possessing some supernatural powers or *siddhis*, I was still not fully confirmed in my trust in Him as a *Yuga Purusha*, or Avatar. But, ever since that first embrace from Baba, some remarkable changes were taking place within me in a quiet, revolutionary manner. No doubt, *maya* would occasionally play tricks with me in order to dupe and deceive me from accepting the Truth about Baba's Avatarhood. During this *sahavas* program, on the very first day of my stay at Meherabad, I was attacked by *maya* in a most silly way. Not being used to shaving myself, at 5:30 a.m. I joined a long queue of persons waiting for the only available barber at Meherabad. The barber had hung a small mirror on the neem tree about fifty yards from the *dhuni* platform. His small shaving brush, soap, and country razor made up the barber salon during the *sahavas* period.

Baba was to reach Meherabad by 7:00 a.m., so I was in a hurry to finish my shave as early as possible. The barber maintained strict discipline in shaving each individual in turn. After nearly forty minutes my turn came, and I sat in front of the barber and asked him to be quick, so that I would be able to take my bath before Baba arrived.

Just when the barber was about to apply soap on my face, a very stout and strong man who had not been in the queue came from the

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roadside in the opposite direction and pushed me aside. He sat in my place and commanded the barber to shave him first, as he had some urgent work. As I could not resist the push of this stout fellow, I fell on the ground in a peculiarly awkward fashion and several lovers in the queue burst into laughter. No one raised any voice of protest against the rude behavior of the Gandhi-capped man who gave me such a hard push. The barber told me in a humble voice in Hindi, "Babujee, please wait for two minutes. Do not mind the trouble. I shall attend to your shave after this man."

Now my ego started functioning in me. I felt not only shocked but insulted at the rude behavior of this Baba lover. But being a helpless victim of a strange circumstance, I began blaming Baba for all that had happened. I said silently to myself, "It's all a hoax. Baba cannot be God, because God is always just and He is an *Antaryamin* (In-dweller). The very fact that such lack of discipline and injustice has taken place right under the very nose of Baba, the so-called Avatar, indicates He could not be God, like Rama or Krishna."

Thinking thus, I made up my mind to leave Meherabad the same day, without attending the *sahavas* program. Simultaneously, I also muttered a few words inaudibly to my soul within, "O Baba, if you are really God and *Antaryamin*, if you are truly 'Meher' and 'Justice,' then you must see that my shave is done first, not this fellow's who has pushed me aside and seized my turn by force."

Hardly had I completed my thoughts, when a mandali member, Vishnu, came running from the other side of the area pointing to the stout man and shouting said, "Oh Mr. Khare, today Baba has arrived much earlier and is calling you just now. Please go."

This really startled me, as Baba was not expected to come to Meherabad so unusually early. At the same time, it also gave me a feeling that perhaps Baba had listened to my words of silent complaint, and was thus making me aware of His Avatarhood.

But Baba's game was not simply a one-act play. My next thought was that Baba turning up early was just a coincidence, and Baba calling the man at that particular time was simply another coincidence. I continued thinking that there was nothing specially great about Baba, since the person getting shaved did not obey the call of

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Baba. On the contrary, Khare told Vishnu to go and tell Baba that he would reach Him in a few minutes, right after the shave was done. Khare then asked the barber to hurry up and be done with the shave.

I then mischievously put forth my own final condition of acceptance of Baba as the Avatar. I said inwardly to Him, "Well, Baba, if you are really the Avatar, or God with the Divine Quality of *Antaryaminship*, then why don't You send the same mandali member again and call this stout fellow to come in his half-shaven condition? If You actually do that, Baba, I will forget the insult and injustice done to me so far and will be happy to attend the *sahavas*. Otherwise, I am bound to leave the place now."

Lo! What a great surprise! Immediately, I saw Vishnu coming with quick steps to the same spot and telling Khare in Hindi: "Khare, Baba is getting much annoyed. He has sent me for the second time to tell you that you must come to Him immediately as you are. These are His orders."

Hearing these words of Vishnu, the barber said to Khare, "Now, Sir, you please go to Baba, and then come back for the shave. You are such an old Baba lover that you must not disobey His orders."

Mr. Khare then got up half-shaven, with soap applied on half of his face and followed Vishnu to meet Baba, in obedience to His call. All those nearby could not control their laughter seeing Khare walking fast to Baba with his half-shaven face. But I alone could not laugh, trembling from within, I thought to myself, "What a blunder on my part to doubt Baba's Avatarhood. He is really God—like Rama and Krishna. He cannot be anything else. Baba responds even to such silly requests or demands of His lovers to prove that He is that same Ancient One."

In the meantime, the barber asked me to take my seat and to have my shave, uttering a few words in Hindi, "Babujee, Baba is God. There may be delay, but no injustice at all."

The story does not end there, because later that day Baba called me to Him and asked me to tell Him the day's news. All that I could think to tell Him was about the morning's events, and so I did. When I had finished, Baba gave a broad smile and nodded His head, saying, "Yes, yes. Are you speaking about Khare, who came to meet

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Me in the morning when I called him? But I embraced him only on one side—on the side where the soap was applied on his face. I did not give him an embrace on his shaven side. Are you happy?"

I was internally crying, without shedding tears. This divine act of a one-side embrace given to Khare revealed to me the truth of Baba's divine justice, which the Avatar maintains eternally sometimes visibly and sometimes invisibly. What an awakening embrace that was!

So this is the story of how Baba blessed me with the light of conviction that He is the All-knowing Avatar of the Age.

From The Wonders of Silence by Dr. G.S.N. Moorthy.

"What Took You So Long?"

Sue Chapman

Only Baba knows when my story really began, but the events I shall describe took place in December, 1983. Though I had not consciously been seeking a spiritual path, it was in my nature to search and question. I had traveled a lot outside England—to the United States and North Africa—and seemed to be constantly changing jobs and directions. After a period of crisis and loss in my work and personal affairs, I was floating like a cork in the stream of life. Then a friend wrote to me and asked if I would like to go with her and her husband to India to study textiles. I was teaching textile arts at that time and jumped at the chance of leaving England for a while and creating some new space for my chaos.

To backtrack a little, I had a friend who was a Baba lover. I had always assumed his "Baba" was just another guru and felt no special attraction to Him. My friend, on the other hand, was convinced I was "ripe for the picking" and had been trying to feed Baba to me for years. He had lent me books that I barely glanced at and returned. He had also given me an album with the Parvardigar prayer sung by Pete Townshend of The Who. I thought it was terrible and passed it on to another Baba lover friend, who had shown me a film he had made about the life of Fred Marks, which I watched just like a TV documentary. In other words, none of it had meant anything to me at the time!

However, in a last final attempt to introduce me to Baba, he had given me the address of the Meher Baba Trust Office in India, with the request that if I should travel anywhere near there, to remember him to Adi K. Irani, Baba's secretary. My friend had attended the '1969 Darshan,' but had not returned to India since then. He did not know that Adi had already passed away. I never gave this address

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another thought, but stuffed it in my wallet as I packed my things for my intended three-month stay in India.

We arrived in India in mid-November, and for six weeks meandered from Delhi through Ajmer, Agra, Jaipur, the Kutch, Jodhpur, and so on, arriving on December 22 in Aurangabad. We spent two days visiting the caves at Ajanta and Ellora. On December 24, my friends planned to visit a textile workshop in a village nearby. We had seen so many already that I decided to do my own thing for the day. I was standing in the hotel lobby when my eye was attracted to a map of Maharashtra, and I noticed the name Ahmednagar, seemingly close to where we were. Wasn't that the name of the town my friend had given me?

I inquired and was told it was just a few hours ride on the bus. I thought, "What the hell? It would please my friend and I have nothing better to do." I packed up my rucksack and left a note for my friends that, in case I didn't make it back that evening, I would meet them the following day.

I didn't think I had made myself understood at the bus station when I inquired about an Ahmednagar bus. There was some shaking of heads, so I sat down and started to peel an apple and wonder how I might spend the day. But a moment or two later, someone came over and led me to a bus and escorted me on board. At odd moments during the course of the quite long and hot journey, when I would wonder why ever was I doing this, simultaneously would come the thought: "Don't worry, it will be okay."

When we finally reached Ahmednagar, my heart sank. I had imagined a small town as my friend had described from his 1969 experience. I hadn't bargained for the busy place I found on arriving at the bus station. How would I ever find the address? Again I had the thought: "Don't worry." I started walking. I thought I would get my bearings first and I studied the address more carefully. I crossed the street, and as I looked up, I noticed a sign that said "Meher Colony." Seeing the word "Meher," I thought it might have something to do with the address I was looking for, so I went in and asked.

I was led to the bedroom of a disabled, English-speaking woman named Dhun. In my confused state, as fast as I tried to explain what

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I was doing there, she assumed I was a new pilgrim and she kept saying, "You must hurry, it starts at three!" while at the same time talking to her servant in Marathi and gesticulating that I must follow her.

The next thing I knew, I was bundled into a rickshaw and the servant gave the driver instructions in Marathi. "Oh my God," I thought, "what have I done? I don't know where I am or where I am going, and this guy doesn't even speak English." Again, the thought came to me: "Don't worry."

The rickshaw wound its way out of Ahmednagar, and I resigned myself to the journey. As we got nearer to Meherabad, the rickshaw driver pointed to a rather insignificant-looking tower at the top of a hill. "Oh, great," I thought, "another sightseeing trip to some ruins."

We crossed a railroad track, and in no time the rickshaw parked beside the building called Meher Retreat. No sooner had I stepped down, than a crowd of people appeared, coming from the right and heading down the slope to what appeared to be an outdoor theater. What a shock! I could clearly see a group of Indian women at the front under umbrellas, and there were fifty or more Westerners—more than I had seen in my previous six weeks traveling in India. I watched for a moment as they settled themselves in the little theater, and tried to appraise what was going on. I thought, "Well, I'll slip in at the back and look for an opportunity to ask someone what is going on, or at least find out if Adi K. Irani is here."

As fast as I tried to make some sense of it all, more fantastic sights occurred. The strains of the *Blue Danube* floated across the sultry air, and from nowhere appeared a ballerina in classical costume. Now I really thought I was dreaming.

Meanwhile, a person sitting close by began to ask me questions: When did I get in? Was this my first visit? How long would I be staying? Slowly, it dawned on him, especially after I dropped in the bit about having a message for Adi K. Irani, that I did not know where I was or what was going on. I did notice the mounting look of amazement and amusement on his face. I had, as it turned out, just dropped in on Mehera's birthday party!

This pilgrim was anxious that I should stay and meet certain

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people, then come down the hill and have tea after the performance. As I explained that I had to get back to Aurangabad by the evening, a look of anguish flashed across his face. "Why?" I wondered. His wife had joined us and with some brief exchanges, they persuaded me to go up the slope towards what appeared to be a little shrine. I remember them introducing me to Don Stevens, who was in a rush to catch a plane to Bombay (Mumbai). Then they tried to introduce me to Eruch, who asked them to wait a few minutes.

Out of sheer desperation, I suppose on their part not wanting me to slip through Baba's net, they escorted me to Meher Baba's Tomb-Shrine. By now, my mind was doing somersaults. They seemed so sweet and kind and welcoming that I did not want to hurt their feelings, but equally, I did not want to meet a lot of strangers, and I certainly didn't want to do any praying in their shrine. Help! Again, the thought came: "Don't worry. You can just go in out of politeness (true British upbringing!), make your excuses, get in the rickshaw, and ride back to town."

So I watched what other people were doing and thought, "Well, what shall I do?" I could see a photograph inside the Tomb, which struck me as pretty bizarre, but I thought, "Okay, I'll just say a few words." So I stepped in, looked at the photo and thought: "I am here because of my friend Dudley back in England. I suppose he sends You his love." I cannot describe what transpired in that moment. All I know is that I lost all sense of myself and of time. I felt quite joyful and found myself stumbling out, and I think I was crying. I remember someone trying to shove a sweet into my hand, which seemed rather peculiar, in view of the fact that I couldn't even stand up properly.

My "caretakers" encouraged me to come down the hill for a cup of tea, and by then I had totally lost my boundaries anyhow. I found myself agreeing to spend the night in Ahmednagar with a group of Baba lovers in the Sablok Hotel. I didn't even try to understand what was going on at that point. I just went with it.

I remember that I was never left alone, and over the course of the evening meal I heard the story of Baba's life and basis of His teachings. I found myself unconditionally accepting it all. They persuaded me to go with them to Meherazad the next morning—

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Christmas Day—before joining my friends again in Aurangabad. Having arrived at Meherazad in a light, English type drizzle, I listened to Christmas carols being sung on the porch and then was ushered into Baba's room, "for a few moments on your own." As I knelt in front of the picture on His bed, He seemed to say to me so sweetly: "What took you so long?" I thought of all the miles I had traveled, all the places I had visited, all the searching I had done, and I knew in that moment that here, in a room so like my own grandfather's bedroom, I was finally home. There would be no more journeys to take. The floodgates opened and I could not stop the dam-burst of tears.

I did return to Aurangabad that night, and explained to my bewildered friends that I would not be going any further with them. They still think to this day that I am crazy. I returned to Meherabad and stayed as long as I could until my visa expired and I flew home to resume my new life with Baba. My dear friend Dudley Edwards was rewarded for his persistence in opening the doors to Baba for me, and to him I am eternally grateful.

It was truly the most amazing gift a person could ever receive, to find the real Christ at Christmas time. There is nothing more to ask for than to remain forever His.

Jai Beloved Meher Baba!

Meher Baba
The All-Knowing One

Shivendra Sahai

I first heard Meher Baba's name along with His claim to be the incarnation of God, from my wife Saroja after our marriage. Being an agnostic, I was not particularly interested, and my wife never said much about Baba, even though she and her family worshipped Him as God ever since they had met Him.

So, when she mentioned that Baba was giving darshan at Guru Prasad in Poona (Pune), and if I wished I could avail myself of this opportunity, I was not very enthusiastic. In fact, I didn't even reply. But somehow this news proved to be a catalyst for me, and I started toying with the idea of visiting Poona and seeing this man who made such a tall claim. I knew nothing about Him; I didn't even know what He looked like, as I had not ever seen His photograph. Obviously, Baba did not know me either. So I thought there would be no harm in having a look at Him from a distance and visiting some nice places in Poona.

Strangely enough, as the day of departure approached, I found myself thinking more and more about Meher Baba. On the 4th of June, 1960, I reached Poona and went to Guru Prasad. A number of people were sitting in the hall, although I didn't know anyone. I entered and sat at the back. After a short while, I saw an old Parsi gentleman with an unusual glow and charm on His face coming out of a side room. He was accompanied by Shri Babu Jagjivan Ram, a minister in the central cabinet of India, who bowed down before Him and touched His feet. Seeing this, I knew the gentleman must be Meher Baba, and at that instant, the gathering shouted "Jai" as if in confirmation.

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Baba walked gracefully to His chair, and the darshan and introductions began. I was an unknown stranger, so there was no question of anybody introducing me to Him, but I was quite contented to have seen Baba. A serene calm and peace pervaded the atmosphere. His entire personality and gestures were so attractive and enchanting that I felt rooted to the place until the end of the program.

After everyone else had met Baba, He suddenly looked at Keshav Nigam, who had been making the introductions. In turn, Keshav looked straight at me and called out my name, while beckoning me to come to Baba. As I went to Him, He stretched out His hands and I embraced Him, as I had seen others do. I bowed down to Baba's feet, faintly listening to Keshav state the name of my father-in-law and wife and details of our family. I was already stunned by the embrace, and while bowing down to His feet, I lost all sense and perception. I was not prepared for all this, and I have no rational explanation as to how I found myself sitting in the side room and crying unabashedly.

Someone showed me a water container and asked me to wash my face and cool down. After a while, I went back into the hall and sat to the left in front of Baba. I was still dazed and bewildered by what had happened to me. Suddenly the thought occurred to me, "Baba, look at me." He was talking to a lady sitting on His right side, but at that instant, He immediately turned and looked at me with an arched brow. Simultaneously, a thought wave came to me, "What is it? Why do you disturb Me?" I was flabbergasted.

After the function was over, I anxiously inquired from Keshavji as to how he recognized me. In a very matter-of-fact way, he said that at the moment Baba looked at him to inquire if he had finished with the introductions, everything about me just occurred to him, and he said it out. He further explained that it was one of Baba's ways of guiding His dear ones to convey whatever is necessary.

I left Guru Prasad with the permanent impression that Baba knows me and that He is my most near and dear one. He knows whatever I think or feel, and He is the most loving person I have ever met. I felt an irresistible attraction towards Him. From that day forward, I was sure that Baba is what He Himself claims to be.

MEHER BABA—THE ALL-KNOWING ONE

I had gone to Guru Prasad as an agnostic and returned as a believer in God and in His manifestation as the Avatar in the form of Meher Baba. After that I always took advantage of every opportunity I could to have Baba's darshan.

One time, in the summer of 1965, as we were excitedly planning to visit Baba at Guru Prasad, my leave from work was unexpectedly canceled. The shock of missing Baba's darshan, which had been compassionately granted after a lapse of two years, was too much to bear.

I wanted to communicate my predicament, as well as my love, to Baba and beseech Him to call me sometime, somehow. As it so happens, I had a knack of molding clay into models, so I decided to make a small bust of Him with clay and send it to Him as a vessel of my prayers.

A few days before the departure of my wife and children to Poona, the bust was dried and ready. I decided to paint it. But as I was looking for the paint, my four year old son played with the bust and broke its nose.

I had used up all the clay and there was hardly any time left in which to do anything about the nose. Therefore, I scratched some material from the back of the head of the bust and used it to mend the nose. I set the bust in a small wooden box covered on all sides except the front, which was covered with a transparent plastic sheet. I also pasted a pink satin cloth all around to improve the look. This camouflaging effectively hid the depression in the back of the head.

My wife, along with Keshav Nigam, presented the bust to Baba upon arriving at Guru Prasad. Baba accepted the bust and handed it over to His sister Mani.

A month later, I received a telegram calling me to Guru Prasad on a specified date. I went alone, and as I entered the room, I found Baba sitting in all His splendor. After the usual inquiries about my travel and the well being of my family, Baba asked me where I learned to make clay models. I explained that I acquired this ability in answer to my prayer to Him to give me a means of remembering Him in my leisure hours. I began to feel that I could make a three-dimensional clay figure from any photograph of Baba. I tried, and that was the result.

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With a surprised look, Baba glanced at Francis Brabazon, who was there, as if to say, "See what a wonder!" Then looking at me, He put His finger on His chin, cheeks, nose, and forehead, respectively, in appreciation of these prominent features, bearing near likeness in the bust. Then with a twinkle in His eyes, He pointed to the exact spot at the back of His head and gestured, "Very well done."

This was the spot in the bust from where I had taken the material and left a depression. Being covered from all sides, it was not at all visible to the human eye. The Omniscient One alone knows our drawbacks, faults, and weaknesses, yet in His infinite compassion, He purifies and converts them into a goblet for His wine of love.

Some twenty-five years later, I was thunder-struck to find the bust still kept on the rack in the back of the Blue Bus at Meherazad. Even a small, feeble, and half-hearted expression of love for Him is noticed, encouraged, and preserved. What an Ocean of Love He is!

Incredible Is the Call of Love

Clarice Adams

In 1956 I had the great good fortune to have a personal audience with Avatar Meher Baba in Bombay (Mumbai). How Baba orchestrated all the events leading to that profound meeting, deeply touched my heart. One of my good friends, Ena Lemmon, used to correspond with Mani, Baba's sister. And in one letter Ena had casually mentioned that I was greatly interested in Baba and that the two of us were saving money in hopes that one day we could travel to India to see Him. To Ena's surprise, a reply came from Mani asking when I would be arriving in India and saying that if I were in India by a certain date, I would be able to see Baba in Bombay. This appeared to be a misunderstanding, since in the letter Ena had written only that we were saving in *hopes* of coming. Neither of us had the money for a trip to India at that time. In addition, Ena felt shattered, because Mani had made no mention of a time for Ena to see Baba. She cabled Mani and asked if she could also come with me on the specified date to see Baba, and a reply came that Baba had granted the request.

Ena somehow managed to get enough money to book passage on the last ship going to Bombay that month, but I was not able to accompany her. Receiving Baba's message through Ena that He would be pleased to see me increased my longing to go at all costs, but I did not have enough money, nor could I take the time off work to travel by sea. My only alternative was to fly, but how? There was no ready money available, although my husband Stan and I were both working—Stan as a teacher and I as a public accountant.

One evening after Ena had already sailed for India, I bought some fish and chips on the way home from work for a quick family meal. The fish was wrapped in newspaper and I happened to no-

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tice a Pan American airline advertisement: "Fly Now, Pay Later." I immediately went to the airline office and, though there was a policy against dealing directly with married women, the desk clerk booked me a seat. I was to pay monthly installments to cover the fare. I could not believe my good fortune as I started making plans for the upcoming flight.

I went to the Health Department to get my compulsory vaccinations, which normally would have required weeks of waiting and I would have missed meeting Baba on the date specified by Him. Even though my vaccinations were not given in time, amazingly, they were passed and stamped by the Commonwealth Medical Officer. I mistakenly had stood in the venereal disease queue, and the officer was laughing so much over seeing a dignified and matronly woman in the V.D. queue that he stamped my health card without looking at the date or examining my vaccination. The airline people caught the mistake, but because of the valid stamp, they could not take any action. So off I flew with a festering arm and a fever.

On the plane I was thinking about obedience—pondering whether I would be willing to jump out the window if Baba asked me. I opened a small book of Hafiz and read:

Knowing love's ocean is a shoreless sea,
what help is there?
Abandon life and founder.

When you give your heart to love
you make the moment lucky:
no need of auguries to perform good deeds.

I decided I *would* obey Baba.

When I arrived in Bombay, Ena and Meherjee met me at the airport. Meherjee gave us the details of our planned meeting with Meher Baba on the 6th of February. On that special day, Meherjee drove us to Arnavaz and Nariman Dadachanji's home, *Ashiana*, and Ena and I were ushered in together into Baba's presence. Baba was smiling, and indicated for us to sit down next to Irene Conybeare from England.

Eventually came the question from Baba through gestures, "Will you obey Me?"

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"Yes," I answered.

"Will you go back to Melbourne and kill your three children?"

I simply cried—I had not even imagined that question. Not having a handkerchief, I wiped my streaming eyes with my sleeve. After a few moments of agony, a comforting warmth flowed in and sustained me. I felt I was being rocked like a baby as Baba conveyed, "I would not ask you to do that, but I had to show you that you couldn't obey me." In His Omniscience, Baba was aware of my resolve to obey Him after reading Hafiz.

Then Baba explained, "First of all there is no value in trying to follow Me unless it is what you want to do, and you are willing to obey Me. It does not matter at all if you do not want to—far better to live an ordinary life, forget about following Baba, and see God in others and in everyday life. But if it is your real desire to love Baba and serve Him, how would you do it? It is very difficult to do and difficult to explain. A man does not ask how will I love my wife? He simply does or He does not...." At that moment there was a loud banging outside, and Baba asked, "Can you hear that noise?"

"Yes," I replied.

Baba continued, "Well, if you loved Me, you would not hear it while you were with Me." Then some of His Indian followers were called in, and Baba asked them to explain how to love Baba. One said, "By perfect devotion."

Baba asked the person, "Can you do that?"

Another said, "By thinking of Baba continually."

Baba smiled, made the sign of perfection, then leaned forward a little and asked, "Do you?" of the one who had given that answer.

After all had explained that they would do their best, Baba gestured, "Well now, I will try to explain. Divine love is the Real love, but you don't have that. So thinking of Me continually is the next best, but you can't do that. So if you just naturally say My Name—while you are working or while you are quiet, as often as you can without effort, that is good. But perhaps you can't do that—so do this: Repeat Baba's Name audibly for a fixed time of half an hour or an hour each day. Now there may be no love in that, no value at all in repetition. But in this case it will bring love, because I tell you to

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do it. But if you don't want to do even that, don't do it. It doesn't matter. Do what you want to do, but try to remember that I am in every one, in every man, woman, and child. Be happy, live naturally, but serve Me in others as much as you can."

Baba asked me, "Why did you come? I am in Australia, in every man, woman, and child."

"I just wanted to." I replied.

Baba shook His head and gestured, "No, *I wanted you to come*. You are here to carry My love to all: Do you know what I mean by all?"

As I said, "Yes," I felt clearly that Baba knew all about the division within the Australian group, but He was concerned only with their love.

"Carry My Love to all, and particularly to My dear Stan and the children." I posted that simple message to Stan, and when I returned to Melbourne, the entire group came to our house to hear Ena and I talk about our visit to Baba. All were now friends and everyone brought extra food and chairs—we could have eaten for a week.

At one stage, Baba asked me about my health. I told Him about my feverishness caused by the vaccination. He gave me a rose petal to eat and told me that I would be alright. That evening at the hotel, Ena decided to re-bandage my badly festering arm, but she found that not a mark remained. My fever had also gone, but that seemed unimportant after being in Baba's presence. Still, Ena said, "I don't care what He says—it's a miracle."

Baba mentioned at one point that Peter was a favorite disciple of Jesus. He had been allowed to share Christ's suffering by denying Him. Earlier Baba had told us that the unforgivable sin was hypocrisy. Even God can't forgive it, though Baba Himself is willing to.

Then I was asked by Baba, "How could you afford to come this time?"

"I am working," I replied, and I told Him about the "Fly Now, Pay Later" ad. (On my return to Melbourne my firm's senior partner surprised the junior partner by demanding that I be given an immediate salary increase. This totally covered my monthly com-

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mitments to the airline. The partners also arranged for me to give a talk about Baba at the Business Men's Club luncheon, which I did.)

As Baba was in seclusion, I had been warned beforehand not to ask Him anything. But Baba said He was in an expansive mood and I could ask Him for whatever I wished. I promptly asked whether He would accept a letter I had with me from Joan O'Brien, who had helped me very much when I was first learning about Meher Baba. Baba said He would accept it and reply, and would also help.

Then He asked, "Do you want anything for yourself?"

"No," I said, relieved that I had been able to deliver the letter without breaking the seclusion rules.

Someone behind me said, "She's very nice, isn't she?" and again the lovely flow of a warm current passed through every part of my being.

As I sat in the room with Baba, He mentioned that beings on all planes of consciousness were listening as He talked with us. Baba said that if we had seen Him earlier, we would have experienced His loving mood, but now He was in His working mood. Still, I was so blissfully happy I couldn't imagine anything more satisfying. I remember being surprised when Baba said that for me the Australian group and its activities were to be secondary. He wished me to look after Stan and the children and to put them first. He added that I could cooperate with Francis Brabazon, if I wished. At the time I couldn't imagine Stan needing or allowing anyone to look after him, but fifteen years later he was in need of my constant attention. As a war correspondent, Stan had filmed the mustard gas trials and his protective suit had leaked. Towards the end of his life, he had to sit with an oxygen machine, even when in bed at night. Stan once commented about this, "Baba did a wonderful thing for me. He shut me up."

The following is the message Baba gave me to take back to Australia, as I recorded it from memory later:

1. Be happy in any conditions and don't worry about anything. If the whole world rocks, don't rock with it. And particularly, don't worry about thoughts. If you want to alter anything, start with actions. Why? Because thoughts belong

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to the mental world, and you have no control over them unless you are established in the mental plane. For example, Clarice, you are married and you may love another man. Don't worry about it at all, but don't act on love except with your husband.

2. Don't pose. For example, when you return and someone asks you about Baba, if you think I am the Avatar, say it. If you do not think I am the Avatar, say it. And if you vacillate, thinking perhaps Baba could be, but you are not sure—one day you think so, one day you do not—then say that. Apply this principle to everything. Just don't pose.

3. Repeat Baba's Name audibly everyday for no less than half an hour and no more than one hour.

When I was leaving *Ashiana* on the final day, I was called back and Eruch said, "Clarice! Baba says, 'Be happy!'" Immediately I experienced a happiness that depended on nothing and required no special environment, although the intensity gradually faded. However, I now know for sure that such happiness is possible. It took me twenty-one years to realize that "Be happy" was also an instruction and that I am disobeying Baba when I allow pain, sadness, and even trivial things to make me unhappy.

Before going to India, I frequently had what I called "black moods" and fits of jealousy. It was months after my return that I realized that these were not occurring anymore and have not ever returned. I wholeheartedly thank Baba for this and for the incredible call of His love.

From a letter Clarice Adams wrote to Bal Natu, and from excerpts from Practical Spirituality with Meher Baba by John A. Grant.

Marvelous Darshan

W.D. Kain

The month of August, 1942, is of immense significance to me. My wife Prabha and I were sitting one day on the porch of our cottage in Gulmarg, Kashmir, watching the clouds coming down from the snowcapped hills, trailing over the daisy fields in front of us, and almost entering our apartment. This cottage of ours was perched right on the top of the highest point of Gulmarg Hill Station and was not near any thoroughfare. The marvelous beauty of the environment held us spellbound. This reverie was only broken when we heard the rustle of leaves on the pebbled path leading to our place from the main road. This was something unusual because our government-deputed servant seldom used that path. We thought it might be a bear, attracted by the corn growing in the vegetable garden. I sent Prabha inside, and from a distance it appeared that some living creature was coming through the thick mist. I was surprised and then relieved to recognize the face of a postman bringing the mail.

As I inspected the registered parcel, I found that it was addressed to me by my full name (which is usually given only on my passport) and that the address was original and not redirected. The sender was Adi K. Irani, Meher Baba's secretary, with whom I had been in contact to find out more about Meher Baba. The wonder of wonders was that we had not informed anyone outside our official circle about our address at Gulmarg. I had arranged to have our mail brought to us from Srinagar in a sealed bag by a special messenger. No one was supposed to know our address! The contents of the parcel revealed and solved the mystery. For contained therein was the book entitled *Discourses* by Meher Baba. Subsequent events and an in-depth study of a portion of the book, as well as a look at dear

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Baba's picture, reassured us that this was a gift from the Perfect Master of the Age, who is the omniscient Highest of the High. As we had only recently been married, His gift of love was a blessing for us. In that bouquet of flowers—Discourses—Baba had sent us the following message of love:

Life and love are inseparable from each other. Where there is life there is love. The law of gravitation, to which all the planets and stars are subject, in its own way is a dim reflection of the love which prevails in every part of the universe. Human love is tethered by these limiting conditions of anger and jealousy so that the spontaneous appearance of pure love within becomes impossible. So when pure love arises in the aspirant, it is always a gift. Pure love arises in the heart of the aspirant in response to the descent of grace from the Master. When pure love is first received as a gift, it becomes lodged in the consciousness of the aspirant like a seed in favorable soil, and in the course of time the seed develops into a full-grown tree.

This love gift created a metamorphosis in our lives. It was not just the gift that came, for it seemed as if Baba Himself had come and embraced us. For my wife and I, it was love at first sight with the Master.

Immediately, I wrote a letter to brother Adi asking him how, when, and where I could see Baba. In his reply, Adi wrote: "Baba has His *Nazar* on you. In regards to His darshan, a day will surely come when you will have His darshan. Baba sends His love and blessings to you."

On the occasion of Guru *Poornima* (Full Moon Night) in the month of July, Perfect Masters are worshipped all over India by their devotees. At that time my regret was that while others would be blessed on that day by their gurus and able to offer them flowers and sweets, my Perfect Master was not available even for darshan, leave aside the sweets. I lay down on my bed almost weeping. I was all alone in the house; nobody to console this child of Baba's. I had practically no sleep that night. At about 3:30 a.m. it seems I dozed off. Around 4:00 a.m. I saw a light in the adjoining prayer room. I was startled out of my bed, for I knew I had switched off the light earlier in the

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night. I rushed into my prayer room to find Baba sitting on my prayer seat, all smiles! Remembering that it was Guru *Poornima* and that Baba had graciously come to bless me, I prostrated myself at His feet, and made a verbal offering of Rs. 101 as Guru *dakshina*. Baba touched my head, and as I got up to have a look at Him, He disappeared as mysteriously as He had appeared.

As day dawned, I wrote out a money order form for the same amount and under this I wrote to Brother Adi: "Baba appeared to me this morning in my prayer room and accepted this sum as Guru *dakshina*. If this is a fact and not a hallucination, the money be accepted. Otherwise it may be returned."

The money order was accepted.

Several years later, I came to know that this "physical" appearance of Baba in Kashmir was not a solitary case. There have been several instances like this in many different places.

From My Life with Meher Baba by W.D. Kain.

Baba Answers My Prayer

Jay Schauer

Years ago, when I first moved to Myrtle Beach, I experienced some very difficult times. My job skills, which were geared toward working in large corporations, had limited application in what is essentially a beach town. I changed jobs four times in less than two years. My family was hurting financially as a result. It was not easy on me personally, as well. I felt I was on a roller coaster with no way to get off.

I decided to accept a job as a real estate agent selling beachfront condominiums at a resort near the Meher Spiritual Center. There was one problem; the salary was based on commission. This meant I would not be paid until 45 days after a sale was final. Therefore, I needed to start making sales quickly, as my financial situation was grave and, if it was not remedied soon, we would have to leave Myrtle Beach. None of my family wanted to do that.

Since I had previous success in sales, I felt confident that I could make what was needed in the six weeks before our money would run out. However, six weeks passed and no sales. I felt very upset and discouraged. I had dedicated all my efforts and energy to this new job. I had even written up half a dozen contracts, only to have them fall apart a few days later.

Because I felt strongly that Baba wanted me to stay in Myrtle Beach, my wife and I discussed our situation and I prayed to Baba about it. I received a very clear intuitive feeling that Baba wanted me to keep trying. I seemed to hear Him say, "What, start digging another well? Keep digging the one you started."

I decided to give myself fifteen more days to close a sale. During this time it seemed as though I repeated Baba's name constantly,

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begging Him for help. I had never before begged more for Baba's assistance. I had staked everything on this throw of the dice.

Fifteen days passed without a sale. Not even a nibble. At the end of the fifteenth day I returned home exhausted, anxious, and upset. Like many men, trouble in my work life affected me badly. I felt worthless. I could barely hold my head up in front of my family.

I felt terrible just sitting in my house, so my wife suggested I call the Meher Center and get permission to come there, even though the official visiting hours had ended. I walked along the deserted paths deep in the woods of the Center, and I swore at Baba with all my might. I was so angry and hurt, I wanted to let Him know. I wandered aimlessly—hot, tired, angry, upset, and depressed—until I finally emerged near the Lagoon Cabin.

I removed my shoes, went inside, and threw myself prostrate before Baba's chair. "What do You want from me?" I asked Baba. "I work hard. I deserve to get paid! I need to feed my family!" I felt angry tears flowing. "Why are You making my life so hard?" I felt nothing—just deafening silence. "You need to take the heat off!" I yelled out loud. "I can't take anymore!"

It is hard to describe what I felt. I was breathing hard, but I felt Baba in every breath. I didn't want Him there. I wanted Him outside of me. I wanted Him to comfort me. I wanted Him to be somewhere so I could scream at Him. But it was as if He were inside of me and absolutely silent. This was not at all what I wanted. I went home from the Center very upset.

The next day I went to work more from habit than desire. I'd made up my mind to tell my boss I was quitting, but she wasn't there. When a pair of married couples walked into the office together, I took them on a tour of the resort. Usually it is a disaster taking two couples on a sales tour. If one couple likes something, the other couple hates it. You can never get a rhythm going, and neither couple ends up buying the property.

Not these folks. Both couples loved the place. They couldn't find enough nice things to say. I showed them the first condo and one of the couples completely fell in love with it. They wanted a beachfront condo to vacation in and decided to buy it. The other couple looked a little depressed... they wanted it too. I took them

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next door and showed them an identical condo. The other couple decided to buy it as well!

When we were driving back through the resort, the first couple asked if we sold investment condos, as well. As it happened, we did! When they saw the model I showed them, they wanted to buy it too! The second couple inquired, jokingly, whether the investment condo next door was for sale. I said, "Yes," and they decided to buy that one, also. I had just sold four condos in one hour.

Now came the hard part: acting calm while I prepared four sets of contracts for them to sign, looking nonchalant while they worried over each of the clauses and paragraphs they were about to sign, and staying relaxed knowing the whole deal could blow-up in my face. I prepared the papers and passed them around the table. As they were signing, they asked how long it would take to close. "Thirty to forty-five days," I told them.

"Couldn't you do it faster than that?" they asked. "Like in a couple of weeks?"

I couldn't believe my luck. Just as the last man was about to sign, he put the pen down and looked at me very oddly. Everyone had been laughing just the moment before. But now the man seemed very serious. "Well," he said to me, "this should take some heat off, won't it?"

I think my mouth must have fallen open. He repeated, "I said, this will take the heat off." He looked at me quite intensely. The man's wife seemed uncomfortable and told him to lighten up. He shook her off.

"No! He works hard! He deserves to get paid." He again looked at me. "Isn't that right?"

I nodded.

"He deserves to feed his family."

I again nodded. Everyone at the table was silent now, disturbed by what was being said. The man's wife in particular seemed very embarrassed.

"Look, he just sold four condos. How often does that happen? I'm just observing that this sale will take the heat off for a while. Okay?" He looked at me, then at his wife. There was a stunned

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silence at the table. The man seemed to collect himself. He shook his head slightly. "I'm sorry," he said to me. "I don't know what came over me. I'm not sure why I said that." He smiled sheepishly at me and signed the contract.

As it so happened, three of the four contracts did not work out, and the one that survived did not close for ninety days. Two others that I sold a day later did close the very day our bank account reached zero! But by that point, I had given up feeling as if I had control over my life. I found out for certain that Baba is the real Boss, that He is the Boss of everything, the Boss of Bosses, and that there is nothing that is beyond His concern or power.

He Enfolded Me in His Love

Surendra Bhatnagar

Perhaps the most difficult relationship for a man to express is his relationship with God, and this is even more so with the God-Man, the Avatar. To do so is to define something which is indefinable, to describe something beyond human consciousness and thought. Even when God chooses to reveal Himself, He does so in terms which defy definition: "I am That" or "*Soham*." But what exactly is that That?

To me the concept of God was only a fantasy of the human mind. God in heaven was not to be found by anyone, anywhere, at least on earth. If you wanted to find God in heaven, you had to seek in heaven was my thought. I was therefore not seeking that type of God, but I was in search of a God before whom I could cry in grief and He would hear. I sought a personal God of whom I could make requests and on whom I could depend.

Meher Baba did not fit my concept of such a personal God, a concept which was heavily influenced by Hindu tradition. I heard about Meher Baba from my friend Prof. Amiya Kumar Hazra, who was a neighbor and life-long influence on me. Daily we discussed many things—social, political, spiritual—and on most points we differed, so at times our discussions were heated. I expected him, as he was a Bengali, to talk about Ramakrishna Paramhansa, or Aurobindo, but every time he veered the discussion to Meher Baba. He told me stories about Baba's life, stories about His Masters, stories of His miracles, His work with the *masts* and His extensive world tours. But none of this satisfied me because such things seemed mostly common in the lives of masters.

Those were the days of the late 1940's when the wounds created by the partition of the subcontinent into the nation states of India

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and Pakistan on August 15, 1947, were still raw. Hindus held Muslims responsible for the partition. In this atmosphere, when I saw photographs of Baba in which He was dressed like an Arab, or wearing Western dress, I was repulsed. This feeling was only reinforced in me by His literature, which contained many Urdu and Persian terms. I thought, "Why shouldn't we worship our own spiritual masters, who belong to our own tradition and cultural environment? Vivekananda," I reflected, "did not wear Western dress even when he went to America. Aurobindo did not wear English dress; even Gandhi refused to do so." Thoughts like this distanced me from Meher Baba.

However, it seems Baba had a different plan for me. It so happened that one day Amiya came to me and told me that Baba was giving darshan at Guru Prasad in Poona (Pune). It was the summer of 1960, during my summer vacation from college. Amiya said to me, "Surendra, look. You may not believe that Meher Baba is God in human form at the moment, but think: What if you come to believe it later on, and realize your mistake after Baba has dropped His physical body? You will repent it for the rest of your life, but there will be no way then to have His darshan." This argument appealed to me, so I agreed to accompany him for Baba's darshan.

I went to see Baba out of curiosity. You could not call me devout or faithful. I took with me nothing to offer: no garland, no prasad, not even a flower. Nor did I expect any miracle from Baba. I stood at the back of the crowd with Amiya. Baba was sitting on a sofa embracing those who filed by and distributing prasad to them, as the long queue inched forward.

I noticed a gorgeous presence in Baba. It was spiritual, but not as I expected. His head seemed large but His shoulders and body appeared very gentle. He sat very still with only His eyes and fingers moving. Although He was silent, His face was speaking volumes to me. He was wearing a pink jacket and white *sadra*. Eruch, who was standing half bent by His side, was translating His gestures.

As we stood at the back of the crowd, Amiya asked me if I wanted to come and have Baba's darshan and embrace. The queue, I noticed, was still quite long so I declined. Although I said to Amiya,

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"Feel free to join the queue yourself if you like, but leave me here." To this day I don't know what Amiya was thinking at that moment, but he decided to stay with me and not go for Baba's darshan. Just at that time, Baba waved His hands towards us. I thought He was calling Amiya, and evidently he thought so too, because he rushed towards Baba, making his way through the crowd. Hardly had he gone a few steps when Baba gestured again, and Eruch's voice rang out on the microphone, "Amiya, Baba wants your friend."

Hearing this, Amiya instantly returned to me, saying, "Surendra, Baba wants you." To me this was a pleasant shock. Baba seemed to need no introduction to me. "How could He have known I was a friend of Amiya's? Why should He pick me out of such a large crowd in such a manner? Had Amiya written Baba about me earlier?" Such questions flashed through my mind, but I had no time for them and in a moment I was standing before Baba.

Baba showed unexpected kindness and concern. He inquired about my stay and the purpose of my visit. Particularly, He wanted to know whether I had come to visit Poona or if I had come exclusively for His darshan. When He heard that I had come with the sole purpose of having His darshan, Baba seemed pleased and asked me to stay with Him during the darshan days. I readily agreed. It gave me the opportunity of a lifetime. I had read about spiritual masters in books, but now I was going to get the chance to live with one and see for myself how the Perfect Masters work.

However, while permitting me to stay, Baba did impose one restriction. He said I should observe everything that transpired, but should not ask any questions. "Be here and see," He offered. Although it would be difficult for me to not ask any questions, I agreed.

Baba once declared that people should take Him as either God or as a fraud, but shouldn't belittle Him by calling Him a sadhu, saint, or *fakir*. I came to realize the truth behind this. The "man" I was now meeting could never be classified as a saint in any traditional sense of the word. He could only be God or a fraud. However, it did not seem to me He could be a fraud. I read some books about His life and was familiar with the rigorous honesty and integrity with which He conducted Himself and required of His mandali. So, was He God? I became serious. "If He is God, does He know me

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as I am?" I wondered. Subsequent events were to prove that He did.

In the afternoons, Baba used to have letters from His lovers read out. During one such session, I was told that Baba had received a letter from my father, who had complained that I was not consenting to get married. Baba wanted me to explain why I was refusing. At that moment I could not tell Baba. Hearing me Baba said, "You should obey your father and marry." My acceptance of Baba's wish made Him happy and jovial. In this light mood, He gave a long description of the girl I was to marry and asked me to write this description to my father. I told Baba I would write my father. Baba then asked me to repeat what He had just said. When I could not, all the people there, including Baba, had a good laugh. Baba then had me write the letter in His presence.

I mention this because it shows how Baba does not conform to set formulas. He has no set mantra for all, except His love. His do's and don'ts vary with each individual. For example, while Baba was acceding to the wish of my father, He was refusing the same wish of the mother of Amiya, a widow with only one male child. She came to Baba with only one request, that He permit Amiya to marry, and every time Baba refused. Those who know our two families intimately can now understand why Baba discriminated in this manner. This is exactly how masters behave; they treat each person individually.

Another incident from Guru Prasad days that I remember concerns the Hindi arti. It so happened that in those days, at the close of each darshan program, this particular arti was sung. Although it was a nice musical composition, I found that it had a large number of linguistic errors. Each time the arti was sung, I had the strong thought, "Why can't Baba have a better Hindi rendering for His arti?" I wondered why Baba should accept such a hybrid and perverse rendering, especially as the English artis seemed to be good both musically and from a literary standpoint.

One day Baba happened to ask me to sing a *bhajan* or prayer of my own composition. I sang "*Namami hey pitah param namami nitya meheram*: I constantly offer my salutations to Meher Baba, the real, ancient Father." This was later published in *Shri Meher Baba Geet*

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Ganga. Hearing the prayer, Baba commented that there were some mistakes in the Sanskrit and I should have them corrected by Panduranga Shastri of Deccan College in Poona, who happened to be in the audience at that moment. As requested, I gave the manuscript to him and he corrected it for me. I noticed that he made a change in the last stanza, where I had inserted Hindi lines to keep the meter and rhyme.

The next day, when I sang the prayer in the corrected form to Baba, He seemed pleased. Baba was teaching me a lesson. I was a person who sought perfection and artistry. So from me, He wanted perfection. That was why He corrected my hymn. But from His lovers, He wants love.

The arti composed by Madhusudan was a work of the heart, not a work of art. That was why Baba accepted it as it was. Not only that, Baba made it a mantra for all His darshan programs, and it is sung throughout India with great feeling and devotion.

Once at Guru Prasad, Baba came out on the lawn, because His lovers had been persistently asking if they could have their photograph taken with Him. He had said that on His own He would not like to have the photos taken, but since His lovers had such strong feelings, He would allow it. Baba gestured for all to come. This brought a rush of people to be photographed with Him. I thought it would be better to abide by Baba's wish and not go in for the photograph.

The next day, my friends asked me to accompany them to Milan Photo Studio where they were going to pick up their photographs of themselves with Baba. Since I had no photo to collect, I had no desire to go, but they told me that Milan had a large collection of other photos of Baba and that I could get one. This persuaded me, so I went with them. To my surprise, when we reached the studio, I noticed one photograph, displayed in glass, in which I was with Baba. It had been taken during a house visit program. Baba looked resplendent, sitting on a sofa in a white linen *sadra* bedecked with garlands. I instantly felt how much Baba knows our hidden desires and how compassionately He moves to fulfill them.

My salutations to Meher Baba, the Ancient One! I am reminded of the message He gave to His lovers who had gathered for His

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darshan and *sahavas* in Poona, from all over India and the world, for the East West Gathering, in November, 1962:

You have come from great distances not for some convention or conference, but to enjoy My company and feel afresh My love in your hearts. It is a coming together of children of East and West in the house of their Father.

All religions of the world proclaim that there is but one God, the Father of all in creation. I am that Father.

—Meher Baba

"I Am the Ocean of Love"

Irwin Luck

How should I begin to share the experiences I was so fortunate and privileged to have had with Meher Baba? I had the opportunity of meeting and being with Baba on four separate occasions, and between those times there was an incredible correspondence over ten years, from the time I first heard of Him in 1959.

I first met Meher Baba in May, 1960, but it was not easy, because my father opposed Baba and was not a person that could understand the type of spiritual search my brother Ed and I were on. We had to get to Baba on our own. It actually was my brother who first heard of Baba, quite by accident, in the library on 42nd Street in New York. Of course there were millions of books in that library and he was there looking for a book to further his acting career, when he saw *Listen, Humanity*. He was drawn to the book because of the title. He thought, "There is something this author really wants to say. What is it?" Now my brother was the type of person who didn't like to read big books, so he weighed it in his hand to see if he would read it. Then he opened it up and his glance caught a few things that he thought might interest him. He said to himself, "I'll read this, but only if there is no trouble taking it out," because he didn't have a library card. But when he took the book to the front desk and asked, the librarian jumped up and said, "Oh yes, you can take that book out, just sign here." So that must have really been Baba.

After Ed read the book, he called me up and told me that he'd read about a Master who lives in India named Meher Baba. I said, "Who?" and he had to repeat himself a couple times until I got the name. But I wasn't even interested because I had already been getting inner guidance and direction over the past few years. I felt that God was really guiding me, and I didn't have need for anything else.

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Three months passed and during this time I had a very strong inner feeling that I was to read the books of the great religions, to see what the originators had to say. So I read the five books of Moses, the gospels of Jesus, the Koran, the Buddhist Bible, and the *Bhagavad Gita*. I wasn't just reading for intellectual understanding, I was trying to live the principles laid down. I realized that they were all saying the same thing in principle, even though their followers had created different religions. They all essentially expressed the same love and truth and goal. I began to feel that if they were all together in one room. they would have gotten along fine with each other.

All of this together really prepared me for what Baba would be saying, once I came to know about Him. Around this time I had a strong feeling that I should go to New York where I would get a connection with God. I wondered how I was going to tell my father, who had such worldly interests. I had been living and working with him, so I thought about it a long time. Finally I broke the news to him, "You know, Dad, I'm planning to leave to go to New York."

"Oh, when do you plan to do that?"

"As soon as possible."

"Why?"

He just couldn't understand, especially when I told him that I felt I would gain communication with God by going there.

"Why do these things always have to happen to me?" he asked.

"It's not happening to you, it's happening to me. Look, I'm not trying to explain this and I don't really know what's going to happen, but whenever I follow my inner guidance, it always works out. And that is what I'm going to do."

"If you go to New York, what do you think will happen? Are you going to go to the mountains and receive commandments? Do you want to be a prophet for a living?"

"That's been done before."

And it went on and on, until it became clear to my father that I was going with or without his blessing.

I arrived in New York with \$70 in my pocket, and even in 1960 this was really very little. I checked into a hotel in a pretty dumpy

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area. For four days I did a meditation that had always been very successful for me, and absolutely nothing happened. I did not receive any guidance about what to do next. I thought, "God, here I am, what do You want me to do?" On the fourth day I went to a nearby church to meet a priest my brother had told me about. This priest recommended I read *Autobiography of a Yogi*. He told me it was about a man who was also a seeker and had met many saints, had extraordinary experiences, and met his master—the one who guided him. Now I'm Jewish, I'm talking to a Catholic priest, and he's telling me about a yogi. What a combination!

I went to the library to take out the book, but they refused to let it out. I could only read it in the library, so I spent the next two or three days reading it, and I liked it. During this time, I remembered what my brother had said about Meher Baba being a master. I wondered if Meher Baba was as high a master as Yogananda's. I started thinking, "I've got to read this book my brother has."

The library had a copy of *Listen, Humanity*, so I began to read it. The thing that really impressed me about Baba was His work with the poor and the lepers—how He told them that God was equally in them, though they didn't experience it. He said He would help them. Baba wasn't doing it for show or out of humility, but for love of humanity. I thought, "This is really love in action." If a person is to be measured by the deeds they do, His were beyond what I would expect from any human being. When I read the "Highest of the High" message, about His coming throughout the ages, and now as Meher Baba, it made a lot of sense to me. "I've got to meet the Highest of the High," I said to myself. Right then and there I made up my mind to go to India and meet Baba. "Wherever He is, I'm going to go there," I thought. Just then the librarian came up with a pile of magazines about Meher Baba. In one of the magazines I found the New York group's phone number.

That day or the next I went to look for a job. I really needed money, so I got a job as an usher in a movie house. That night I called up the Winterfeldts and said I would like very much to have the address of Meher Baba. I told them I was planning to go see Him. Mrs. Winterfeldt was very nice and said she'd like to meet me first and invited me to the meeting the next night. I said I didn't

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want to go to a meeting, I just wanted to meet Meher Baba and that would be sufficient. But Mrs. Winterfeldt wouldn't let up, and I saw I wasn't going to get anywhere without attending a meeting. I had just started a new job, so how would it look for me to take off my second night on the job! But then I thought, "No, I can't wait another week. Why am I here, for this job or for spiritual direction?" So I called up my boss and told him I wasn't going to be able to come in. Lucky for me, He agreed.

An amazing thing happened that day, uncharacteristically I was worrying a lot, though I didn't know what I was worried about. This went on all day, until the meeting time came. I arrived at the Winterfeldts and as I was crossing over the threshold to enter their home, this incredible heaviness—this weight of worry—lifted and just disappeared. In its place, I experienced an amazing sense of well-being, and over the next hour the feeling grew more and more intense. I thought, "If this gets any stronger, I will actually see Him appear." The group was discussing Meher Baba's *Discourses*, and I found them very interesting. I wondered why there weren't more people present. When the meeting ended and I was getting ready to go, I realized that not everybody was experiencing what I was. They were in light, happy spirits, but not like I was. This was the only time that kind of experience happened to me. It must be that Baba wanted me to gain conviction of who He really is by giving me that experience. Afterwards I was really focused on meeting Baba. I wrote Baba a letter and in the letter I said:

Dear Baba,

I plan to come to see You and I will be leaving in two weeks. I'm only writing because some of Your followers here had said that I should contact You first to let You know that I would be going to see You and see if You have anything that You wanted to say. I expect to be leaving in two weeks and if I receive a reply as to where You might be and how I can see You within that time span, then I would be happy to get that, otherwise I will be on my way.

Now, there was one problem—I had no money. I planned on working my way over on a ship, but in the next two weeks I couldn't find work, though Baba did send a reply. He wrote that I could

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come to see Him for one hour only, wherever He was and then return back home. He gave me a phone number of whom I should contact in India. And signed it: "Love, Meher Baba."

Weeks turned into months. Six months had gone by, and I still had not made any money or found a job on a ship. One day a letter came, a circular distributed to all of Baba's lovers in the West. It said that soon Meher Baba would be entering seclusion for six months, during which time no correspondence and no visitors could be received. Only in an emergency would we be able to contact Him by telegram. At this point I was desperate; I couldn't figure out how to get the money. All of a sudden an idea came to me, and I wrote Baba a letter, "I want very much to have the benefit of Your love and guidance. The only thing standing in the way is money, and I can't see how money should stand in the way of such an ideal, providing it's Your wish." I sent it off. That letter was one of the first indications that I was really taking Meher Baba to be who He says He is. I was convinced it would take an act of God to get me over there, and I now took Him to be God.

I received a one sentence reply, "Don't worry; circumstances will adjust themselves. Love, Meher Baba." I was thrilled, and I thought to myself, "I wonder what's going to happen." In two weeks, it all came together in a single day, just like it was meant to be.

I had been working with my father in real estate, though I wasn't at all interested in it. Around this time, my father went out of town and he asked me to run the business while he was gone. He mentioned I might do some advertising to promote the parceled land we had been trying to sell. Now I got the idea that this was the way Baba was arranging for me to make the money to go to India. I decided that I would take out a full-page ad in the *Miami Herald* newspaper on Saturday and a half-page on Sunday. The prices of ads are doubled on Sunday, so it was no small expense. I made the arrangements. By mid-week my father returned and asked me what I'd done. I said, "You'll be very happy," and I told him about the ads, and he asked to see them. When I said that it was a full-page ad he yelled, "Do you know how much this costs?" Then I told him I had another half page coming out on Sunday. That did it. He said he was going to cancel them both, and he called the newspaper. But

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it was past the deadline—too late to cancel. So Saturday came and we were all set up and ready for the people who usually come early. All our salesmen were dressed up and we had a movie projector to show slides of the land. Only one lady came in all day and she said, "I don't have twenty-five dollars to put down, but I have five. Is that okay?" My father gritted his teeth, but he said yes. So by the end of the day we had only made five dollars!

My father was very nice and didn't harangue me. Early the next morning we were all set up and waiting again, but no one came. A little before twelve o'clock, I said to Baba, "I need a miracle. This is the best that I can do, or else I won't be able to see You." Just then I started to hear this strange sound, and it kept getting louder and louder and closer and closer. All of us were listening trying to figure out what it was. Then the doors opened up and a mob of people came in! The whole place was filled with people instantly, and the phones started to ring. People were asking, "Can I put down a thousand dollars instead of twenty-five." And; "I'm sorry we couldn't come in, but can you send somebody over, we want to get the land." From noon to 6:00 p.m., it was non-stop. We did incredible business, to say the least. So many people had signed contracts that I thought, "Now is my chance." I approached my father and pointed out what a success my idea had turned out to be. "I've had some good ads in my day, son," my father answered. Then I told him that the reason I had worked so hard was to earn money to go to India. My dad said, "Oh it was never the money, it's the principle of the thing. What a waste of money and time! This man says he's God, and you just believe that? He'll send you home and you'll be right back where you are. You wouldn't be in your right mind, if you were to go."

I was twenty-three and certainly old enough to take care of myself. So I decided that I would go with or without his permission. I knew that Baba would eventually endear Himself to my father and that he would one day thank me for telling him about Baba.

So, I took a jet plane and arrived in India and was taken to Guru Prasad in Poona (Pune). Meherjee was driving, and as we pulled into the driveway I could see Baba on the verandah watching—waiting for my arrival. Meherjee said, "Baba is waiting for you, so

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go over to Him." I scrambled out of the car and by then Baba was going back inside. About fifteen people were sitting on the carpet around Baba, who was sitting in His chair. I walked in with a big garland, which had been Meherjee's idea. I put the garland over Baba, and the first thing He did was take it right off and grab me and embrace me. He asked me where my brother was, and I had to explain how our father tried to stop us both from coming.

Baba gestured, "It would have been better if you'd both come together, but Ed will benefit just as much as you, even though he's not here."

Then Baba gestured, "How did you come?"

"Baba, I was able to come because it was Your will," I replied.

He made me stand up and repeat this to the group in the room. Just then someone else raised their hand in the back of the room, "But how did you get the money to come?" I was thinking, "That's not the point, it could have happened a thousand and one ways." As I was thinking that, Baba gestured, "That's not important." Then Baba had me sit back down.

I had been sitting with Baba for some time when all of a sudden He turned His head and asked, "How long are you going to be here?"

"One hour."

Then Baba asked Eruch what time it was. Eruch told Him and Baba looked at me and smiled, "It's already been two or three hours. How could it be?" He pointed to someone else and asked, "How could it be?" Then He became more serious and gestured, "Come every morning at 7:30, stay until I have My lunch. Go to your hotel for lunch and then come back and stay until the end of the day." Imagine my joy—one hour had turned into an indefinite stay!

After being with Baba for this short while, I truly felt that He is who He says He is. And I began to think that my intention in coming was to know Him as He really is—to experience the Infinite state that Baba spoke about—that He has come to give us. I thought, "Baba has come to give liberation and I have come to get it. If we got together, we would make a good team." That was my view.

Baba was so loving. One day He off-handedly told me, "You were sent to Me by another master." He just turned and conveyed

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that. Baba would look at the history of the soul, at how that person came to Him. Another time Baba asked me, "If I give you knowledge, what would you do?" I knew He meant Real Knowledge, and I replied, "When You give me knowledge, I'll know what to do." At one point, there was a room full of people, and Baba asked if anyone had any questions. I felt that Baba wanted me to ask a question, but I didn't say anything. Then He asked again and gestured, "Now is the time to ask." Again no one raised their hand, and I didn't say anything because my question didn't seem very important. Now the third time, Baba asked, "Irwin, do you have a question?"

My mind went into high gear, "I want it to be the one question to answer all questions." I thought, "What is that question?" Baba had stated that the one who asks for His love will be the chosen one. So I asked Him, "Baba, could I experience all Your love?"

He looked at someone in the room and asked, "Do you experience all My love?"

"No, Baba," came the reply. He asked another and it was the same answer. These were people who had been with Him many years. Then He asked me, "Why should I give you My love? Why shouldn't I give him or her My love?"

"Baba, I want You to give Your love to whomever You want, but I'd like to experience it, too." I said.

He picked up a jar and gestured, "I am the Ocean of love, the infinite Ocean of love, and you are in this jar that is the ocean. There is a lid on the jar that keeps the Almighty Ocean of love from coming in. All you have to do is remove this lid, and you will become one with My Ocean, and will be One with Me."

I had already formulated my next question to ask Baba about this, but just then Kaikobad came in and shifted the whole conversation. It was no longer appropriate for me to ask. Kaikobad was one of the only mandali members who had inner experiences. He repeated Baba's name 100,000 times a day. To me he looked pathetic; he was all skin and bones and he wore glasses. But however he may have looked, what great fortune! Baba told Kaikobad to tell me about his experiences, and he told me to go and listen. I did not much care to hear what he had to say, because I had been sitting with Baba, who embodied the highest experience of all. Kaikobad

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didn't like to talk, so the two of us together were quite a pair!

On another day that Baba allowed me to be with Him, I had the great good fortune to see Mehera. Mehera had been in seclusion, and Baba did not allow men to see her. I think it was Arnavaz who came over to me and said that Mehera would like to see me and asked if I would like to see her. I said "Yes." She told me to go in the back room and just wait for her. Mehera came out and stood a little distance away. She was really so happy to see me, a Westerner, who had come such a long way to meet Baba! At that time, very few young people were coming, so she had asked Baba's permission to see me. We had a short conversation. She was very sweet and very pleased, and I was happy to meet her. Later, in 1969, she gradually came out more in public, until finally everyone could see her.

On another day, Baba gave me, what I look back on now and see as, a test. Baba had a lot of people in front of Him in the room and He motioned for everyone to leave. I got up along with the others, but He motioned for me to stay. I was alone with Baba and Eruch; then Baba asked me some questions. "Do you believe that I am the Avatar?" I nodded yes. "Speak up," He gestured. I said, "Yes."

"Are you ready to obey Me?"

"Yes."

"But what if I were to ask you to walk about the streets naked, would you do it?"

"Yes."

"But what if I gave you food to eat and you didn't like it, would you eat it?"

Again my answer, "Yes."

"And what if I was to have your head cut off for Me, are you ready to do this?"

"Yes," I answered, but by then I wasn't even thinking anymore. Baba motioned for everyone to come back into the room. Boy did I have a lot to think about! Would I really do all that, I was wondering. "Well, I could try," I thought. "If I really believe He is who He says He is, I can try."

I thought that was the end of it, but the next day, Baba invited

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me to accompany Him to an orphanage. Baba was embracing the children, and at one point He came over to me with a platter of sweets that were being given out to all. I took one, and it was the worst thing I had ever tasted in my life. "How could they call this candy?" I thought. I was standing right behind Baba as I bit into the sweet. Suddenly it came to my mind what Baba had said about giving me something to eat that I didn't like. I was imagining that Baba would turn around and tell me to eat the sweet, but He didn't. I still had that one bite in my mouth and I spit it into my hand. I said to myself, "Baba didn't say I had to eat this. Why should I make an order up for myself?" I thought that was the end of it.

That first visit lasted two weeks and concluded because Baba was to go into seclusion. The day before I left He asked me if I would obey Him, and I said that I would. "If I ask you to return to the States, will you go?" What could I say? "Yes," I replied, though I really didn't want to. "I want you to return with My instructions." And then Baba motioned for me to come over and embrace Him. When I stepped back, Baba gestured, "Distance means nothing to Me. Time and space are no barriers for Me. I will be with you wherever you are. Don't worry, remain happy, I am with you."

When I left the room I had this incredible energy, like I had been drenched in a bath of water and stood up dripping—that was the sensation. I was drenched, not with water, but with a life source energy. It made me very restless, and the feeling didn't leave me until the next day.

A year later I returned to India with my brother Ed. On the day we were leaving to go home, a woman came out with some sweets. She said the sweets were prasad from Baba and everyone should have one. Usually the prasad Baba gave was really good, but this was the same bad-tasting sweet and now there was no way out. I had to eat it. "How am I going to swallow this?" I wondered. I was thinking about all the different ways. "Should I break it into little pieces and just nibble away at it until it's gone? But that will only prolong the agony. How about gulping it down? No, it's too big. Or I'll make my mind blank. But, I was never really good at that. No, just cold turkey, no tricks." So I did it, but I must say that I would only do that for God.

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Time didn't seem to matter with orders from Baba. A year had gone by before I had to carry out that eating order. And that was the only one of the three things so far that I've had to do. What really mattered was that if I was willing to do extreme requests, then I could do the everyday things of living my life better, as well. The little things can prove to be harder than any one of the extreme things that Baba had mentioned. It is rare that a person is called upon to sacrifice their life for God.

When I returned home after my first visit, a very interesting thing happened. My father did two things. He not only wanted me to continue working for him, but he gave me a raise! I thought he wouldn't want me back, because I had gone to India without his blessing. And he also gradually gained a great respect for Baba over a period of some years. He used to write to Baba and use Him as an intermediary to get my brother and me to do things, because we would obey Baba. My father would write a long list of demands, and Baba could pick and chose among them. One day I asked my father, "Who would you say your best friend is? Could you say that Baba was your best friend?" He spent a few days thinking about it, and mentioned different friends and their drawbacks. Then he finished naming all his friends and said, "Now, Meher Baba, Baba understands me. Yes, I would say He is my best friend." When Meher Baba dropped His body, my father actually saw Baba. Baba appeared to him.

Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai!

From a talk at Meherabad on August 14, 2000.

Revolutionary Becomes a Baba Lover

Bal Natu on Pukar

In 1950 when Baba stepped out of the New Life for a day, on the 16th of October, He called a meeting of His lovers at Mahabaleshwar, and over two hundred attended. Those invited to attend had been informed that whomsoever wished could offer money for Baba's work with the poor and the God-intoxicated. During the meeting, the time came for contributors to make their donations. Many availed themselves of this unique opportunity, though it was not compulsory. No one knew what others donated. While this was happening, the audience saw a stout young man silently stand and take off all his clothes except for his undergarment, a *langoti*. He was Parameshwari Dayal Nigam (later called Pukar) of Hamirpur in Uttar Pradesh.

During his childhood Pukar had been immensely devoted to Rama. The *Ramayana* was the book he revered and loved most. He could recite line after line from it with great devotion for Rama, the God-Man. After finishing his schooling, he gradually got involved in politics, especially because India was then under British rule and he vowed to free his motherland. The interest he had as a boy in leading a spiritual life slowly receded, and he became a staunch revolutionary, one of the top leaders of an underground organization in north India.

When he first heard of Meher Baba, he thought Baba might be a British spy, trying to divert the attention of other Indians from the struggle for freedom. He also suspected that Baba might belong to that group of false masters who cheat the gullible. Besides, his mind vehemently rebelled against the claim Baba made of being the Avatar of the Age. He even decided to expose Meher Baba as a fraud. Pukar openly expressed his views against Baba's divinity. But in spite of

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his efforts, he found that a few of his close friends and relatives in Hamirpur began to deeply love and worship Baba as God in human form. Their devotion coupled with his opposition led him to visit Hardwar and Dehra Dun to see Baba in person, but each time he just missed Baba.

In the early 1940's Pukar wrote a few letters to Meher Baba, challenging His authority. He criticized Baba's way of changing the dates of His programs so often, and at the same time expecting implicit obedience from His followers. In one of his letters, he rather impertinently asked Baba why hundreds of people in Bengal should die of starvation due to a severe famine, when Baba claimed to be the Avatar. He also wondered, when this could happen right under Baba's "nose" in India, how Baba could possibly relieve humanity at large of its suffering! In those years, Baba was very busy contacting the *masts*, and only certain letters were answered. Pukar did not receive any reply to this letter. Owing to his immature understanding of the spiritual work done by the Perfect Masters, he felt that Baba dared not reply to him. This made Pukar denounce Baba all the more. In spite of this severe criticism, his own relatives continued to love Baba, and he became more and more perplexed.

In this state of hostile bewilderment, he learned about the meeting at Mahabaleshwar. At the recommendation of his relatives, Pukar received an invitation and decided to avail himself of this opportunity to solve the conflict that had been raging within him for years. From the day he left for the meeting, he experienced some coincidences that made him feel that Baba was drawing him close. There were also incidents that confused him, but later he realized that he had simply misconstrued the facts. However, it could not be denied that the entire journey from Hamirpur to Mahabaleshwar was a significant and even glorious event in his life. On the way to Mahabaleshwar he participated in a gathering of Baba people at Poona (Pune). The *bhajan* program appealed to him so much that tears of unknown joy often rolled down his cheeks. He also heard with interest some incidents from Baba's life and was much impressed. In general, all of this made him decide that if Baba really was the One He claimed to be, he would surrender his entire life to Him and would not go back home.

At Mahabaleshwar, on the morning of October 16, 1950, Pukar

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watched Baba very lovingly embrace each of the visitors. He was greatly moved. Baba seemed to have established a perfect rapport with everyone He met. As Pukar approached Baba, he nearly broke down. Through the tears that flowed from his eyes, many of the doubts he had harbored about Baba's divinity were washed away. Later, in the meeting place in Florence Hall, he sat facing Baba and experienced an incredible awakening of the heart.

People with love and respect started giving money for Baba's special work. As this was optional, Pukar had not previously thought of donating any sum. But on the spot he felt so overpowered that he wanted to give whatever he possessed. He took off all his garments except his *langoti* and made a bundle of them. Before doing this, he had hurriedly scribbled a note that he placed in the pocket of his shirt, along with the money he possessed. The short note stated that he wished to surrender his money, body, and mind at the feet of Meher Baba, the Perfect Master, all in the service of the poor. In the spirit of this note, Pukar, as one of the integral components of the bundle, stood on it. Then he prostrated before Baba with uncontrollable sobs. As he stood in that gathering, nearly naked, a few thought that he was deranged; some even thought that he might be a *mast!*

It was all Baba's game. He gestured to Pukar to bring the bundle of clothes to Him. Someone helped him to go near Baba. Meher Baba looked intently at the clothes, kissed the bundle and returned it to Pukar. Baba instructed him, "Put your clothes back on. When this meeting is over, go back to Hamirpur. Continue the work that you have been doing. But remember one thing, that formerly you were doing it for yourself; now think that you will be doing it for Baba." This was a response to the intention Pukar had made at Poona to surrender his life to Baba. In a casual way Baba also conveyed, "It is the inner attitude that counts and not its outer expression." These words of advice helped Pukar in the coming years to understand that Baba's work of spiritual awakening is totally and qualitatively different from the propaganda and activities conducted by the philanthropic societies or political parties the world over.

This understanding was instrumental in his subsequent withdrawal from political and social fields to offer his services in Baba's cause. At the October meeting he had only a glimpse of Baba's

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divinity. The firm conviction of His Avatarhood occurred a few years later. At the time of this first meeting, Parameshwari Dayal was the editor of a Hindi weekly called *Pukar* (the Call), dealing mostly with the political and social issues of the time. Later this weekly was turned into a monthly magazine called *Meher Pukar*, which is still being published and is totally devoted to Avatar Meher Baba and His message of Love and Truth. As Parameshwari Dayal came in closer contact with Meher Baba, instead of calling him by his long name, Baba nicknamed him "Pukar," which is how he is known to this day.

Meher Baba's New Life phase concluded in February, 1952, and ushered in the Life phase, which Baba stated is "eternally Old and New." In this phase, in the early part of November, 1952, there was a gathering of Baba lovers at Meherabad that Pukar attended. During the meeting Baba agreed to visit Hamirpur and Andhra Pradesh to give darshan to the people. On November 21, Baba went to Ingohta, in the district of Hamirpur, and agreed to visit Laxmi Chand Paliwal's house, who was a rich landlord. Baba wished to walk to his residence, despite the pain in His hip from His recent automobile accident. So the mandali and a group of His lovers, including Pukar, followed Him. As they were walking, Pukar thought, "Is Baba only for the rich? Does He like to visit the houses of only well-to-do people?" As soon as this thought crossed his mind, Baba sat down in the dusty road for a minute without any apparent reason, and then stood up and walked ahead. Again the same thought flashed through Pukar's mind and again Baba sat in the dust in His clean clothes before continuing His walk. When this happened a few more times, Pukar's political approach to understanding Baba's actions received a considerable jolt. In the beginning Pukar kept trying to understand Baba's work with his mind and not his heart. But here he deeply felt that Baba was demonstrating to him that a seat in a mansion or in a dusty road made no difference to Him.

When Baba reached Paliwal's house He sat down on a large stone porch at the front of the big house. From a distance Pukar looked at Baba, and all of a sudden one of the special dreams that he had had as a boy was vividly revived. In Pukar's dreams, Rama, to whom Pukar was deeply devoted, appeared to him with a bluish complexion just as He is described in the *Ramayana*.

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In one dream, though, Rama had a much lighter complexion, and he wondered about it. Not only that, but He had sat on the same kind of stone porch, in the same position, as Baba now sat. For Pukar it was like seeing his dream come to life. The mystery of Rama's light skin in this one dream was solved as Pukar experienced that Meher Baba was Rama, come again as the Avatar.

This inner revelation was so clear and intense that Pukar's body began to twist and sway. It became hard for him to stay on his feet and he suddenly slammed to the ground with a loud thud. People rushed to help him up and eventually he was led to Baba. With a look of surprise, Baba asked Pukar what had happened. Pukar was sobbing uncontrollably and in a hoarse voice he related to Baba what had transpired within him during that short walk to Paliwal's house. Baba knowingly nodded and disclosed to Pukar that he had had close connections with Him in one of His previous Advents. Such a confirmation from Baba filled Pukar's heart with great joy.

It was a day for house visits so Baba sanctified some more houses of His lovers. In one of these houses there lived a strong, sturdy man, who was unfortunately crippled. It was hard for him to walk out into the front room of his house and greet Baba. So Pukar, in the exuberance of his love for Baba, went inside and asked the man to sit on his shoulders and then carried him to Baba.

It was a memorable sight to see the huge-framed Pukar carrying someone in that fashion to Baba for His darshan. Baba looked delighted. With a smile He conveyed that Pukar looked like Hanuman with a lover of the Avatar sitting on his shoulders. (Hanuman was one of Rama's most beloved disciples, who once carried Rama and Rama's brother, Laxman, on his shoulders.)

This and a few other incidents that Pukar witnessed during Baba's visit to Hamirpur and Andhra Pradesh, gifted Pukar with the conviction that Meher Baba is the same Ancient One, and he most willingly offered his life totally in Meher Baba's service. Pukar traveled throughout India, spreading Baba's messages, until his death in May, 1980.

From Glimpses of the God-Man, Meher Baba, Vol. II and III by Bal Natu.

God's Love Proven to an Atheist

Prof. Amiya Kumar Hazra

I was a staunch atheist. One day, while walking along a road in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, I saw a disciple of Meher Baba, named Bhau Kalchuri, addressing a large crowd. I stopped to listen and after the meeting, I went up to the speaker and asked him several questions, but his answers didn't satisfy me. I walked away ridiculing such proselytizing. Some days later I attended a wedding party and a Baba lover came up to me and gave me *The Theme of Creation* by Meher Baba. I read the booklet and was impressed. I told Muniraj, who had given it to me, that I would visit him later to discuss it.

Actually, I didn't visit him as I had promised, but one day I met him on the street. Muniraj offered me some other Baba books to read. Meher Baba claimed to be the Avatar, God in human form. I thought, "If He is that, then He must be omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient. And if He is, then He must prove it to me." Thus began a period of testing Him.

For example, one day my mother asked me to get some sour limes. I was relaxing in an easy chair reading a book and didn't feel like going to the market, so I thought, "If Meher Baba is omnipotent, He should send me some sour limes." A little while later a neighbor most unexpectedly sent us some sour limes. These silly sorts of tests went on and on. I must have tested Baba over a hundred and fifty times. Each time He "passed" the test, but somehow I was still not convinced, as I tended to attribute these happenings to coincidence. So one day I went into my room and said to Meher Baba, "Maybe there is a God and You are that God. Maybe I am deluded. If I get an experience directly from You, where no third person is involved, then I will accept You."

GOD'S LOVE PROVEN TO AN ATHEIST

After dinner I was sitting on my bed, when suddenly the whole room was pervaded with a milky white light. I looked around but could find no source for this light. I tied a cloth over my eyes, but still I could see the light. Then, in the white light beautiful colors appeared. For some time I was absorbed in the spectacle before me, the interplay of glorious colors and lights. A brilliant ring of golden light then appeared and moved with a terrific velocity right at me. I was starting to panic when I felt a sudden "seizing sensation" and I found myself leaving the room, my family, my home, at an incredible speed. Moving away, so far away that it seemed to me it would be impossible to ever return to the earth, much less to my family. I shouted and jumped from my bed and ran out of the room, hoping to escape this experience. I began praying to Baba to send me back to my family. "Meher Baba, forgive me for testing You," I pleaded. "Do not send me to some far away place. I love my mother. I love my father. I love my sisters. Please send me back." As I prayed, the experience gradually began to wane and my panic began to subside. I was so shaken by this event that I decided simply to go to bed.

The next morning, despite what had happened to me the night before, once more doubts began to spring up. Could it have been a hallucination? I met a Baba lover and told him what had happened. He said, "Believe in Baba now, or you will miss the boat for seven hundred years. You may write to Baba, if you wish."

So I wrote my first letter to Baba. His close disciple, Eruch, replied on Baba's behalf:

Baba says that it is your very absence from His presence that gives you a feeling that you are separated from Him. Baba is unimaginably close to your "self," and it is your very imagination that makes your search futile. Stop imagining, stop the search and find Him as your own true Self within you.... Realization of God is beyond the domain of imagination, for God is Truth and not imagination.... To stop imagining, mind must be annihilated. Love, pure unadulterated Love, alone can overcome the mind and find God as the True Self of all. Baba wants you to love Him more. Baba sends His love to you.

I wrote to Baba asking for orders, but I wondered after sending

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the letter whether Baba had really accepted me. In the reply Eruch wrote, "Baba sends His love to His Dear Amiya." This was the turning point in my life. From then on I thought about Baba constantly. I attended my job, but my mind was not there. I was thinking about Baba, longing to see Him. I wrote to Baba begging for His darshan, and Eruch replied, "Control yourself." I wrote and said that I would go mad if I couldn't have His darshan. I wrote letter after letter. Eruch replied, "If you cannot wait until the *sahavas* of February, 1958, come and see Baba at Guru Prasad for a day in December."

I cannot express in words my feelings when I read that letter. Simultaneously, I was overjoyed and yet tremendously apprehensive. What if Baba turned out to be an ordinary person? What if Baba had not been the One responsible for all the miraculous events that had occurred in my life of late? It would mean the death of hope, of faith, of everything I had begun to value. On the other hand, if He turned out to be who I conceived Him to be, then what joy and revelation that would be!

On the appointed morning, I rushed to Guru Prasad. As I walked up to the building, I saw hundreds of people, all strangers to me, excitedly anticipating Baba's arrival at 8:00 a.m. Everyone was so engrossed, waiting for their first glimpse of Baba, that no one took any notice of me.

I had not anticipated that this would be such a big gathering, and the possibility of being with Baba in close, intimate contact now seemed a remote hope. And even though I felt confident I would recognize Meher Baba from His photograph, I didn't know how Baba would recognize me. And how could I introduce myself in such a large crowd. I felt a little dispirited.

Just then people spotted a blue car slowly entering the gates. They rushed towards the car with shouts of "Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai!" and the atmosphere instantly became electric. As the car reached the portico, the door swung open, and a few members of the mandali alighted, followed by Meher Baba Himself, clad in a pink coat and white *sadra*. He was radiance personified. So graceful, so pure. His personality was so awe-inspiring and yet so heartwarming that all I could do was stand and stare.

GOD'S LOVE PROVEN TO AN ATHEIST

Baba nodded gently at His numerous devotees, and just as He started moving towards the big hall, He suddenly turned and looked at me with His big star-like eyes and smiled. The next moment He had gone inside with the disciples still shouting "Avatar Meher Baba ki Jail" and rushing after Him to get a seat as close to Him as possible. As hundreds rushed past me, I reflected that I should do the same, but I was too late. By the time I entered the hall, it was almost filled, and I could get a place only in the third to last row from the exit. My seat was behind some turbaned villagers so that I could barely see Baba.

I felt completely exasperated. Here I had come for the first time to meet Baba, and now I was not even able to see Him properly. And the worst part was that no one who knew me was there. No one could tell Baba that I had come. As the music started and some *bhajans* were sung, my despair mounted. I felt that I had come all the way from Bhopal only to see three turbans instead of Meher Baba! Just then the turbaned heads parted and I saw Meher Baba at the other end of the hall, sitting on a chair looking like the King of all beauty and grace. He stretched His hand and directly pointed His index finger at me and made some gestures with His fingers. A man, whom I came to know later was Eruch, bent down and asked "Amiya Kumar?" Baba nodded His head and again pointed at me. Eruch looked at me and said, "Amiya Kumar, Baba is calling you to Him."

I stood up, face to face with Meher Baba for the first time. He shone like the sun and His extraordinary eyes were on me. He had just proven His omniscience by singling me out of a crowd of hundreds, when no one there had any inkling as to who I was. I began to tremble. With every step I took, the trembling increased. I felt as if I were wading through water. This strange feeling of resistance to my forward progress made me so nervous I nearly fainted. I was an athlete, a sprinter, and I had never felt my legs so weak before. I became afraid that I would fall down unconscious, if I attempted to walk any further towards Baba, and I inwardly prayed, "Meher Baba, You are omniscient, You know me, and You also know that I am utterly unable to hold up my limbs at this moment, so please don't call me now."

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I staggered one or two steps forward and Baba gestured, "Amiya Kumar, Baba wants you not to come to Him just now, but He wants you to sit close to Him at that place," indicating a spot about ten or twelve feet to His right. I managed to stagger there and Baba gestured, "Amiya Kumar, you could not see Baba clearly before. Now can you see Him properly?" I nodded in assent with gratitude, and Baba beamed a comforting smile at me and soon began a discourse on obedience.

Although Baba's discourse was ennobling, I was more attracted by Him than by what He was telling us. Seeing Baba, I felt as if I had found my closest friend or relative with whom I had lost contact for ages and who loved me immeasurably. Yet I had been so full of doubts, criticisms, and sarcasm. I felt deeply sorry for my previous unjust thoughts and inwardly prayed to be forgiven. Baba, who had been busy describing something, suddenly stopped and turned fully towards me and looked at me with eyes so full of pity and compassion that instantly I burst into tears. Baba turned away and continued with His discourse. I wept for some time. Then I felt as if I needed a second affirmation of His divine forgiveness, for I felt my sins were very great. I managed again to look at Baba, who turned to me and looked fully into my eyes and eloquently conveyed to me His love and forgiveness. Again I burst into a flood of tears.

My weeping rose out of the depths of my heart—it expressed both my ecstasy in meeting Baba and my pangs of separation. Unable to control my weeping, I bit my wrist with my teeth. Even then it was difficult to overcome this emotional state. Yet I again wanted Baba to look at me with love, unconditional love, because I felt that I needed Him more than anything else in the world. Unfailingly, the Omniscient One turned to me and filled my heart with His love-pouring eyes. A love so sublime, so unselfish, so All-giving that I found a new meaning for the word. I made a pledge not to leave Baba's presence. This pledge made me happy, but not for long.

Soon giant baskets of sweets, which Baba lovingly touched, were brought in. Then a volunteer announced that all should leave the hall because the prasad was to be distributed on the back veranda and tea would be served there. Baba would stay in the hall, and after we had finished, we were to reenter and have His darshan again.

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All the devotees got up and began filing out, but I found myself in a fix. Should I honor my internal pledge or Baba's external order? Not knowing what to do, I looked at Baba, praying for Him to show me a way out of my dilemma. To my surprise and frustration He turned away and began gesturing to one of the mandali. My former doubts about Baba's omniscience returned with a vengeance. I rose and slowly joined those leaving the hall.

Clearly, it seemed to me, Baba's turning His face away indicated that He had somehow missed my prayer to Him. Yet, He had earlier responded to my thoughts many times. I was at a loss as to how to reconcile these facts. I finished my prasad and went out into the backyard of Guru Prasad to drink the cup of tea that was so hospitably being served. A volunteer smilingly handed me a cup, but before I could take a sip, one of the mandali ran out from the hall shouting, "Amiya Kumar, who is Amiya Kumar?" I identified myself. He looked at me sharply and said in a rather stern voice, "You are Amiya Kumar? Well, leave the cup of tea and rush inside the hall. Baba wants you!"

I set down the cup and began hurrying after him. But he said, "Don't walk—run, for Baba has been asking about you all this time." This surprised me since barely five minutes had passed. Anyway, as the man wanted me to run, I scampered back to the hall where another tough-looking volunteer looked at me sternly and said, "You are Amiya Kumar from Bhopal?" "Yes," I replied.

"Why did you leave the hall?" he demanded. "You come all the way to be in Baba's company and when He wants you, you are not there. You ought never to have left His presence. Now go in and meet Him."

"How dare he chide me for obeying Baba's orders?" I thought. But at that very moment my eyes caught sight of Meher Baba sitting on the sofa, softly smiling at me. All at once I knew that it was not that rough-tongued volunteer, but Baba Himself, who was taking me to task through him for leaving the hall and being false to my pledge. Yes, He was chiding me, but through that benevolent remonstrance He was also teaching me a lesson. Once I had made that pledge not to leave His presence, I should have stuck to it, not heeding the consequences for disobeying an order. And, because I

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had unilaterally made my pledge without consulting Baba, why did I expect Baba to respond to my prayer as to whether I should keep the self-made pledge or not?

Suddenly I heard Eruch say, "Amiya Kumarjee, come to Baba and embrace Him." I took a few steps forward in that empty hall, but now a deep sense of both shame and guilt overpowered me at having again doubted the One who had given me so many kind evidences of His divinity and, above all, of His affection. I struggled to go ahead, but when my eyes fell on His pure lotus-like feet, I could not proceed.

I was not worthy to touch His feet. He is so noble, so pure, so loving—and I am so suspicious, so mean, and so full of filthy egoistic vices. I sat down midway and said, "It is okay from here." But Baba gestured, His two arms continually calling me to Him. "Amiya Kumar, Baba wants you to come up to Him and embrace Him."

Again I tried, but seeing His eyes full of light and compassion, I lost the power to violate the sanctity of that Being with my unworthy embrace. I started to sit but Baba continuously motioned me to embrace Him.

"Why are you keeping away from Baba. Baba wants you to come close to Him and embrace Him," Eruch said in soft tones. Seeing no other alternative I went slowly up to Baba, closed my eyes and held my hands out like a blind man asking for alms. In a second I found my hands caught by the most loving hands I had ever felt touching me, then those hands drew me close, and soon I found myself locked in an embrace that to this day I cannot speak of. My head rested on His shoulder and He kissed me as a father kisses his son when they meet after a long interval. I felt all my sins being washed away by that holy touch and my heart full of misgivings was set to rest. Yes, Baba loved me, and He will always love me.

From Memoirs of a Zetetic by Prof Amiya Kumar Hazra.

Khorshed's Vision

An Interview by Ward Parks

Khorshed Kaikhushru Irani was one of Meher Baba's earliest and closest women disciples. She first met Beloved Baba at the age of ten just at the time when His outward involvement with Upasni Maharaj and the Sakori ashram was coming to an end; she visited Baba on a daily basis during the Manzil-e-Meem period in Bombay; and along with Mehera, Mehera's mother, Daulatmai, and her own mother Soonamasi, she was one of the first group of female disciples to take up residence in the Post Office building at Meherabad in 1923. With an intimate association with Baba extending from the very beginning of His mission through to His physical death in 1969, Khorshed was a living treasure-house of memories and reminiscences of the Beloved. While a full account of Khorshed's recollections would fill a book, what follows are a few selected stories from her early life leading up to her initial meeting with Baba. These accounts I took from her dictation two years before her death on August 4, 1999. Since English was not her first language, I edited them for readability but otherwise left them unchanged. This final draft was read to Khorshed and incorporates her corrections.

It was Khorshed's fortune to be born into a family of lovers of God. Her mother, Soonamasi, maintained a close connection with Baba from the time she first met Him until her death; and now her grave lies alongside those of Kitty, Rano, and Naja immediately on the south side of Baba's Samadhi. Her father, Kaikhushru Beheram Irani, was an ardent seeker of God who gave to Baba most of his personal wealth; many of Baba's early activities at Meherabad in the 1920's were in part supported (in the financial sense) by his gifts. Khorshed's maternal aunt was Gulmai, whom Baba called His

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"spiritual mother." Gulmai was married to Kaikhushru Sarosh Jr who built for his family residence "Khushru Quarters," now the Trust Compound, and who donated to Baba the property that He then transformed into the Meherabad ashram. Kaikhushru and Gulmai's sons (and thus Khorshed's cousins) were Rustom and Adi, both members of Baba's intimate mandali. In 1923 Rustom married Freny, the sister of Baba's beloved Mehera; and thus Khorshed and Mehera, close friends in the earliest days of the Meherabad ashram, were related by marriage. Among Rustom and Freny's children was a daughter, Meheru Irani, who accompanied Baba on the New Life and now resides at Meherazad. Sarosh Irani, one of Baba's mandali who under Baba's orders founded Sarosh Motor Works and Sarosh Cinema immediately adjacent to the Trust Compound and who later became the mayor of Ahmednagar, was the cousin of Khorshed's cousins, Adi and Rustom. In short, several of Baba's intimate longtime disciples numbered among Khorshed's close family relations.

From an early age Khorshed's father Kaikhushru had been spiritually inclined, but these longings were constantly thwarted by the worldly life that his circumstances had forced upon him. Khorshed's grandfather had owned a liquor store, and after his death, the responsibility for its management devolved upon Kaikhushru. "Kaikhushru did not like this at all," Khorshed continues, "because he was very spiritual. He was all the time thinking that he would like to spend his time praying to God instead of having to think about the world. He had a sister, two brothers, and a grandmother. He knew about Upasni Maharaj, Babajan, Sai Baba, Narayan Maharaj, Tajuddin Baba—he knew about all of them, and whenever he could he would go to their ashrams to see them. He was all the time sad at heart, because he did not like all the worldly things connected with the liquor shop that he was forced to spend his time on. 'If only I had more money,' he thought, 'I could stay at one place and retire, and devote myself to God.' So he used to buy tickets for bets at the horseraces, hoping that he would win. 'That would be good,' he thought. But he didn't win, and the feeling of sadness continued. A Muslim friend of his, noticing his condition, asked him, 'Why are you sad all the time?' He answered, 'I have no money, and I want more of it, so that I can give myself over to spiritual things.' 'In that case,' the Muslim friend said, 'if you really want to

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do something to fulfill your wish, you should undertake the *chilla*. Draw a circle on the ground, step inside, and for forty days don't eat or sleep, remaining in the circle all that time. And I'll show you the prayers that you should say. You have to be very strong-minded, because visions of wild animals will frighten you, but you must not come out of the circle.'

"Now Kaikhushru was indeed very strong-minded, and he decided he would undertake this austerity in order to get more money. So he went home and told his wife Soona, 'I have to do the *chilfa*.' He drew a circle in one corner of the room and told those around him, 'I won't be eating or sleeping or doing anything for the next forty days. Don't disturb me.' And he began on that very same day that he had received this advice from this Muslim friend. Thirty-eight days he completed nicely. But on the thirty-ninth day he fell asleep. And while asleep he had a vision. The Hindu goddess of wealth and good fortune, Lakshmi Devi, was coming straight towards him, and she said, 'Take this.' In her hands was a small baby. But he answered, 'No, no, I don't want any children.' 'Then what do you want?' Lakshmi Devi asked him. 'I want spirituality and money.' 'If this is really what you want,' Lakshmi Devi answered him, 'then take this baby. She will give you everything—money, spirituality—everything that you want, you will get it from her.' Hearing this, Kaikhushru changed his mind and thought, 'I will take the baby.' So he opened both hands and found that the outer extremities of both arms from his hands to his elbows, had changed from flesh to silver. He extended his arms, and Lakshmi Devi gave him the baby. And as soon as he looked at the baby, he thought that she was very beautiful, very charming, very active, very lovely. 'But what is her name?' he asked. 'Khorshed Banu,' said Lakshmi Devi. 'But remember, you have to give her every comfort, and keep her happy, and look after her very nicely and carefully. Don't give any trouble to her. Keep her happy always, and she will give you all that you long for.' With this, Lakshmi Devi vanished, and the vision was finished.

. "But Kaikhushru didn't immediately attach all that much importance to this vision. When it had ended, nonetheless, he came out of the circle and went out on the road for a walk. There he met

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another man walking along the roadside, and the man asked him 'Would you like to be with me as my partner? I have a jewelry shop in the business district of Bombay with eleven boys helping me. But I can't manage it alone, and I want a partner. Are you willing to become my partner?' And Kaikhushru said, 'Yes, I would like that.' And so he became a partner in a business more to his liking. And this happened as the first thing immediately after he came out of the circle. So he gave the liquor shop to his brother and took up this new line of business. Soon Kaikhushru's wife Soona had a baby boy named Eruch; but the boy died. Shortly after that Soona again got pregnant and gave birth to a girl. They thought this baby was very beautiful but didn't know what to name her. So they called an astrologer who consulted the baby's horoscope and told them, 'According to her astrological chart, the baby's name is Khorshed Banu.' As soon as Kaikhushru heard this name, he remembered the vision and said to himself, 'Oh this is the baby Lakshmi Devi gave me—the same one. For she said that the name of that baby was Khorshed, and this baby is Khorshed also; so this must be the baby she has given me.' And he was very happy with the baby, since it was a gift of the goddess." And so life went on, with the jewelry business flourishing. Kaikhushru would often visit Upasni Maharaj in Sakori. And the baby was growing up well, with Soona and Kaikhushru as her mother and father.

Lakshmi Devi, who figures prominently in this story, is, as the consort and female counterpart of Vishnu, a major figure in the Hindu pantheon and in contemporary Indian popular iconography. Vishnu himself, of course, represents the Preserver aspect of divinity in the supreme trinity of Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva (Creator-Preserver-Destroyer). It is Vishnu, according to Hindu tradition, who takes birth periodically as the Avatar. In view of Khorshed's own subsequent association with Mehera, often taken to be Beloved Baba's own female counterpart, it seems appropriate that Lakshmi Devi was to exercise a decisive impact on Khorshed's life, as the following account shows.

This episode occurred when Khorshed was still a young girl. "The family at the time was living in what is known as Parel, a section of Bombay, and our bungalow was called Irani Bungalow. It was

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only a one-story bungalow. Down below, on the ground floor, was the kitchen area and go-down (or storage room). On the first floor there was a single bedroom, with a hall and stairway that led to a balcony on the roof.

"One day, when I was still in my ninth year, not long after my thread ceremony (*navjote*), I was coming out of my bedroom and wanted to go out onto the veranda. And suddenly I felt both hands gripped by the wrists. And I wondered who had caught me. I looked, and I saw there were two small fairies, one on one side and one on the other, little, as if they were my age. The fairies had golden hair, golden locks, and blue eyes; they were very good and nice-looking with beautiful faces and blue ribbons and white dresses, girls both of them, and each had a pair of white wings. There were only two of these fairies, and they looked my age. Since the fairies had caught me, I wondered, what will happen now? And they took me to the staircase that led up to the balcony. I went along with them, and we came towards the roof. Out on the balcony I could see there was so much light, like the light of a hundred suns. And there was a good perfume, very strong and nice. I looked here and there, because I wanted to know what was going on. And on the middle of the balcony was a golden chair, and on that chair Lakshmi Devi was sitting. Then I knew what was going on, but the two fairies didn't let go of my hands, but they pulled me out onto the balcony.

"As soon as we came onto the balcony, Lakshmi Devi saw me, and I saw her, and she opened her arms to welcome me. The fairy put my hand into the hand of Lakshmi Devi, and she caught it and held it to her chest, very lovingly, pressing it to her chest with both hands. I came close to her. 'O my daughter, O my daughter,' she said, 'today I have caught you at last. O my daughter, I have wanted for so long to tell you something important. And today I have found you, so listen to me.' And when she began to say 'O my daughter,' then suddenly I thought that it had been Lakshmi Devi who had given my father a child, and I was that child. So now I wanted to listen to her and find out what she wanted to tell me. So she said, 'Listen to me very carefully. Don't marry. Don't marry.' And again that second time also she said, 'Don't marry.' So both times I nodded my head, saying 'Yes, yes.' And a third time she said, 'Don't just

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say, "Yes, yes." Think it over, and give me your answer.' She opened her hand, so I saw her hand, and thought, 'She wants my promise;' so I put my hand on hers and promised. And as soon as I had promised, she stood up and lifted me like we lift a little baby, with her hands under my armpits, and put me to sit on her chair. And then I saw that I was becoming like her, and all my body was shining and smelling like a nice perfume. And after letting me sit on her chair, she took off her crown and put it on my head. And I was very much surprised to see all these things that she was doing for me, but I didn't say anything, but kept quiet and happy. And then she embraced me so lovingly and told me, 'Do you know why I have given you all this and done all this for you? It is because you have made the promise, as long as you live.'

"And then the vision ended and everything vanished. It had lasted for only about five minutes. And I found myself back in the hall outside the bedroom where I had been when the fairies first took me by the wrist, although I didn't know how I got there. And as I came to my senses, I thought, 'What I have done? What have I promised her?' I began to think it over seriously. 'What am I to do now? I have to keep my promise as long as I am alive.' And then suddenly it came into my mind that I ought not to tell about this vision of Lakshmi Devi or the promise, not to my father or mother or anyone, because they would not believe me. They would only say, 'You are just a little girl. What is all this business of a vision and Lakshmi Devi and this and that?' They wouldn't believe it at all. So I would have to keep quiet and keep the promise that I had given to her. And in that way the days went by and I felt better, because I had found out the way to do it, by just keeping quiet.

"Meanwhile, my uncle was staying at the house, my mother's brother. He was a doctor and had a degree from London. He had a wife and a son and a daughter, and they loved us very much. Other aunties were there also, and we were all staying together in one bungalow, and all of us little children would play together. So one day my uncle's son suddenly told me while playing, 'O Khorshed, when you are older, then you will become my wife.' And I was so much shocked and angry, and I shouted, 'No, no it will never happen! I will never become anybody's wife.' But I didn't say anything about

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a promise. So my cousin went and told his mother, and she told my mother; and my mother came to me and asked, 'Is it true? Did you say this?' And I said, 'Yes.' And she said, 'But we promised my brother, and we have already arranged your marriage. What shall we do about our promise?' And I said, 'I don't know about your promise, but I won't marry.' And so my mother and my aunties thought, 'She must not like this boy,' and they began to show me other boys; but I wasn't interested in anyone. Whenever they would try to show me a boy, I wouldn't even look at him but would say, 'N' 'o,' no! 'N' 'o,' no!'"

In this way planning for Khorshed's marriage was for the time being brought to a halt. Several years later, when Khorshed had made contact with Baba and was securely in His fold, the subject of this vision arose again. The occasion was Baba's first visit to the property up the hill which later came to be known as Upper Meherabad. Since Kaikhushru (Gulmai's husband) owned this land, Gulmai had invited Baba to inspect it; and one fine day, with Gulmai, Mehera, Khorshed, and other women mandali, He did so. Now during this time, the subject of marriage and her promise to Lakshmi Devi had been on Khorshed's mind. For Baba had recently told Adi's sister Piroja to marry; and shortly after that, He had arranged for the engagement of Rustom, Adi's brother, with Freny, Mehera's sister. "What if He should ask me to marry?" Khorshed had been wondering. "What would I do? To obey Him, I would have to break my promise to Lakshmi Devi." So during the morning excursion, after Baba had inspected the water tank and other property and was leading the party back down the hill, Khorshed seized the opportunity to bring the matter to His notice. As it happened, Baba was walking swiftly ahead, while the women were following behind more slowly. Running after Him, as Khorshed continues, "I called out to Him, 'Merwanji, Merwanji, please!' Baba turned and looked at me, and I gestured for Him to stop. 'Merwanji,' I said as I caught up with Him, 'I have to tell you something, because I had a vision.' And I started to tell Him about my vision of Lakshmi Devi. But Baba stopped me. 'Don't think about this any more,' He said, 'because I know everything, and I will take care. So don't worry. I will see to everything.' So that meant that He would look out for me and would not give me the order to marry."

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Soon after that, Khorshed joined the ashram at Meherabad; and in the years that followed she lived with Mehera and the others as one of Baba's close female disciples. The question of Khorshed marrying never again came up; and she remained unmarried up until her death.

From Meherana Messenger, No. 7, Issue 1997.

My First Darshan

Bal Natu

It was in November of 1944 that I was finally blessed with the good fortune to have Beloved Meher Baba's darshan. Baba was planning to visit Nagpur and Saoner and I had been given permission to attend all of the programs. Along with Pandoba, who had lived with Baba at Meherabad during the *Prem* Ashram days, I traveled by train to Manmad. There we would catch the train to Nagpur.

When we arrived, we discovered that Baba and the mandali were already there. Their luggage was piled up like a long wall in the waiting room and Gustadji was sitting there, watching over it. Baba and the others were nowhere to be seen. Pandoba introduced us. Gustadji was wearing white trousers and shirt, a brown Parsi style long coat and a black round cap.

I had already heard some stories about Gustadji—about how he had been on silence for over sixteen years; had been with Sai Baba and then Upasni Maharaj before being turned over to Baba; and that he was now on the sixth plane of consciousness! But what impressed me the most was Gustadji's beaming countenance. From the first I was attracted to him, and I naturally gravitated towards his side. I sat down in the waiting room next to him. Although he was on silence, he was a "talkative" person and was eager to converse with anyone willing to take the time to try to understand his alphabet system of gestures.

As a digression, let me add here that over the years, I continued to seek out Gustadji's company. One day, a few years later, we were at Meherabad. I can't remember exactly what we were doing. Perhaps Baba was taking all of us on a tour of Arangaon. What I do

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remember is that we were all walking on the road, with Baba and the others at the front. I was at the back of the procession along with Gustadji. As we were walking, it occurred to me that this was my chance to ask him something which I had wanted to for quite a long time. I said, "Gustadji?" He gestured, "Yes?"

"May I ask you a question?" Gustadji gestured, "Go ahead, ask."

So I ventured, "Gustadji, is it true that you're on the sixth plane?" Gustadji nodded very authoritatively. And then gestured that he was advanced, quite advanced, and held up six fingers to confirm that he was on the sixth plane.

This made sense to me. After all, a man who had served three Perfect Masters (after coming to Baba, Baba had had him serve Babajan as well) and the Avatar, was obviously not an ordinary person. I walked along, perhaps with even a little extra pride that I was accompanying and was friendly with such a great soul, when I felt a tap on my shoulder. I turned and Gustadji gestured, "I have made a fool of you." He went on to "say" that in his whole life he had never even been on an airplane, much less the planes. And then he gestured, "Put the idea out of your head."

Anyway, to pick up the story, I was sitting in the waiting room next to Gustadji, when he got up and went outside for a moment, leaving me alone with the luggage. Although I am not particularly devotional by nature, I couldn't help but reach out and touch each piece of luggage. As I did so, I thought, "One of these is Baba's luggage." But then the thought came to me, "What if Gustadji comes back?" I quickly removed my hand and stepped back. I looked around. Gustadji had not returned. Seizing the chance, I bowed down to the luggage.

Gustadji came back and we sat there. Just before our train arrived, Baba came and sat on a bench at the far end of the platform. Adi Sr. was sitting next to Him. I was too shy to even think about going forward and disturbing Him.

When the train arrived, Baba and the mandali got into a compartment which had been reserved for them. I found some room in a crowded third class compartment.

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Word had gotten out that Baba was on the train and as we pulled into stations, often there were many people on the platform, hoping to see Baba. The mandali would lean out of the windows and ask those on the platform, "Have you come to see Meher Baba?"

Getting an affirmative reply, the mandali would gesture to the back of the train and say, "He's back there. Go there." I witnessed this curious behavior and thought, "What is this?" I didn't know, nor did it occur to me at that time, that the mandali were simply trying to spare Baba the aggravation of dealing with large crowds of the curious.

When the train pulled into the Nagpur station I got down, and I saw Baba standing at the entrance way leading into His compartment, holding on to the two vertical rails on either side of the door. He was wearing a yellowish silk jacket with a rose garland. Yet, His complexion was even more radiant than the roses.

I am not a judge of beauty. To this day, when people comment about the extraordinary beauty of this movie star or that personality, I find that I often can see nothing unusual about the person. Or even when I can tell that they possess some beauty, I am never particularly carried away by it. And yet, my immediate reaction, on seeing Baba standing there, was of His immense beauty.

His forehead seemed especially luminous, while His flowing hair framed His face which was set off by the incredible luster of His eyes. His skin seemed to glow as if it was not reflecting the light so much as transmitting it from some internal source. I simply stood and stared at Baba. In fact, it would not be going too far to say I was in a kind of a trance, absolutely mesmerized by the sight of God in human form.

Of course, at that point, I still had never met Baba, had never approached Him, or spoken a word to Him. In the large crowd that was on the platform, I was merely one anonymous figure, and a very thin and insignificant one at that. And yet, I felt that Baba looked at me and smiled, as if not only acknowledging, but signifying His happiness, at my presence there. Looking back on it now, I can see that from that very first moment, Baba made me feel accepted.

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Amid loud cheers of "Shri *Sadguru* Meher Baba ki Jai!" Baba stepped down onto the platform and left the station. After a moment or two, I partially came down from my entranced reverie, gazing at Baba's form, to find that someone had picked my pocket. Perhaps it will indicate just how affected I had been by my sight of Baba to mention that it was an inside breast pocket of my coat which had been picked. I hadn't noticed anything until I reached inside to get my ticket so I could leave the platform.

It was only then that I discovered that my wallet with all my money, as well as my train ticket was gone. I didn't know what to do. In those days, when one left the station, one gave one's ticket to the guard. Without a ticket, you couldn't leave the station. As many people had come on to the platform to greet Baba, I squeezed into the middle of a large group and figured that I would try to pretend that I was part of the crowd and sneak out that way.

Although, ordinarily, you needed to hand in your ticket when you left the station, on special occasions, when local folks had come to meet some big personage, they were allowed on to the platform without a platform ticket and were allowed to leave without one too.

My luggage had already been collected and put with the mandali's and so I didn't have a bag in my hands to identify me as someone who had traveled on the train. I boldly (but with much trepidation) walked out of the station surrounded by many others.

To my great relief, I made it past the entrance. Once I was safely outside, I stopped and stood for a moment or two, feeling very thankful and sighing with relief. Just then I felt a tap on my shoulder. I turned, and there was a railway official, with the ticket collector insignia on his collar. My heart sank. "He's caught me," I thought. "He must have seen that I'm a stranger, not one of the local Nagpur folks." My mind raced on.

"Now," I thought, "instead of getting to spend time with Baba, I'm going to have to go to the police station and who knows what will happen. I don't have a ticket, I don't have any money, are they going to believe me that I am a victim of a pickpocket or will they simply think I'm a ticketless traveler and treat me accordingly?"

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The ticket collector said, "Natu? Don't you recognize me?" It turned out he had been a friend of mine in school a dozen years earlier. Under other circumstances I would have been very happy to have met him again after all these years, but as it was, I am afraid that I was so relieved that I wasn't being retained that I merely said, "Yes, yes," to his happy recollections and fled almost immediately. No doubt leaving a rather puzzled friend behind.

Again, with hindsight, I can see that from the first Baba established a pattern that would remain constant throughout my years of contact with Him—an emotional roller coaster of ups and downs, whose purpose, I think, is to teach us to learn to be resigned to His will.

Baba and the mandali were put up at K. K. Thakur's, who had a place just a little off to one side of Dr. Deshmukh's. A little bit away on the other side was a building where some of the rest of us were put up. We were to be housed on the second floor. When I first heard this, I had a moment's hesitation. My health was rather delicate and the doctor had told me that I should avoid going up and down stairs as it put too great a burden on my weak heart. However, I thought, "Now I have come to stay with Baba, I won't worry about such things." And I didn't give it a second thought. Nor did I experience any difficulties with my health. We had our meals at Dr. Deshmukh's and, the next morning, there was a program at Thakur's bungalow.

This was my first chance to attend a Baba program. I felt too shy to sit near Baba, but found a place somewhere near the back or off to the side where I could unobtrusively stare at Baba's incredibly radiant face without disturbance. I had not brought a garland or indeed anything to offer to Baba. Of course, even if it had occurred to me to do so, I didn't have the means as I was penniless, but the truth is that I was still in another world, still transported by Baba's beauty.

I was more than content to not join the lines queuing before Baba to have His darshan, and stayed where I was, continuing to gaze at Him. Nor did I feel that I was missing anything by not going forward for darshan or prasad. I was completely satisfied with the incredible opportunity afforded me to simply gaze at Baba's face. It was endlessly captivating and fascinating, for not only did His ex-

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pression seem to change moment by moment, but even His beauty had an ever renewing quality to it.

I may add here, that over the years, this habit of mine did not change. I continued to be quite happy finding an out of the way place in the crowd and never felt comfortable trying to get physically near Baba. Of course, if He called me near on His own, that was a different matter. I also may add for those who may be curious, that I tended to look at Baba's forehead. I didn't want to stare at His eyes because this became a disturbance to Baba which I felt He did not want.

That evening there was a program at the National College. An article had been published in a local paper warning people to keep away from saints and *Sadgurus* and the article had mentioned Baba's name. Perhaps because of this, there were many in the crowd who had come out of idle curiosity and even some who seemed frankly hostile. Dr. Deshmukh, who was a professor at the National College, performed a *kirtan* (a presentation of Baba's life and message through song), honoring Baba's divinity.

I was deeply impressed by Deshmukh. As he sang, he seemed to lose himself in his words of praise. He was completely indifferent, even oblivious, to the reactions of others. And there were quite a few college students in the crowd who were openly making fun of the idea that anyone, like Baba, could claim to be one with God, and they were ridiculing Deshmukh's *kirtan* as well.

For some, this might have caused discomfort. They might have felt embarrassed to reveal their heart's feelings so openly before their colleagues and students, but Deshmukh's conviction in Baba was so absolute, that no one else's opinion in the universe mattered to him. I don't remember what Deshmukh said about Baba, but I have never forgotten the way in which he said it. This made a deep impression on me.

For His part, Baba also seemed to be completely unaware or uncaring that there was anyone in the crowd who was not completely devoted to Him. He seemed totally at ease and happy. As with other programs during this period, a message Baba had prepared was read out.

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The next day, Gadekar (one of Baba's lovers and an acquaintance of mine) arrived with his family and a message for me. He told me that my mother, along with one of my sisters, had decided to come. Apparently she was worried about me, anxious about what I might be getting myself involved in, and had come to check things out for herself. Gadekar told me that they were traveling to Wardha and expected me to go there and bring them back to Nagpur.

Hearing this, I felt a certain amount of annoyance. "Why does my mother feel she has to come?" I thought. "Now I will have to lose some precious moments in Baba's company, wasting my time in senseless traveling to Wardha and back." It never occurred to me not to go, how could I do that? But I wasn't happy about it.

Even though I had only been in Baba's company for a day, I knew that the general rule was that once one had come to be with Him, one had to seek His permission to leave before the scheduled time. I sent a note to Baba through Pandoba and explained the situation. Baba relayed His permission for me to go to Wardha, which I planned to do the next afternoon.

The next morning Baba made house visits and in the afternoon there was another program at Thakur's bungalow. Dr. Ghani, (who was one of the mandali who was most helpful to me in the early years in gaining some perspective on what life with Baba was all about), read out Baba's message on two aspects of Divinity.

This message introduced new concepts to me. Although I do not claim, to this day, to truly understand it, I felt, at the time, that it helped me get some perspective on the world situation. For the first time, much which had puzzled and even distressed me in the world, I could now see in a way which made more sense. My mind, which had always found it difficult to reconcile the suffering that exists in the world with the apparent indifference of "spiritual" masters, was now mollified to some extent. Perhaps that made me feel even more unwilling to leave Thakur's to go to the station. I think I must have borrowed some money from someone for my ticket.

Just as I stepped out of the building and had gone only a short way, I was hailed by a man I didn't recognize. He called out my name and came up to me. It turned out that he was a distant relative and had come to tell me that my mother had decided to travel

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to Nagpur on her own and that her train would be arriving at the station fairly soon. If I had left Thakur's only a moment or two earlier I would have missed him. I would have ended up traveling all the way to Wardha only to discover that my mother had gone on to Nagpur. Not only was I spared that, but now I would not have to miss much of Baba's program as the trip to the station and back was not too long.

In hindsight, this too seemed typical of Baba's way with me. My annoyance and distress were instantly overturned into surprise and delight, and through the means of an incredible coincidence. This has happened so often in my life with Baba that I have come to see these coincidences as His private conversation with me, assuring me of His omniscience, compassion and loving personal care.

Perhaps I should add here that my mother came and stayed very briefly and left completely reassured that I was in good hands. Although my mother remained devoted to Ram, after her visit to Nagpur, she never had any problems with my following Baba. She continued on her path, and I on mine, and there was never any conflict between us because of it.

Another incident which stands out in my memory concerned Pankharaj from Jabalpur. Baba had told Pankharaj that every day, while they were in Nagpur, it would be his duty to collect the telegrams sent by Vishnu and give them to Baba. Meanwhile, Vishnu had been instructed to send telegrams every day in care of Dr. Deshmukh in which he reported on the health of the men and women mandali left behind at Aurangabad.

One day there was no telegram for Pankharaj to pick up. That afternoon Baba called and asked where the telegram was. He looked a little annoyed to hear that it had not arrived. He gestured, "Vishnu would not have failed to send a telegram." Pankharaj replied, "Baba, this is war time and top priority is given to military, not public communications." But Baba insisted, "Go back to the post office. Ask well and bring Me the telegram. They must have made a mistake."

I should explain that in those days, despite the war, the telegram service was extremely efficient. A telegram sent one day from Aurangabad would ordinarily arrive the same day in Nagpur. Pankharaj went back to the post office while Baba and everyone else

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proceeded to the Convocation Hall, where a large program had been arranged by the Vice-Chancellor of Nagpur University.

Many "prominent" people had gathered and a few delivered speeches in Baba's honor. The proceedings were rather formal and yet, while all this was going on, Baba spotted Pankharaj standing near the back of the hall by the door. He looked at him and made a gesture which plainly meant, "Have you got it?" Pankharaj shook his head, "No."

Except for a few who, like myself, were aware of Pankharaj's mission, no one in the hall had any inkling of what was transpiring. Baba's gestures were so quick, and so apt that while they were meaningless to the crowd, they conveyed their meaning perfectly to Pankharaj. In the very next instant Baba had turned and was enthralling yet another heart with a glance.

The next day, Baba was due to visit Saoner. That night, after supper, Baba called Pankharaj and said, "Tomorrow I am visiting Saoner. You should not join the mandali in the morning, but come by a later bus after today's telegram is received."

At nine that evening, Pankharaj was called again and Baba asked if he had received the telegram yet. Exasperated, Pankharaj replied, "No telegram. I have made the necessary inquiries. What else can I do in this matter? I can't help."

Baba turned to Adi Sr., who was standing by His side and asked, "Had Chanji been alive to attend to the correspondence, what would have been his reply?"

Adi promptly answered, "Definitely not like that of Pankharaj. He would have humbly said, 'I will try once more, Baba.'"

This was in reply to a letter Pankharaj had written to Baba two months earlier in which he had expressed his desire to come and work for Baba, suggesting that now that Chanji was gone, he could take his place. Baba now gestured to Pankharaj to come close and Baba reached out and twisted his ear, remarking, "Do you know now how competent you are for Chanji's work?"

When Baba points out one's inadequacies, one cannot help but feel the truth of Baba's remarks. At the same time, Baba's love softens the blow and Pankharaj was happy as he took this rebuke, or

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the manner in which it was delivered, as an expression of Baba's intimacy with him.

At the same time that Baba brings home to us our little egoistic characteristics, He makes us feel that He loves us anyway. His love is unconditional, and therefore our desire to change is motivated not so much because of the rebuke, as it is by the love that is provoked within us by Baba's love for us.

The all too typical footnote to the above story is that at midnight Pankhara] was called yet once again by Baba. With some trepidation, Pankharaj went into Baba's room, only to find Baba in a very happy mood. Baba spelled out on the alphabet board that the telegram had arrived and that someone had given it to Kaka Baria. Kaka had been on his way to the bathroom and he had put it in a drawer of a mirror stand for safe keeping until he returned and then completely forgot about it. It was just by chance that he happened to reopen the drawer a little while ago and found the telegram. Baba concluded, "Go. Have a good rest. Do join the mandali going to Saoner, without fail."

Thus Pankharaj had gone through a quick succession of downs and ups, with the end result being that he felt closer to Baba, and more determined to be worthy of His love. I should add here that Pankharaj went on and worked for years in Baba's cause in his home town of Jabalpur. And what work he did too! What a gem he was. But even gems have to be polished and set in place by the master jeweler.

Continuing with my story, I too had been invited to attend the program at Saoner. Again, it is not possible to put into words the heart capturing excitement of the day. The enthusiasm which being in Baba's company brought, the vibrant sense of anticipation and excitement, is something that is not easily described. One not only felt more alive when around Baba, but one felt as if one's surroundings and every event, even the seemingly mundane, became imbued with added significance and profundity. It is no wonder that one's moments with Baba remain so deeply etched in one's memory.

That evening we were all leaving. As I was packing, someone came to me and asked me where I was traveling to. "Why," I replied, "what's the matter?"

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The man informed me that he was purchasing tickets for those going with Baba and that a third class bogie had already been reserved for Baba and party from Nagpur to Manmad, a journey of about twelve hours. This was an incredibly sweet surprise to me, as I had to go to Manmad to get a train for Kurduwadi. But it had never occurred to me that I would be traveling in the same compartment as Baba! This was beyond my wildest dream.

And the more I thought about it, the more inexplicable it seemed. For until now, I still hadn't been introduced to Baba. I had not had a private interview, or even bowed down to Him in a darshan line. I had not even really spoken more than a few words to any of the mandali either. And yet I knew that no one would be allowed to travel in Baba's compartment without His permission. I wondered how He even knew that I was there. But I didn't worry about this, I was too happy at the prospect of traveling with Baba to examine how this had come about. I just accepted it as one more indication that Baba's grace was ever flowing towards me.

Maybe, it was this which prompted me to feel that I had to, at last, buy a garland and some fruit to offer Baba. Or maybe, it was simply the fact that in preparing to leave, I was somewhat jolted out of the dazed state I had been in ever since seeing Baba standing on the train, holding on to the railings on either side of the door. At any rate, the thought suddenly came to me, "My goodness, here I've been with Baba all these days and I haven't offered Him anything!" I had seen thousands of people give Baba garlands or fruit and yet I had not offered Him a single thing. My mother had given me some money when she had come, so that was no longer a problem and I immediately set out to rectify my omission.

Without telling anyone, I slipped away and went into the city on foot. I don't know what kind of foolhardy enthusiasm had me in its grip for I didn't know the city at all. I had no idea where the market was and, as I've said, my health made it difficult for me to walk long distances. Still, without a thought, I headed into town and succeeded in buying a nice rose garland. As Nagpur is famous for its oranges, I bought some, and a coconut and a lotus as well. By the time I got back, I found that there was no one in the house where we were staying. All of my luggage had also disappeared. What to do now?

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I felt I had to offer Baba all that I had just bought and so I headed over to Thakur's bungalow. I found that place also practically deserted. The luggage truck had already left and the mandali seemed to be gone as well. There was no one on the ground floor, so I headed upstairs where Baba stayed. As I passed the first room the door was open and I could see inside. Baba was sitting there, with Adi Sr. by His side. It was almost as if Baba had been waiting for me.

I entered the room, but it never occurred to me to tell Baba who I was. Baba looked at me very lovingly and smiled. It seemed so natural to be in His presence; He made me feel so completely accepted that without hesitation I went forward and gave Him the oranges, and the coconut and the lotus. Baba twirled the long stemmed lotus in His hands and looked very happy with my gift. He motioned for me to garland Him, which I did. Then Baba stood and gestured for me to embrace Him.

Although I had been corresponding with Baba, there was no way for Him to know who I was. We still hadn't been introduced or exchanged a word of greeting. But when He gestured for me to embrace Him, I stepped into His arms. What need was there for any introduction, or words?

What can I say about that embrace; it enveloped me so completely that I feel it continues to this day. It was so complete and timeless that its loving reassurance continues to uphold me even now, over 55 years later.

Baba then gestured to Adi that he should see that a *tonga* took me to the station. This was done. There was quite a crowd at the station, come to see Baba off. I got into the compartment and looked out at those on the platform. Many were obviously deeply affected by the imminence of Baba's departure; some were openly sobbing. As the train pulled out, I watched everyone waving farewell to their Beloved, their voices shouting out, "Shri Meher Baba ki [ai!]" or "Shri *Sadguru* Meher Baba ki Jai!"

It was a thrilling sight to behold, especially when secure in the knowledge that I still had twelve hours in front of me of being so close to Baba. As usual, Baba made sure that the atmosphere in the compartment was good-natured and casual. He distributed fruit, which had been given to Him, to everyone there with His own hands.

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Then He turned to this one or that and asked them to tell a joke, or sing a song. I was quietly sitting in my seat, enjoying this delightful intimacy with Baba. Maybe I was even a little overwhelmed by it for all of a sudden the thought popped into my head, "Why don't you sing a song for Baba?" Just then Baba pointed at me and gestured, "Sing."

I did so. God knows what the others in the compartment made of my poor attempt, but Baba gestured that it was "good." Of course, to Baba, even the worst is but a degree of good. And Baba does not judge such things by worldly standards anyway; He responds to the love which motivates the attempt. One time .Baba declared, "Whatever is offered to Me with love, I accept with love."

Anyway, after singing the song, Baba gestured, "How did I know you wanted to sing?" This was an indication to me that Baba indeed was omniscient. But it was done in such a friendly and matter of fact manner that it did not inspire awe as much as it did confidence. It did not create distance, but brought me closer.

In the early morning we reached Manmad. From there I was catching the train to Ahmednagar. Baba and the mandali were traveling on to Aurangabad so they all got down. It seems significant to me that we were separating at Manmad, as that was also the place where my journey with Baba began. In between, Baba had silently spread the feast of His love every day and it was true to say that I was not at all the same person I had been who had boarded the train at Manmad a mere six days earlier.

Thus my six day journey with the God-Man reached its end but my endless journey with Him continues to this day, until, with His grace, I find my Abode in Him.

Edited from Glimpses of the God-Man, Meher Baba, Vol. I by Bal Natu.

Glorifying the Lord through Song

Bal Natu on Prakashwati Sharma

From a very early age, Prakashwati Sharma was an ardent devotee of Lord Krishna. She loved to sing *bhajans* addressed to Krishna and longed to see Him. In the late 1930's, she received word that a seven-year old girl named Pashi was seeing and conversing with Lord Krishna while wide awake.

Prakash earnestly wished to meet this girl, but when she reached the place where Pashi was residing, she found many people already assembled. In fact, there was a big crowd, a sort of village fair. Prakash was of two minds—to stay there and wait as long as necessary, or to go home and return after a few days. Finally, she resolved to wait until she could meet Pashi. The moment she determined not to leave, to her utter surprise, she heard her own name and residential address being called out.

She was ushered into Pashi's hut for an audience with this child of the Lord, and during their brief conversation, Pashi said, "Lord Krishna tells me that your time for His darshan has not yet come." Prakash felt disappointed, but humbly inquired when that opportune moment would be. Pashi replied, "You have to wait for some years. Then, at the right time, He will give you His darshan; it will be in a thatched hut near the Ganges." Prakash at that time was living in a town in northern Punjab (now in Pakistan) which was far from the banks of the Ganges.

In the course of time, Prakash married, had children, and in a way became immersed in her worldly life and family duties. In the mid 1940's she was residing with her husband and children at Rawalpindi, near Islamabad, the present capital of Pakistan. Their

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neighbor, Kishan Singh, had a government job in the Controller of Defense Accounts Office of the Air Force. Kishan Singh's wife had died in 1936 leaving him with three children. A few years later he had to leave Rawalpindi for some months because of his work, and during his absence Prakash felt moved to take care of his children. This served as the coincidence that brought the two families closer together.

In Kishan Singh's house there were many beautiful pictures of Meher Baba, who looked most charming with His flowing hair and warm smile. Prakash used to address Kishan Singh as Babuji, but she would refer to Baba as "Babuji's fashionable Baba."

Soon thereafter, Kishan Singh was transferred to Delhi. A few years later, due to the partition of the Indian subcontinent into India and Pakistan, most of the Hindu families from northwestern Punjab migrated to India. There were special refugee camps established in different parts of India for the large influx of displaced people. Out of all these camps, Prakash and her family went to one in Hardwar, which is situated on the banks of the holy Ganges. Whether she was hoping to see Lord Krishna there, we do not know.

The days that followed partition were terrible in all ways for those refugees who had left their homes and farms behind and had come to India with only the barest necessities. In many ways these times tested Prakash's faith in God, her Lord Krishna. She was soon physically and mentally stressed beyond her limits. Out of necessity she was rushed to Delhi for medical treatment and underwent a thorough diagnosis and extensive treatment. At last, after a blood transfusion, she felt a little better and was discharged from the hospital. By this time, her husband had secured a job in Delhi and Kishan Singh graciously accommodated the entire family in his house. Here she began to gather more information about Meher Baba, the real Beloved.

Love is self-communicative, and as a person goes through life, especially after passing through an ordeal like Prakash's, the heart may either become embittered or grow more receptive to the give and take of real love. With Prakash the latter happened, and so she began to appreciate Kishan Singh's one-pointed love for Meher Baba and the part that Baba played in his life. Kishan's silent and natural

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admiration for Baba's love opened her heart. Wholehearted and honest adoration is the prelude to receiving pure love.

With genuine interest, Prakash listened to Kishan Singh tell of his intention of joining Baba in His New Life, and she also paid close attention to his experiences of Baba's omniscience. Gradually she grew so interested in Baba that she suggested that they start a Baba Center in their own house. Weekly meetings were held in which she fervently sang *bhajans* in praise of Baba. However, she still regarded Baba only as a saint, though perhaps of a higher order.

To maintain the atmosphere of Baba's love, Prakash also inaugurated a *sankirtan* (devotional singing in praise of God) on a weekly basis. All these meetings slowly but surely began to have a far-reaching effect on Prakash, perhaps more than she could have imagined at the time. It was about then that Kishan Singh and Prakash were both impressed by the book *Avatar: The Life Story of the Perfect Master Meher Baba*, a narrative of spiritual experiences by Jean Adriel. They even presented a copy to the Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru.

The weekly meetings brought Prakash in contact with Baba people in Delhi. At Baba's birthday celebration, she began to feel that Meher Baba might be the Avatar in the same sense that Krishna was. Her heart became fired with the idea of meeting Baba in person. From Kishan Singh she learned that Baba would soon be visiting Hardwar, but He was not seeing anyone because He was in His New Life. Therefore, Kishan told her that it would not be good for her to go to Hardwar during the forthcoming *Kumbha Mela* in April, 1950, as she might thereby inadvertently disobey Baba's instructions.

Although Prakash had great regard for Baba, she still did not consider herself a Baba lover as such, and felt that Baba's instructions to His lovers did not apply to her wish to see Him. She felt a great urgency to know from personal experience who Meher Baba really is.

During her talks with Kishan Singh she had learned that around that time Baba planned to stay in a secluded house belonging to Sansar Chand, which was not far from Motichur, a village close to Hardwar. Unable to control her restless heart's yearning to see Baba, one day she left for Hardwar with her two-month old baby in her

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arms. She could not wait any longer at Delhi. Prakash hired a room near the railway station in hopes of meeting Baba on an arriving or departing train, and she kept a watch on the road.

When the day passed without her seeing Baba, she decided to go to Motichur in search of Baba's residence. She hired a rickshaw that evening, but the man proved reluctant to take Prakash there, because the road led through a forest and she did not even know the exact location of the house. This did not deter Prakash, however. Filled with an overpowering urge to see Baba, she hired a horse cab and started out. After traveling some miles, the horse suddenly stopped on the road and refused to budge, in spite of a hard thrashing by the cabman.

Prakash got down to ask a shopkeeper the whereabouts of the bungalow. He laughed aloud at her query and said, "The horse seems more sensible than you people. The dumb animal stopped exactly before the place you are seeking." On being asked who was staying in the house, the man replied, "It seems that a very rich businessman with an exceptionally charming face is staying there. But God has been cruel, for He has made him a dumb person!" This was clear information to Prakash that it was Baba's residence.

Prakash noticed a gardener sitting outside the gate of the house, and she asked him who stayed there. He replied, "A most handsome *seth* (businessman) from Bombay-side, who, unfortunately, is unable to speak, has come here for a short stay." After entering the gate, Prakash noticed that someone was lighting a stove, perhaps for the evening meal. He was one of Baba's mandali and he told her that Meher Baba was not there, but he added that He might return the following evening.

Prakash returned to Hardwar with glowing thoughts of meeting Baba the next day and hardly slept that night. With her heart full of expectations, mingled with the fear that Baba might not see her, she set off again for Motichur. It was late afternoon and without any difficulty she reached the bungalow where Baba was staying. This time, fortunately, Baba was there, and with His back to the door, He was communicating with Eruch via the alphabet board. Prakash noticed an enclosure of bamboo screening, which provided privacy for the occupants. As she went closer, Baba turned His full gaze on

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her, and she felt that He directly reached her heart for a split second.

Seeing the bamboo screening, and knowing that Motichur was quite close to the holy Ganges, Prakash suddenly recalled Pashi's words which had been conveyed to her in the 1930's. Baba beckoned her to come forward and asked her where she had come from. Remembering her conversation with Kishan Singh, she did not dare to give a direct reply. She said, "Baba, I have come from the place where you have kept me." Baba asked whether she had been cautioned by anyone not to see Him. To this she again replied evasively, "The gates of the Father's house are always open to His daughter." Baba knowingly smiled and put His finger to the middle of His eyebrows, a sign that she was fortunate.

When Prakash met Baba at Motichur it was an overwhelming experience for her, and it was hard for her to know which part of it was true and which a dream. Baba lifted His hand as a loving farewell and good humoredly gestured, "Now, go back immediately to the place you have come from and remember one thing: if you find anyone coming to Motichur or Dehra Dun for My darshan, stop him." Prakash enthusiastically replied, "I assure You, I will obey Your instruction even at the cost of my life!" Baba smiled again and Prakash left the house.

As Prakash was about to get into a hired cab, she noticed Eruch, one of the mandali, rushing towards her shouting, "Stop! Stop! When he approached, he said, "Baba wants to know whether you know Kishan Singh and Prakashwati of Delhi." Prakash was greatly surprised and even felt guilty at having concealed her identity from the Omniscient One. However, with a smile on her face she said "Yes," and then confessed to Eruch that she herself was Prakashwati, who was residing in Kishan Singh's house.

At this point, Eruch asked her to wait while he conveyed this information to Baba. He returned in a few minutes with a message in which Baba asked her again to follow implicitly His earlier instruction to her to stop anyone she found coming for Baba's darshan. She was to dissuade the person completely from his intention of visiting Baba during His New Life.

On her return to her residence in New Delhi, she found a *tonga* waiting in the yard. On inquiring she was told that Kishan Singh's

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son-in-law and his mother were just about to depart for Hardwar for Baba's darshan. Prakash emphatically and repeatedly told them Baba's order to her. Kishan Singh's relatives began to express their resentment and accused her of being selfish, as she had just had Baba's darshan and was now telling them not to. But finally, after a heated argument, Prakash succeeded in persuading them not to leave for Hardwar. This small incident provided Prakash with another glimpse of Baba's omniscience and the importance of obeying His orders.

As the years rolled by, Prakash's love for Meher Baba deepened, and her conviction in Him as "Lord Krishna come again" began to germinate and blossom. On another occasion, in later years, Baba asked Prakash whether she was still conducting *sankirtan* every week. She looked depressed and complained of the poor attendance. With a very loving expression, Baba gestured that she should not worry about it and added, "I am present whenever and wherever I am remembered with love. I am present at any *sankirtan* done with love, irrespective of number. And what counts is My presence!"

Baba's words of cheer and divine authority uplifted Prakash's spirit, and as instructed by Baba, after returning to Dehra Dun, she continued to have *sankirtan* programs. A large group of women began to attend Baba's *sankirtan* led by Prakashwati. The Meher Baba Center at Dehra Dun came to be known as Meher Baba's *Brindaban*, the place where the gopis glorified Lord Krishna. Many who attended the functions related experiences of Baba's presence. Meher Baba had laid the foundation of the *sankirtan* and He sustained it through His presence.

From Glimpses of the God-Man, Meher Baba, Vol. IV by Bal Natu.

My Appointment with God

Cindy Dacek Lowe

My father, Claude Whitaker, was a Presbyterian Yogi. A sincere spiritual seeker living near Chicago, he had investigated just about anyone who had any claim, however dubious, to spiritual fame. He knew about Ouspensky, Gurdjieff, Yogananda Paramhansa, Krishnamurti, Theosophy, and he also believed in aliens and life on other planets. He practiced yoga faithfully every morning and night, he was an organic farmer, a Presbyterian choir director and organist, and a professional accountant. He didn't sleep much!

During my childhood, my dad and I would often say the Lord's Prayer together at bedtime, and sometimes we would talk about spiritual matters. He taught me yoga and told me about reincarnation; and the importance of getting my "third eye" to open. He also explained what an Avatar is and told me that he believed the Avatar would be on earth during my lifetime and that it would be my job to find Him! Excited by this prospect, I decided to spend my life searching for the Avatar.

By the time I was twelve, I had developed a great love for Jesus and would sometimes feel His presence. One night while I was lying in my room in the dark, I saw a face at the end of the bed looking at me with great love. He was very beautiful and I knew I was seeing Jesus. The strange thing was that there didn't seem to be a body—just a face. Yet the face seemed complete; nothing was lacking. I had a very good feeling from this experience, but I didn't tell anyone about it, not even my father. That vision stayed with me for a long time, and I became quite religious, although I was certain that the Presbyterian Church in Libertyville, Illinois was not my destiny.

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My father died of a heart attack when I was sixteen. The following year, 1962, I went off to college in Missouri, where I began reading his books on spiritual subjects. I was particularly taken with Theosophy and even believed I might have been Madame Blavatsky in a past life! One of my favorite books was *Autobiography of a Yogi* by Paramhansa Yogananda, but I also read a lot of really strange stuff, including a book supposedly written by a being from Jupiter. I actually read about Meher Baba in *A Search in Sacred India* by Paul Brunton, though I didn't pay much attention because the author's reaction to Baba was negative. But I'm glad my father had read that book too, so at least he knew of Baba.

From my reading I became convinced that I had to find a master, but, alas, this was easier said than done during the early sixties. Nonetheless, I would chatter endlessly about spiritual subjects to anyone who would listen. I thought I might be spiritually advanced and wondered what plane I might be on!

In 1963, I transferred to the University of Miami, where my roommate was an atheist who was totally uninterested in anything I had to say about the spiritual path. She became so fed up with me that one day she said in desperation, "You know, I went to high school with someone who went to India and met a master. I'll try to introduce you to him."

I was very excited at the prospect of meeting someone who had actually met a master. But meeting him turned out to be another story. My roommate didn't know his last name or phone number; she knew only that his name was Eddy and he hung out at a certain spot in Miami Beach. Getting to the beach was quite an ordeal because we had to take three different buses, and our first couple of attempts to find the elusive Eddy ended in failure. I begged her to take me to the beach again, because, of course, I had no way of recognizing this guy on my own. And on our third try she spotted him as soon as we arrived. She quickly introduced us, saying, "Cindy, this is Eddy. Eddy, this is Cindy." Then she left as fast as possible.

I was so happy—after all, I'd been searching for a master for two years. Dying with anticipation, I said, "I hear you've been to India to meet a master." Eddy, in an agonizingly slow fashion,

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replied, "Yes. His name is Meher Baba and I met Him in India."

I had a feeling this was IT! I said, "Tell me about Him." Time crawled along. I felt as though I'd waited such a long time for this information that I just couldn't bear to wait any longer. Then Ed asked if I would like to see the picture of Baba he had in his wallet, and he slowly, ever so slowly, removed the wallet, opened it, and showed me the photo called "The Ancient One." Immediately, I realized that this was the face I had seen in my vision when I was twelve!

Ed told me Baba was God. It didn't cross my mind that He was *not* God. I knew it was true. I knew Meher Baba was my Master, the one I had been looking for!

I was in a strange state of exhilaration and ecstasy as Ed and I talked the whole day. I felt that all the puzzle pieces of my life suddenly fit perfectly together—everything about Meher Baba made complete sense. I remember thinking foolishly that all my problems were over now that I had found my Master at last!

I decided that I absolutely had to meet Meher Baba as soon as possible. The fact that I was a college student with only about twenty dollars to my name did not deter me in the slightest. I was going to meet Him and nothing could stop me! The next morning I called my mother in Illinois to inform her that I was quitting school and going to India to meet my Master. I was sobbing ecstatically as I told her this surprising news. She, of course, was less than thrilled and also started sobbing, but for very different reasons. She said, "Oh no! Not another one in the family! How much money do they want?" She was referring to the fact that my father had sometimes given large sums of money to the "masters" he was involved with. (In later years my mother, who came to like and respect Baba, was most impressed about two things: she believed He had gotten me off drugs, and neither He nor his followers had ever asked for money.)

Then I called Ed and announced that I was going to India and needed to get Meher Baba's address. He told me that Baba was in seclusion and I couldn't possibly see Him. Ed explained that going to India would be seriously disobeying Baba, and since I sincerely

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wanted to obey Baba, I agreed not to go. But I felt crushed. To this day I feel that not going to India at that time was the biggest mistake of my life. Of course, I also realize that it was my destiny to have had Ed, who insisted so adamantly that I couldn't go, as my Baba contact. But I had searched and searched for my Master, and now that I'd found Him, I couldn't see Him! I went from bliss to bleak despair during that one short phone conversation.

Ed did invite me to come to Miami Beach and meet his brother Irwin, and although this prospect seemed a poor substitute for meeting my new Master, I had a wonderful day with the Luck brothers. From then on, I spent every possible moment with them and other Miami Baba lovers. This period was a very magical time in my life with Baba—the "honeymoon."

Baba was in seclusion, but not the deep seclusion of later years, and we sent several cables to Baba during this time. This is one we sent in 1964:

Cindy, Edward, and I love You more than anything else and feel privileged to carry out Your wish. We are very happy and very, very thankful that You love us so much. Cindy Whitaker's address is 1101 Miller Drive, Coral Gables, Florida.

In Your love Baba.

Cindy, Edward, Irwin

In Miami I was leading two very different, but absolutely parallel, lives. I had started using drugs right around the same time I came to Baba. Whenever I wasn't with the Baba people, I was doing drugs with my other friends—mostly musicians. Ed and Irwin advised me to write to Baba about my drug use. I remember they instructed me to use the word "hemp," because Baba might not know what marijuana or pot was! So I sent the following cable:

Need help stopping hemp and present situation to draw closer to You.

Love, Cindy

In an effort to stop doing drugs, I dropped out of school, left Miami, and returned to Illinois to live with my mother. I soon visited the Meher Spiritual Center for the first time. Everyone at the Center

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was fascinated that I was so young—as a nineteen-year-old I was quite a curiosity. Only a few Baba lovers were younger than forty, and most were even older. I saw my first Baba movie during my Center visit. I was overwhelmed seeing Baba on the screen for the first time. How beautiful He looked! I really don't remember what I thought, only that I wept and wept.

For part of the time I was there, I was the only Center guest. I spent a lot of time with Kitty Davy and was amazed by her energy. I also met Dr. Ram Ginde during that visit and sent the following letter back to Baba with him:

Thank You for all the love and for all the help You have given me drawing me closer to You. I love You as much as I am able. I want to love You more and more. Please don't suffer for me. I have stopped taking hemp. Thank You for loving me—thank you for my life, thank You for being Baba. I hope You are feeling well, I wish You didn't have to suffer for our sake. Thank You for Your love.
Cindy

A reply came on 29 March, 1965 from Mani at Meherazad:

Dear Cindy,

Your heart's message to Meher Baba sent personally with Dr. Ginde, has reached Beloved Baba. Baba wants me to write and tell you that He is happy with your love for Him which is strong enough to make you stop taking hemp. Baba wants you NOT to resume taking hemp or form any similar drug habit again. Baba sends His Love to you, and wants you to remain happy in His remembrance. Beloved Baba does not wish you to reply to this letter.

With love to you dear Cindy and to our Elizabeth Kitty Ruth Eileen Laura Edith Bessie and all who are at the Center, Mani

Feeling that I was now able to follow Baba's orders about drugs, I left Illinois and went to New York, where things went well for a while. Unfortunately, I began using drugs again, but I thought that if I could just hang on until I met Baba at the upcoming May, 1965 darshan program, I'd be okay. So when Baba canceled the darshan for the Westerners, I was devastated. I cabled Baba to ask if I could come anyway, but He replied that I should "wait for darshan."

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My life became hellish. I stayed continuously stoned. I tried hard not to think of Baba, but I still kept the "Ancient One" photo by my bed, where it was the first thing I saw every day and the last thing I saw every night. The Baba scene felt oppressive to me, and I began to do more and more drugs in an effort to obliterate the pain of disobedience. I became almost completely estranged from the Baba community.

Sometime in 1965 Baba asked His lovers to write letters to Him by a certain date. I waited until the last possible moment to write my letter and when I wrote it, I was high. I think I said,

Dear Baba,

I'm not ready for Your love. Love, Cindy

I could not find my way back to Baba—even though Baba reminded me from time to time that He had not forgotten me. During that period a friend arranged for me to sell drugs to a famous English folk-rock star. To my utter astonishment, I was sent to the Hotel Delmonico to make this deal, to the very place where Baba had stayed during his 1956 visit to New York! Although I had never been there before, I had seen a film of Baba at the Delmonico, celebrating His birthday with a large group of His western lovers. And now here I was, surrounded by vacant-eyed groupies, selling drugs to an English singer's stoned "assistant" (I never did meet the star) in the hotel where Meher Baba had given interviews and attended a banquet. While I was hanging around waiting to get paid, I had a vivid fantasy that Baba had actually stayed in that very suite! I have no idea whether or not I was right, but at the time I was convinced, and I could clearly visualize Baba sitting in a corner on a divan, looking radiant. I felt horrible beyond belief. But I knew Baba was still there, waiting for me.

Baba was also there to save me when I needed Him most. On my final acid trip I stopped breathing, and I believed I was dead. I made a deal with Baba: "If you get me out of this, I'll never do LSD again." I kept my "bargain" with Baba and never did LSD again, but I did continue to use other drugs.

About this time Baba communicated to Ed and Irwin that He did not want them to use drugs, including marijuana, or to associate

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with those who did, and Irwin wrote to me to say they could no longer see me. Now I was even more isolated from Baba people.

In October, 1966, I had a dream that I was with a man I loved deeply. The next day I met Henry Dacek, the very man, and since I already loved him in my dream, things progressed rapidly and just three days later, he asked me to marry him. I told him I would if he got permission from Baba. He sent a telegram to Baba who responded to his question by cable:

You may marry Cindy if Cindy also wants to marry you. My love to you. —Meher Baba

Several days after we met, Henry and I got up one morning and did not use drugs. There was no discussion; we simply didn't feel like doing drugs—which was pretty amazing. That afternoon, October 10, 1966, I got a call from Ed Luck. I was surprised to hear from him in view of Baba's order to stay away from people who were using drugs. He told me he had received the following communication from Baba in a letter from Eruch:

Beloved Baba is very happy to hear that dear Cindy Whitaker is totally free from drugs and is proud of her love for Him.

Upon hearing this message, I immediately felt totally free from drugs! I was astonished to find out that Eruch's letter had been sent more than a week earlier from India. And not only did I feel free from drugs, I felt free from the karma I had incurred. For some reason, I foolishly assumed the message was intended for both Henry and me, and we made plans to go to the Center to get married.

We married in Myrtle Beach, and after a few days at the Center we returned to New York, where we attempted to adapt to our new, drug-free lifestyle. Unfortunately, Henry was unable to continue to stay away from pot and other drugs. In the months that followed, I received more communications from Baba about drugs. On January 26, 1967, a note came from Dr. Goher to Kitty that said:

Have noted about dear Cindy Whitaker. Yes one learns through experience. Beloved Baba sends His Love to her and wants her to remember Him wholeheartedly and keep away from drugs.

I was puzzled by this message, as I was no longer using drugs of

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any kind. I was also distressed that my husband had resumed taking drugs, and I asked Baba for clarification about "keeping away from drugs." Baba responded by cable in June, 1967:

Henry may smoke tobacco but stay away from drugs except medicines when prescribed by medical specialists. Love to you and Henry. —Meher Baba

Henry continued to get high. Although I implored him to keep his drugs out of the house and use them elsewhere, he continued to bring them into our home. Eventually, although it was one of the hardest things I've ever done, I left Henry because I wanted to follow Baba's orders to me about keeping away from drugs. I moved to Woodstock to start over.

After Baba said I was free from drugs, I easily obeyed His orders until 1976, when I suddenly and inexplicably smoked some pot one evening with friends. I have no idea why I got high, because I had absolutely no desire to do so. And, strangely, I continued to feel "free" from drugs, even though I'd smoked pot. But that night I had a dream in which Baba made it clear to me that I could never, ever use drugs again. I never have.

During the late 1960's one of the best things that happened for me was that many young people came to Baba, so I finally had a same-age peer group. Many of these "new" lovers, mostly former drug users like me, would become my closest friends. The sense of community I experienced with my new Baba friends was wonderful.

In 1969, when the news came that Baba had dropped His body, I was devastated. It seemed totally unbelievable that He was gone! We were in mourning, wondering what to do, when news came from India that the mandali believed the darshan program should still be held; after all, Baba had said, "I will give darshan reclining."

In 1965 Baba had told me to "wait for darshan." And in April, 1969, I finally "met" Meher Baba at the '1969 Darshan.' the event in Poona (Pune) that He planned for us before He dropped His body. When Eruch opened the darshan program with the words, "It is nine o'clock and you have kept your appointment with God," I knew it was true. All other moments in my life had led to that particular, infinitely timeless moment, the most important moment of my life:

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my appointment with God!

Throughout the darshan week, I felt Meher Baba's living presence in a way I've very rarely experienced since. I go to India frequently in an effort to recapture the experience of being "with" Baba, but that first "meeting" with Him remains the most extraordinary.

So I kept my appointment with God and received the gifts of a lifetime. Thank You Baba! For everything.

Meeting Meher Baba

Dr. C.D. Deshmukh

In 1932 I was at the University of London working toward my doctorate in philosophy. I was not happy with book knowledge, nor was I happy with myself, surrounded as I was with a spiritual darkness that seemed impenetrable. I had seen a photograph of Meher Baba in the *Daily Herald*; He was being hailed in the London papers as "The Messiah." The caption below the photograph read: "Leave the aimlessness in life." There was something about the photograph which appealed to me, that quietly assured me that here was someone to whom I could turn. Here, possibly, was the source of Light for which I had been searching.

Sometime later when I was visiting the Lake District in England, I saw a photograph of a group in a newspaper with Meher Baba as the central figure. When I looked at the photograph I felt an inexplicable but irresistible inner call to meet Meher Baba. This inner prompting was so strong that I immediately canceled the rest of my visit and rushed back to London. I contacted the newspaper which had printed Baba's photograph, and although they did not know where Meher Baba could be located, they managed to forward a letter I wrote to Him. Meher Baba replied that He could not see me at that time, but He would meet me on His next visit to England. Baba then left for the United States.

Though I was inwardly drawn to Baba, I remained critical and full of resistance when I read some of His literature. Then, on the 29th of July, 1932, I had a most unexpected surprise. I was fast asleep in my bed, when all of a sudden a new vista opened itself to me. I was in a different dimension, in another body. I had been separated from my gross physical body and a new sensitivity and receptivity had been released in the higher psychic vehicle in which I found

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myself. It seemed to be made of light and color. The environment was charged with the expectation that Meher Baba would be coming shortly. My eagerness to meet Him was great, and I did not have long to wait. With steady steps, Avatar Meher Baba came by my right side and stood in front of me, in His resplendent body. We were face to face! Through the exquisitely sweet and meaningful eyes of His effulgent body, He looked into me.

Here, before me, was the Incarnation of Divinity, unchallengeable in the clear expressiveness of the mental form, steady in its outline. I did not have to infer Meher Baba's divine perfection; I saw Him as the personification of Perfection. As I looked at Him, I lost myself in adoration, completely forgetting myself. From my own radiant body, there sprang up a beautiful and rippling rosy cloud of devotion, reaching out towards Beloved Baba from my heart. Obviously there was no need for formal greetings or words or ritualistic expressions. This offering of devotion was entirely spontaneous, free from any sense of deliberation. It simply happened, and I could see it happening. For a split second I was oblivious of myself and my environment, while I was enveloped in my own feeling of rising devotion. When the expression of my heart had completed itself, my mind and my vibrant psychic body settled down, with the result that I could again discern with full clarity the resplendent and effulgent being of the Beloved Avatar in front of me. My adoration had found its expression, not in words, but light-color vibrations.

Then for the first time, in His exquisitely sweet voice of the inner plane, Meher Baba spoke to me in clear unmistakable words, "You are closely connected with Me. You are a good man." There was a clear hesitation within me to accept this comment, but Baba then asked, "Are you not?"

My response was a prayer. With great ardor it just issued spontaneously from my heart. In all earnestness I mentally prayed to the Beloved, "Good or bad, please take me up into You."

Baba's response was immediate. From the inexpressible spiritual beauty of His radiant body on the inner plane, there poured out on me, in deep sky-blue vibrations, His divine love and blessings, enveloping and engulfing my entire being. What peace—beyond words to express! What ineffable ecstasy of deep fulfillment! It was

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like bathing in cool, clear moonlight. And then, without any break or diminution of the intensity of my awareness, I found myself slowly transferred to the physical world and joined to my usual physical body, lying in bed.

Four months later, I had the great privilege to surrender myself at the Holy Feet of Beloved Avatar Meher Baba on the 8th of December, 1932, at the Knightsbridge Hotel in London. I recognized Him as the One who had won my heart. It is impossible to put into words what it is to be in His holy presence. He radiates love and happiness through His beautiful eyes and fascinating smile, and raises the consciousness of those around Him, so as to give them a glimpse into the true values of life. In His company, time ceases and one may have a taste of the life Eternal. In Him there is a perennial spring of purifying love. And yet, in spite of the grandeur and perfection of His being, He never creates a sense of distance. His love knows no separateness, and He addresses Himself to the inmost being of His disciples.

On my return to India, by Baba's Grace, I got a job at a university and was able to spend my vacation time with Baba serving Him. In Meher Baba one sees the fullness of life. Every act of His, every word, every look, springs forth spontaneously and vibrates with the Truth. Meeting Meher Baba has been the greatest experience of my life.

From The Compassionate Father and My Master and His Teachings by Dr. C.D. Deshmukh.

The First Time I Saw Meher Baba

Josephine Ross

The first time I saw Meher Baba was on November 10, 1931 in an upper room of a charming stone house built above the Croton River at Harmon-on-Hudson, New York. This house had been loaned to Baba for His use on His first visit to America. There were balconies on each floor overlooking a wooded ravine that stretched down to the river. The room Baba occupied ran the length of the house on the river-side, with a balcony from which one looked down into tree tops—a truly sylvan retreat.

My mother, Mary Antin, had met the Master first and called me to say I must come to meet Him. At the time I was twenty-three, very naive and unsophisticated. The "flapper" era of the roaring twenties that followed the first World War was something I knew only by hearsay, having spent my teens in secluded boarding schools or in quiet vacation spots with relatives.

My mother and Malcolm and Jean Adriel Schloss were at Harmon as a sort of working staff. There may have been others, but after meeting Baba I was not aware of anyone except Him!

When I arrived I was ushered upstairs to Baba's room. The door opened, and I hesitated on the threshold. Way at the end of the long room, seated on a broad divan decorated in orange and black was a Person with long, flowing dark hair. He was wearing a brown fur jacket that may have been Persian lamb. One of the disciples said, "Don't be afraid," and I think Baba held out His hand toward me. At any rate, I crossed the room and knelt at His feet—and was lost in those luminous brown eyes. Almost at once I felt that I knew Him. Here was the Christ. There was no doubt in my mind. Later,

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I could only express what Baba meant to me in the form of verses—one cannot really portray in words a transcendent experience that is beyond words.

Baba touched me gently and His hand flicked over the alphabet board He used in those days. The disciple who spoke for Him conveyed His thoughts so rapidly that everyone used the phrase "Baba said" or "Baba asked." So I use the term "Baba asked me" what I would like to ask of Him, and I said I would like to help people. Without a moment's hesitation He replied, "First you must learn how to help," which seemed to me the most sensible answer anyone could give. Being unworldly and idealistic and completely unschooled in the problems which most people face, I had some vague notion of running around with outstretched hands "helping people." It had never occurred to me that I did not know how!

Some people, on meeting the Master, have to be helped out of the world into a higher plane of thinking and acting. I was just the opposite. Baba had to make me face the world and become aware of the ugliness and torment, as well as the fine things that most people grow up knowing. As an only child of intellectual parents—one a writer, the other a professor—I had been so protected in every way that I was quite unprepared to take my place in adult life. I withdrew into books and fantasies when outer life seemed too harsh or unpleasant. I saw life only as I chose to see it, and shut my eyes to what I did not like. Baba had to turn me around and make me face and overcome the world as it is. Over a long period of years and many difficulties, He has always been in my heart and by my side. Baba accomplished what psychiatrists and loving friends failed to do. He helped to make me a more balanced person.

At Harmon people came and went from New York City and elsewhere, to meet the Master during the month He stayed there. Some came down from the upper room exalted and uplifted; others were in tears, overcome by the tremendous experience. Some had to be led to a separate room to rest and compose themselves.

Always we were aware of the Master—it was like living in Heaven knowing God was in the upstairs room. The house was permeated by His Presence. Many times I had the privilege of taking Baba's meals to the door of His room, where I could catch a glimpse

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of Him as one of the disciples took the tray.

Several friends came to meet Baba the day I did, and we were given rooms in a nearby guest house. The first night we were there the house caught fire and we escaped in our night clothes. The house burned to the ground, and we were so happy to be forced to move back into the same house with Baba that none of us cared what things were lost or inconvenience was suffered—we were in the house where Baba was: that is all that mattered!

The next day Baba called us to His room, and asked if anyone was hurt. On being reassured that we were all untouched by the fire, Baba told us that fires often spring up where He goes. Afterwards, He went to see the smoldering ruins and returned with some photographs that were all that was left. They were pictures mother had of me when I was seven years old. The mats were scorched but the pictures were untouched. Baba showed them to me but made no comments. I have never seen them since.

There was a young disciple with Baba named Ali, and I remember dear Chanji. Names are not my strong point and I was really only conscious of Baba, other people came and went as shadows in an unreal world.

I do remember Meredith Starr. Later I was to meet Meredith's brother-in-law, Kenneth Ross, who became my husband. I also remember clearly Princess Norina Matchabelli, a fascinating and unusual person, and young Anita de Caro, who always seemed to be close to her. I went rowing on the river below the house with: Milo Shattuck, Grace Mann, Howard Inches, and Donald Halloway, some of the other young people there.

To my great joy, Baba said He wanted me to stay at Harmon while He was there, and when He left, to remain until He returned. I was to help type letters and announcements to the press about Baba and His mission. Needless to say, we who stayed at Harmon that winter lived only to see Baba again when He returned in the spring, at which time He stayed only a few days.

Perhaps the best way to express my experience at Harmon was to write in verse. I may add that I had never written verse before meeting Baba. All of a sudden I had to write—it was the only way to express the experience, and poems were my songs of praise to the

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Beloved. This is part of a poem I wrote on December 11, 1931 at Harmon-on-Hudson at the Meherashram.

The Beloved One

Like the flame burning upon the altars of a
thousand hearts you came, and from every
altar rose sweet clouds of incense.
Wherever you went you took Light with you
and people's lives blossomed into new beauty.
At last we knew what Love was. At last we
understood why Jesus had such power over
men's hearts. Looking at you, we saw Jesus,
and loving Him, we loved you the more.
Love and Joy and Beauty, Peace and Light
and Life—these we found incarnate in you.
And our faith was turned into certainty.
Hitherto we had believed in God, now we knew
that He existed, for we found Him in You.
Life became a succession of days of flaming
glory and radiant beauty—and you were that
glory and that beauty. Every moment was
filled with divine joy—and you were that joy.
Our hearts burned with a love we could hardly
understand—and you were that love

From Glow International, November 1998.

A Harvest of His Grace

Esfandiyar Vesali

Esfandiyar Vesali was one of fourteen boys from Iran who were called by Baba to join the Meher Ashram at Meherabad in 1927.

He was among the group that was later separated from the others because of their special experience of love and their inclination toward the spiritual life. This section of Baba's school was called the *Prem* (love) Ashram. The *Prem* Ashram boys had very close associations with Meher Baba and some experienced inner spiritual awakenings.

After about two years the boys were sent back to Iran to resume their lives with their families and communities. Esfandiyar and his family remained devoted to Baba through the years, but after Baba's visit to Iran in 1930 Esfandiyar did not see Baba again for many years. He became a farmer, and as a young man went with his uncle to another area of Iran, north of Teheran, to raise strawberries and cherries. Esfandiyar worked in the orchards and sold the produce at the market.

During this time he would correspond with Baidul, one of Baba's close mandali, who lived in India. Baidul would ask him about his life and work. Esfandiyar responded that all was going well, as long as their cherry trees did not receive hail from the skies at the wrong season, which would spoil the crop. Esfandiyar and his family were dependent on each year's successful crop for their livelihood.

One day in 1963, Esfandiyar received a letter from Baidul saying that the time had come and that Baba was inviting the old Meher Ashram members to be with Him in India, after all these years. This was wonderful news! However, Esfandiyar knew that for him, the possibility of making the trip would depend on that year's cherry crop. He wrote about his concern to Baidul. Hearing it, Baba replied

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that Esfandiyar should go through his orchards, stopping at each tree, telling it, "I have the chance to travel to see Baba after many years, so please would you give good fruit this year so that I can afford the expenses for the trip."

Esfandiyar obeyed Baba's instructions literally, visiting each and every tree, pleading his case. He felt happy and confident then that his financial needs would be satisfied by the year's crop, so he borrowed money for his expenses and made all the preparations for the trip to India. He planned to travel by land, but upon reaching the eastern border of Iran, he found the bridge there had washed away and no one could cross. So he had to go to his son's house nearby to borrow more money for a plane ticket, and proceeded to India by air. This caused Esfandiyar some delay. Baba had given permission for those coming from Iran to stay for four days. When Esfandiyar reached India, he found that he was one and a half days late and had only two and a half days remaining to spend with Baba. In fact, when he first arrived at Guru Prasad, in Poona (Pune) at midday, he saw people leaving and felt upset, thinking that the program was over for the day and that he had missed his chance to meet Baba. But Aloha, who greeted him, told him to wait and said that after an hour or so Baba would come and Esfandiyar would get his chance to have Baba's darshan.

As they waited, Esfandiyar thought, "Is this real? Or am I dreaming?" Many other thoughts came into his mind. As he was called at last to meet Baba, he thought, "Who am I, such a lowly man, and I come all this way to see God Himself?! How do I dare approach God?" But he soon found Baba beckoning him to come and take darshan, and to sit down close to Him and be comfortable. As he sat there, his happiness complete, Esfandiyar had the impulse to massage Baba's feet, as he and the other boys had done so often years ago at Meherabad. He did so, but after some time he began to feel self-conscious and stopped.

For the next two days Esfandiyar spent time along with the others in Baba's company. He experienced a wonderful atmosphere around Baba, filled with spiritual music and song.

At last the sad time came for him to leave Baba and begin his return to Iran. Baba asked Padri, one of His close disciples, to

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accompany Esfandiyar from Poona to Ahmednagar to see Meherabad and Meherazad before going on to Bombay (Mumbai). Afterwards, in Bombay when Esfandiyar tried to purchase an air ticket to Iran using Iranian currency, they would not issue him his ticket. He had to write a letter to Iran to have someone there send him his ticket. Esfandiyar kept a copy of the letter for himself, and as soon as this work was done, he took a train and headed straight back to Poona to be with Baba!

Aloba appeared at the entrance of Guru Prasad, exclaiming, "What are you doing back here?" Esfandiyar described his predicament to Aloba, explaining that he now had to wait for his ticket to reach Bombay. Aloba related this to Baba, who gestured, "Bring him here." Baba told Esfandiyar, "Don't worry, it's all right. Stay here now for two weeks, and when your ticket comes, you must go." Esfandiyar couldn't believe his fortune—this was more of a blessing than he had hoped for—to be able to spend a longer time with Baba.

For the next two weeks Esfandiyar visited with Baba at Guru Prasad each day. There were various programs going on, and he enjoyed the time spent in Baba's company. Baba gave him permission to take his lunch with the mandali there each day. After two weeks, Baba told him to go to Bombay to check on his ticket. As the ticket hadn't yet come, he immediately returned to Poona, and Baba allowed him to stay another week.

Again Esfandiyar was overjoyed to be able to spend more time with Baba. After the third week, Esfandiyar made yet another trip to Bombay. This time his ticket had arrived. Esfandiyar could now return to Iran. Just before leaving Guru Prasad, he had been given a note from Aloba stating, "Don't leave for Iran without letting us know you are going." Esfandiyar seized upon this request to head straight back to Poona on the next train! This time Nana Kher was the first to see Esfandiyar arrive at Guru Prasad. He was shocked! "Why are you here again?" Aloba came out and asked the same question. Esfandiyar showed him his own note and said he had come to let Baba know that he was finally leaving for Iran. Aloba expressed surprise at what he had written in the note.

Esfandiyar was allowed to stay yet another week with Baba, since

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the flight to Iran was only once a week. But Baba told him this time he was definitely to leave, and it was up to him to make sure he departed from Guru Prasad at the right time in order to catch his flight.

Two and a half days had been extended to four wonderful weeks in *sahavas* with his beloved Master. All this time Esfandiyar had been staying somewhere outside Guru Prasad at night. On the last night, Baba gave him permission to remain at Guru Prasad. He felt so overwhelmed to be staying under the same roof with his Divine Beloved, that he got no sleep. At last Esfandiyar departed and returned to Iran.

When he got home, it was almost time to harvest the cherries. Two or three days after he arrived, he decided to start picking. He picked box after box of cherries and sent them to market. The man who unloaded the boxes asked him, "Do you have other orchards somewhere else? Where are all these cherries coming from?" Esfandiyar showed him his fields and the man said, "You've been picking these trees? They are still laden; they don't look like they've been picked at all." Esfandiyar's trees gave a tremendous crop that year. Their yield covered the year's expenses, as well as Esfandiyar's trip to Baba. The Master had sent His instructions. The disciple had acted on faith. And the cherry trees, too, had fulfilled their part in the divine play!

*From a talk given by Esfandiyar Vesali at Meherabad in January, 1998.
Translated from Persian by Iraj Namiranian.*

Baba's Amazing Humor

Marc DeMatteis

In 1985, Marvel Comics began publishing in the U.S. a twelve-issue comics "novel" of mine entitled *Moonshadow*. Done in collaboration with illustrator Jon J. Muth, *Moonshadow*, was, up to that point (and maybe still), the finest piece of creative work I'd ever been involved in. It was my attempt to tell, with humor and whatever wisdom Baba would allow, of one naive soul's "journey to awakening," the first step in the spiritual journey. When a work turns out as good as *Moonshadow* did—it becomes clear to me that "I" have precious little to do with the work. So naturally, I dedicated the series to Meher Baba (and to my father, who'd died a few months before publication). And that, I thought, was that.

Later in 1985, Marvel published *Doctor Strange: Into Shambala*. Unlike *Moonshadow*, which I created, *Doctor Strange* is an old-time Marvel character... a mystic whose departed master was called, believe it or not, The Ancient One! With these elements in hand, I tried to feed into the story (co-plotted and illustrated by Dan Green)) as much of Meher Baba as I could. The tale plays with the idea of three-fourths of humanity being destroyed in order for a new humanity to arise (familiar stuff, huh?)... and, unlike *Moonshadow* (where Baba's presence is, I think, more subtle), the Baba influence is pretty blatant. So, naturally, another Baba dedication. And that, I thought....

Cut to: July 1987. After thirteen years with Baba, I'm on my way—for the first time—to Meherabad. New York to Paris to Frankfurt to Bombay (Mumbai) to Poona (Pune) to Ahmednagar... with little, if any, sleep along the way. There were a few other Westerners on the Frankfurt/Bombay leg... but I didn't connect with them (since Baba was busy beating my brains in). In Bombay,

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instead of killing time at the Centaur Hotel (where, I later learned, some of those same Westerners were waiting), I sat in the sweltering domestic airport, feeling like an insecure and ugly American. The next morning, I found myself sitting next to a man who, I later found out, was one of the Westerners on my Frankfurt-Bombay flight. Despite the fact that we were among the only Westerners on an otherwise all-Indian Bombay-Poona flight, we didn't say a word to each other! Not even a muttered "hello." He was busy taking pictures of the rainstorm outside. "Hmm," I thought, "anyone who takes pictures of rain must be a professional photographer." After hearing him mention a previous trip to India to his wife, I just assumed that he was some hot shot picture-taker out on assignment—and returned to the state of neurotic, sleepless lunacy that Baba had me in.

Off the plane I went, into Poona where I found that the Hotel Blue Diamond was filled up *for a month*. "Baba must want me to plunge on," I said, so I grabbed a rickshaw to the cabstand, and took a taxi to Ahmednagar. (The "photographer" and his wife, I later learned, spent the night at—where else?—the Hotel Blue Diamond!) When I reached the Meher Baba Trust Office, I found that, since I arrived a day early, there was no room for me at the Pilgrim Center. So, I was packed off to Viloo's house for a long sleep and some very good food.

The next day I arrived at Meherabad. After going up to visit Meher Baba's Tomb, I returned to my room to settle in. A little while later, my roommate arrived: it was the "professional photographer," Bill Gibson, who recognized me from our long flights together. I later learned that Bill thought I was going off to Rajneesh's ashram in Poona, and that's why he wasn't talking to me. Even after he saw my Baba button on the plane to Poona, he simply assumed I was a Rajneesh devotee in disguise! Sounds silly—but Baba obviously didn't want us to talk to each other... yet.

Well, this was coincidence enough, all that travelling time together without talking, and we're going to the same place—not only that, but we end up *in the same room*. Ah, Baba—what a sense of humor You have.

Then Bill began to unpack, and out from his bag came all twelve

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issues of *Moonshadow* and the *Doctor Strange Graphic Novel*! I looked, but it didn't register. The *last* thing in the world I expected to see had just emerged from Bill's bag! I looked again, sure that I wasn't hallucinating, then calmly shrieked, "What are you doing with that?!" Bill looked at me, blankly. "I wrote that!!" I wailed.

And that's when I learned that a friend of Bill and Denise's back in Denver had come across *Moonshadow* and *Doctor Strange*, and noting the Baba dedications, wrote to Eruch, who asked that they be collected together and sent to him. No one at Meherazad knew about me or my literary career, even though I'd been a Baba lover for years. So this friend did as he was asked and gave the comics to Bill. And Bill just "happened" to be coming to Meherabad at the same time as the *author* of those comics—just "happened" to be travelling on the same planes, and just "happened" to end up in the same room!

Baba's Grace is an amazing thing! On Saturday, my first visit to Meherazad, I found myself presenting the comics to Eruch while Bill stood taking pictures. I was welcomed home in a way that: I could never have imagined: I felt Baba's presence, His loving attention, and the individual care He gives to each of us. Left to my own, I'm the type who would hang out on the fringes. This "coincidence" brought me right into the *middle* of things, into the arms of my Baba family.

And if I'd only known then that this amazing incident was just the beginning of two of the most Baba-ful weeks of my life, I don't know if I would have been able to bear it. As it was, He drew me in, welcomed me, embraced me, then lowered His loving boom.

Jai Baba! Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai!

Baba's Omniscience

Krishna Nair

I first met Meher Baba when He was staying in Bangalore in 1939.

I was born in Kerala, but my father died when I was quite young and my life had been entrusted into the hands of my aunts and uncles. When I failed the ninth grade, one of my uncles beat me very badly. A kind aunt took pity on me and gave me money with which I could leave home. So I traveled to Bangalore with a friend, and when my money ran out, I asked for a job in the Ragindra Bowen Hotel, where I had been taking my meals. The hotel owner gave me a menial job and I was very grateful to him for his kindness towards me. I had been working at the hotel for a month and a half, when as fortune would have it, Meher Baba's brother Jal, Adi K. Irani, Dr. Donkin, and another member of the mandali came for tea there. It was my job to collect their cups after they had finished. Jal was impressed by my service and asked me if I wanted to come and work at their home in Bombay (Mumbai). I was just fifteen years old. I declined the offer, as I felt indebted to my boss and was unsure about moving again. Jal returned to the Links Bungalow where Baba was staying and told Baba about me. Though I was so young, Baba instructed Jal to ask me to come and work for them, even ordering him to bring me without fail. The third time he asked I assented. I informed the hotel owner, who warned me against going with strangers to Bombay, saying all kinds of things that they might try to do to me. Nevertheless, I had decided to take the risk and begin a new life.

When I met Jal at the appointed hour, I could see by his face that he was in a happy mood. Perhaps because he had been able to carry out Baba's order. He brought me by car to the Links Bungalow. Baba was sitting in a chair with all of His mandali around Him. He instructed one of the men to ask me, "Are you afraid of Baba?" I

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was thinking about all that my boss had told me they might do to me. I didn't know what to think. Baba saw my face and silently called me over to Him, "Sit down near me; sit, sit." Baba gestured to Jal to say to me in Hindi, "Tell him, don't worry. For a very long, long time I have known him. That is why I called him." Then Baba conveyed, "Don't you worry. Stay with Me."

I told Baba that I wanted to go back and reassure my boss that I was in safe hands. He agreed and asked me to return by 11:00 a.m. the following morning. So on the next day, October 18, 1939, I came to stay with Baba. After I had been with Baba for some days, He decided to go to Mysore. So along with the men mandali, I accompanied Baba to Mysore.

For the next few years I went on many travels and *mast* tours in India with Baba and came to feel in my heart that He is the Avatar, God in human form. In 1942, I was with Baba in Dehra Dun. One evening an unexpected event occurred. I had gone out for my usual walk at about five in the afternoon. Just at that same time, four girls from a Punjabi family staying in a nearby bungalow were also out on a walk. That particular day they decided to tease me. One of the girls asked me if she could join me on my walk. During that period, I wanted nothing to do with young women. Feeling offended, I spit in her face and quickly left.

The girls were quite upset and went back to Baba and complained about me. Baba sent someone by bicycle to fetch me. When I came to Baba's room, the four girls were standing in front of Him. Baba asked me what had happened. After I told Baba my side of the story, He asked the girl to take off her sandal and slap me on my face with it. She slapped me very hard. Then Baba asked me to bow down to her feet, which I did, since it was His order. The girls left laughing, feeling triumphant. I was very embarrassed.

Then Baba asked me why I had done such a thing. I said that I did not want to become involved with any girls or women. But Baba told me that I would marry and have children. I said to Baba that I wanted nothing to do with family life. He asked me if I was challenging Him. I said, "Yes, I will never marry!" So Baba asked Dr. Nilu to bring a needle and prick my finger, and I wrote in my own blood that I would never marry. Baba took the sheet of paper

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and without my knowledge asked Vishnu to keep it with him until Baba asked for it.

Three years later, in 1945, Baba gave me two months leave to visit my mother in Kerala, and instructed me to obey my mother's wishes. After I had been there for a few days, my mother began talking about marriage. I told her that I would marry next year, but she insisted that it must be that very year. She said, "I want to see you with your wife." So I wrote a letter to Baba and He replied that I should keep my mother happy. Because of this, I agreed to marry and my mother made the arrangements.

The very next day after my wedding, I received a telegram from Baba to return immediately. When my relatives saw the telegram, they asked me what kind of Master this was to make such a request. I told them not to ask anything about Baba. Then I showed the telegram to my wife and said that I wanted to go. She replied that since Meher Baba had called me, I must go. So I left for Dehra Dun the same day.

When I saw Baba, He asked me about my wife—whether she was beautiful and if she loved me. I said to Baba, "How can I say? I was only with her for eight hours for the wedding!" Baba laughed heartily, and then told me not to tell anyone that I was married.

A year later Baba sent me on a month's leave back to my native place and family. I was there for only eighteen days before receiving a telegram from Baba to return. I received a letter from my wife ten months later letting me know that she had given birth to our son. Baba was reading the letter over my shoulder, and He asked if the baby was a boy or a girl. When I told Him it was a boy, He seemed happy, but asked me not to tell anyone else.

Several months later Baba gathered the mandali together and asked me in front of them about my wife and son. I replied that by His grace, they were well. The mandali were very surprised by this, since none of them knew that I had ever gotten married, much less had a son. Dr. Ghani asked Baba if it was a miracle, to which Baba laughingly replied, "Krishna once challenged Me, writing in his own blood that he would never get married." Then He asked Vishnu to give me that paper. This shows how everyone's life is an open book to Baba.

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Dr. Nilu then said, "To celebrate the birth of Krishna's son, we should all have *basundi* [a special milk custard treat]." Baba told him to make the request of me, but as I had no money, Beloved Baba Himself gave a *basundi* party for all the mandali.

It was a great privilege and a blessing of Avatar Meher Baba to allow me to serve as His night watchman for some years. These indelible memories of life with Him are most heartwarming, for though life with Baba was not easy, His loving presence sustained me throughout both the sublime and challenging moments I encountered in His service.

From tape recordings of Krishna Nair at Meherabad.

The King of Hearts

Kristen Kehler

I grew up in a New England intellectual family, with a father who claimed to be an atheist. My mother had attended Gurdjieff groups as a college student, but gave up her interest in spiritual matters after marrying my father. Following my father's model, I expressed great contempt for religion when I was an adolescent and young adult. Psychology interested me instead, and from a young age I planned a career as a psychotherapist.

The first time I recall seeing a photograph of Meher Baba was in the early 1970's. During this period I lived in a series of California communal households, experimenting with drugs and other forms of protest. One day in Berkeley I saw a poster of Meher Baba as an older man, with a large round face and twinkling eyes. "Don't Worry, Be Happy" was written in bold letters across the bottom. I reacted with my usual distaste for those described as gurus, barely looking at the photograph, and commenting angrily that "Don't Worry, Be Happy" seemed to be a highly irresponsible message to write on a poster.

"Doesn't he realize that there are plenty of things we should be worrying about?" I argued. "Doesn't he care about the problems in the world—the suffering, starvation, and wars? How can we possibly be happy with all that going on? People should not be allowed to say things like that."

I continued to live for many years in Santa Cruz, California, working as a therapist without hearing anything more of Meher Baba, until I met Patrick Carlson in 1978. The first time I visited Patrick's house, an odd photograph of a man lying on a bed, dressed in white, caught my eye. I asked who this man might be and was dismayed to hear the name, Meher Baba. I was beginning to fall in

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love with Patrick and hoped that this Meher Baba would not turn out to be important in his life. I had visions of the Rajneesh people dancing at dawn on the beaches and didn't want Patrick to be involved in strange cults.

I was disappointed to learn that Patrick was, in fact, extremely interested in Meher Baba. He had even spent four months at Meherabad in the early 1970's, describing it as the most wonderful experience of his life. I privately thought that Patrick needed a father figure, since his own father was an alcoholic and his family life very distressing.

Patrick and I began spending a lot of time together, and he introduced me to a number of his friends, who also knew about Meher Baba. One night Beverly Smith showed slides of her trip to Meherabad. John and Rene Bussanich came over to see them, and; they all excitedly talked of Baba and India. I listened, silently criticizing every word, again concluding that they must all have had unhappy childhoods to need such "crutches" in their adult life. I found their belief that Meher Baba had lived as God in human form particularly horrifying. The word "God" itself sounded like fingernails on a blackboard to me, something shouted by fundamentalist preachers.

"If you need a fantasy to live by," I told Patrick at one point, "Meher Baba sounds nice enough. I just don't happen to need a story to construct my life around. My childhood was not as unhappy as yours: I don't need a new family in India, or myths to live by."

I waited defensively for Patrick and his friends to try to convert me, but they just listened politely to my objections and went on talking about Meher Baba with the same enthusiasm. I found myself disturbed by the photographs and paintings of Meher Baba that people had in their homes. When my eyes caught a glimpse of one, I would quickly turn away, almost in embarrassment. His eyes unsettled me; I did not want to look at them.

One evening Patrick and his friends wanted to attend a meeting led by Filis Frederick. I wanted to be with Patrick so rather grudgingly I accompanied them. Everyone stood up to say a prayer at the end of the gathering, and I felt strongly repulsed, vowing never again to come to a Meher Baba meeting. I told myself that these

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people suffered pathetic delusions, and that their belief in this man indicated unresolved childhood traumas.

Although most of the time I was repelled by the conversations about Meher Baba, I did experience occasional moments of softening. When Patrick played Cole Porter songs that Meher Baba had loved, or told stories of His sister, Mani, reading murder mysteries aloud to entertain Him in the evenings, I felt somewhat attracted to this strange person, although I would never have admitted it to others. One evening I went with Patrick and friends to a Sufi play about Meher Baba and found myself weeping during certain scenes. "I must be very tired," I told myself. "The play is very maudlin, in any case; meant to be a tear jerker."

One spring I met Meher Baba's niece, Shireen, who had recently married Patrick's old friend, Jay Bonner. Sensing my conflicts, Shireen tried to reassure me with a story about Baba forbidding her to read any books about Him. I felt immediately and strongly interested—He wanted Shireen to know Him in some other way, not influenced by words and ideas. She suggested that I need not read any books about Meher Baba, either, and I felt strangely relieved and happy. No need anymore for me to decide if these ideas were right or wrong!

After a couple of years, Patrick and I decided to get married and made plans for a wedding on the coast of Maine with family and a few friends. We sat down one afternoon to write our wedding vows, preferring an informal personal ceremony, and almost immediately got into a conflict about the mention of God in the marriage.

"I absolutely can't have the word God in this wedding," I protested vehemently. "I don't believe in God; my family doesn't believe in God; and my friends don't believe in God. God cannot be part of this wedding! It would be incredibly embarrassing!"

"Well, what do you think getting married is all about?" Patrick asked in some shock.

"I don't know, but it certainly isn't anything having to do with God," I stated emphatically. "And I am definitely not having that until death do us part thing either!"

Patrick took a long walk on the beach to sort out his feelings. He

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told me much later that on this walk he had questioned the whole marriage, but eventually returned to present me with a possible compromise.

"We'll leave out the word God, but I want a few passages of Meher Baba's to be read by Carl Ernst during the ceremony."

"Fine," I agreed. "But stick them somewhere in the middle and make them short." I privately hoped that no one would notice the passages if they were mixed in with enough music.

The wedding took place, and I managed to block my ears when Meher Baba's messages were read. Once happily married, we began making plans for a long trip abroad. Patrick had often talked about wanting to revisit India, which didn't interest me much, but I consented since it seemed so important to him. We agreed to travel in Europe for a couple of months, then head eastward.

"We can go to Meherabad for two weeks, from there to Sri Lanka, and then on to Nepal," I explained. "I don't mind meeting the mandali, since they seem so important to you, but don't expect me to be going into Meher Baba's Tomb or anything weird like that," I warned Patrick. He told me I could do whatever I liked. I planned to catch up on some reading.

In London we stayed at Pete Townshend's place, Meher Oceanic. I resisted Delia Deleon's and Adi S. Irani's attempts to engage me in conversations about Meher Baba, and, at times, wished that I had never agreed to go to India with Patrick. But while I felt defensive and irritated most of the time, softer moments would occasionally creep up on me. Someone was watching a video about Meher Baba one evening and I felt a curious tug, but only watched a minute or so before I pushed myself away. Another person left Jean Adriel's book, *Avatar*, lying about, and I found myself reading a few pages with some interest before abruptly tossing it aside.

I was not going to be tricked into this Meher Baba cult, I told myself. It was only for people who couldn't face their lives alone; dependent people who couldn't think for themselves; unhappy people searching for security; or desperate people clinging to false promises. I did not need this, I assured myself: I was already happy. My life was wonderful. I had just married the man I loved; we were traveling together around the world; I had work, family, and friends

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that satisfied me and I didn't need anything else.

The time eventually came for us to leave for India. I had noticed Patrick's unspoken impatience to be at Meherabad throughout our travels in France and England, and felt disappointed that he wasn't fully satisfied to remain in the French countryside forever. Why did he have to be so obsessed with this Meher Baba? In every other way he seemed an ideal partner.

We flew to Bombay one October evening in 1980, or at least tried to fly to Bombay, but were unable to land in the dense fog and thus forced to continue on to Madras (Chennai) for refueling. I had always been afraid in planes, particularly taking off and landing. This particular flight became grueling; long, turbulent, and then sweltering inside the airplane on the ground in Madras, while we waited for fuel.

The situation grew yet worse. An engine failed during the takeoff on our return to Bombay. A bird had flown into it and the pilot was forced to finish his take-off with half the usual power. The engines strained and we flew low over shanties near the airport, unable to gain altitude. Everyone sat buckled into their seats, knowing something to be gravely wrong, hoping to survive the flight. After finally managing to get the plane aloft, the pilot's shaking voice came over the loudspeakers, informing us about the near disaster. "If we get to Bombay," the pilot continued, rather tactlessly, "the flight will not continue." The attendants spent the three hour flight to Bombay with their faces pressed to the windows, watching to see if the engine would explode. Many people prayed. I wished I believed in God.

The fog cleared, and we landed amidst tremendous cheering and clapping. India seemed miraculous; I wanted to kiss the ground as we rushed out of our airplane prison. I immediately fell in love with Bombay, its vibrant pulse, noises, and smells. It reminded me of West Africa, where I had lived as a teenager; in some odd way I felt I had come home. We made our way to the flat of Khorshed Irani, one of Meher Baba's long-time disciples. An Indian festival was in progress with young people dancing in the streets, striking sticks against their partner's raised sticks. The noise was intoxicating; I felt a wild excitement, watching the streets from a small porch,

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hardly wanting to sleep. We stayed for a few days, making arrangements to travel to Ahmednagar. I continued to feel very uncomfortable with the prayers and the photographs of Meher Baba, but the general environment thrilled me so much that I endured the rest. Khorshed also seemed to be such a sweet woman that I hated to offend her by refusing to stand up for the prayers.

One evening we boarded a bus for Ahmednagar. The whole night I remained wide awake, filled with a strange excitement, while Patrick dozed beside me. At four in the morning we were dropped off at the Ashok Hotel in Ahmednagar. A few people wandered about in the night, but the town seemed largely asleep. Patrick had not been there for almost ten years and felt disoriented. We staggered about in the dark with our luggage, looking for the Trust Office. The dust irritated my eyes and the latrine smell began to sicken me. Dogs barked and growled as we passed, and I grew increasingly nervous that some rabid animal would attack us in the dark. I became more and more irritated, I wanted a hotel and sleep, but Patrick pressed on in search of some sign of the Meher Baba community.

We found the Trust compound after a half hour of circling the area, but the gates were shut, sleeping bodies lying on the ground in front. Patrick suggested that we take a rickshaw out to Meherabad. He found a driver who knew no English, seemed never to have heard of Meherabad, but wagged his head from side to side at the mention of Arangaon.

"I think Meherabad is near Arangaon village," Patrick told me. "So if we go out in that direction, we can probably find it." I knew there was no point in arguing with Patrick, who could be very stubborn, and was clearly set on arriving at this Meherabad place. We set off into the night, soon turning onto a deserted country road, pinpoints of stars in a vast black sky. Neither Patrick nor the driver appeared very confident about the route and I soon began to wish I had argued more for staying in town, at least until daylight. Despite the dust, dogs, and bad smells, Ahmednagar seemed preferable to being lost on dark roads in the Indian countryside. Just as I began lobbying to return to town, Patrick shouted "Meherabad! Meherabad!" and pointed the driver into a darkened driveway.

We pulled up outside a long low building and peered out of the

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rickshaw. In the dark, a door banged open, and an angry voice bellowed from the far end of the building.

"What do you think you are doing waking everyone up at 4:30 in the morning? You stupid pilgrims! Why are you coming in here? You are supposed to go to the Pilgrim Center, but not in the middle of the night...." A tall thin man with bushy white hair strode over, pouring out a stream of abuse. Suddenly he seemed to recognize Patrick and threw his arms around him, the torrent of angry words stopping in mid-sentence. I still felt shaken, and wished I could hop back in the rickshaw and leave. Another door opened and a woman rushed out. "Padri! Heather! Patrick!" Everyone seemed to be shouting and hugging in the dark. Between embraces Patrick introduced me, but I disliked the place already.

Patrick inquired about Eric, and hearing that his old friend was still up on the hill as the night watchman near the Tomb, he wanted to rush off again into the night. I felt exasperated and miserably exhausted, now faced with a choice of staying below with Padri and Heather or following Patrick up the hill to the Tomb. I had been determined not to go near the Tomb, in case someone expected me to go inside and bow down, a thought I found particularly horrifying. The thought of remaining below in the dark with Padri alarmed me even more, however, so I accompanied Patrick up the hill in bad humor.

As we approached the Tomb, Patrick spied Eric. They embraced and began talking in animated whispers. I stood immobile in the predawn, hoping I was invisible and wondering how soon we could leave. While waiting, I rehearsed a few conversations with Patrick; I informed him that I didn't want to stay at Meherabad after all, suggesting that we leave for Sri Lanka, or at least for Ahmednagar, right away.

A woman carrying a small pot and a few rags opened the door of the Tomb and went inside. From my spot outside, I watched her begin to wipe a slab of marble, carefully pouring drops of water onto her cloth. A few other women appeared out of the darkness, from the direction we had come, and began to help with the cleaning. I wished that Patrick would finish his conversation so we could leave. The woman poked her head out the door and seeing me standing in

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the dark, beckoned me to come near. I smiled and shook my head. No thank you, I mimed. She tilted her head to one side, smiled, and beckoned with more urgency.

I wanted to tell her that I wasn't interested in Meher Baba and didn't want to go in His Tomb, but a large sign outside the door read, "Silence." I wanted to tell her that I hadn't meant to come here at all; I was just waiting for Patrick to be finished talking to his friend. She kept beckoning silently, urging me to come inside. Even if I was allowed to talk, I reasoned, she might not know English. She motioned me inside once more, pantomiming cleaning with the cloth.

Even more exasperated than I had been down below, I finally decided that it would be easier to just take the cloth, wipe up whatever she indicated, and be done with it. Maybe then she would leave me alone. Slipping off my shoes, I walked up onto the stone porch, accepted the small brown cloth and stepped over the threshold into the Tomb. The moment I found myself inside the small painted space, I began to weep. None of the others paid any attention, and the woman smilingly motioned for me to wipe the marble that I imagined covered Meher Baba's body. Feeling faint, I knelt down to wipe the surface.

I wiped and I wept. I wondered why I was crying. I didn't feel sad, but the tears streamed down my face. I decided I must be suffering from jet lag. One voice inside me said: "This is what everyone in the world is looking for! This is the love that everyone wants!" The other parts of me argued for fatigue and jet lag, urging me to get out of the Tomb and get some sleep. I stayed inside for what seemed like hours, but when I emerged, Patrick and Eric stood in the same position, still talking. I walked down the hill later, dazed, forgetting all about my plans to leave.

My resolve to stay away from the Tomb disappeared completely. I was drawn like a magnet, returning several times a day to sit on the floor inside, even bowing down in the way that had previously horrified me. I found myself singing at the arti, listening to the words of the prayers. The tears continued flowing, sometimes inside the Tomb, sometimes at hearing mention of Meher Baba's name, seeing objects He had used, or imagining Him having walked along the same paths I now walked. "Jet lag," I told myself. "Extreme

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exhaustion."

One morning, I sat cross legged inside the Tomb and looked up to see Meher Baba standing in the corner, next to a vase of flowers. He looked very young, achingly beautiful in a long white *sadra*, smiling and watching me. The image appeared clear, although not solid. I could have put my hand through it. "Hallucinations," I warned myself, but continued to gaze at Him. "I must still be very exhausted from the trip." He seemed so beautiful I could barely breathe. I wanted to cry and cry.

I came back again and again, hoping to have more glimpses. Many times I could see Him in the corner between the windows, and once or twice saw Him pass by the right window, His *sadra* sweeping along. His eyes would meet mine through the window as He strode past, and I felt dizzy. I must be imagining it, I told myself. It seemed that whenever I looked in the corner, I could make His image appear. I told Patrick who suggested that it might be better not to talk about it too much. I talked with Bal Nattu, who told me I was very fortunate to see Baba, but I wasn't sure that I believed him. Sometimes, I wondered if I was being brainwashed, because there were so many photographs of Meher Baba around, but I still loved to see Him.

One day I sat in the Tomb and began to hear Baba talk to me. It seemed to be a voice without sound, external, but I knew what He was saying.

"You are troubled by the idea of an Avatar? You can't believe in this?"

"Yes, I can't accept all of this. It sounds crazy, someone being God. I don't even know what God is."

"It doesn't make any difference. You don't have to use any words like those. You can just accept Me as your best friend. You are interested in psychology now—do you believe in the idea of a highest self?"

"Yes ... that makes sense to me."

. "Then that is all I am. I am your highest self. But the most important thing is to listen and obey this highest self." I had always been bothered by people talking about obeying Meher Baba. I could

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not understand, with such a Western background, the concept of obeying a master. Now I felt caught in my own logic, simple and compelling.

"Stand up and go outside now."

"What? I just sat down in here," I protested.

"Learn to listen to this voice and obey it," He ordered, and I began to worry that I was now beginning to suffer from auditory hallucinations, yet I obeyed Him: I knew from my Abnormal Psychology classes that auditory hallucinations indicated even more serious symptoms than the visual ones I had been experiencing, especially delusions of hearing the voice of God. I wondered if I was experiencing some type of mental breakdown. I felt very happy, however, and continued to follow the voice that led me through various seemingly meaningless exercises, practicing the art of listening and obeying. Eventually, the voice became more internal, the words less distinct, until it became a knowing rather than an order.

Time passed. Patrick and I spent two months at Meherabad instead of two weeks. I didn't speak much about my experiences, often doubting the reality of them. I finally gave up the notion that I was having a psychotic episode, and decided that I was just imagining things instead, making pleasant little games for myself.

We returned to the U.S. and settled in New England. I carried a quiet and personal feeling of Baba inside me, still not liking to read books or discuss any metaphysical theories. At first my friends thought that I might be changed from this visit to India, but soon accepted that I was the same. Indeed, I felt the same, yet utterly different.

A couple of years later, Patrick and I returned to Meherabad for Amartithi, bringing a friend along. I looked forward to seeing Baba's image in His Tomb once again, since I had not been able to recreate it anywhere else. I sat and stared into the corner, but no form came. Maybe I had lost my knack, I thought, disappointed to see only the painted walls. I tried many times to imagine seeing Baba, but was unable. I enjoyed our stay at Meherabad, nonetheless, a visit that was to be Patrick's last, as he was killed in a car accident the following year. During that visit, Patrick had carried the torch in the early

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morning run from Meherazad to Meherabad, lighting the Amartithi *dhuni* at dawn. He said afterward, "If nothing else happens in my life, it is complete now after this act."

On June 1st, 1984, I came home from work to find a note on my door, asking me to contact the police. I knew something had happened to Patrick. On the telephone, the officer asked me to come to the station, as Patrick had been in a car accident. My friend drove me to the police station; I repeated Baba's name all the way, knowing Patrick had died. Still in a state of numbness, I was aware of always having known this event would take place, as if the souls now known as Patrick, Kristen, and the drunk driver (whose name I no longer remember) once agreed upon this intersection of our lives. I felt prepared in an odd way and knew that Meher Baba would help me get through the unimaginable pain that would follow.

Later in the day, I came to see the body, arriving at the funeral home with friends, photographs of Meher Baba, and some ashes from a *dhuni* fire Baba once lit at Meherabad. I had never seen a dead body before, and when I first came into the room and saw Patrick lying on a hospital bed with hands uncharacteristically folded across his chest, I couldn't grasp what had taken place. Clearly this inert body was not Patrick, or what I knew best of him. I began silently to ask Baba what had become of Patrick. I stood by the side of the bed and touched his dull cold hands, looking up to the left as I saw light near his head. Baba stood there, again smiling and watching me, but this time as an old man, clothed in a beautiful white *sadra*.

As the images came into focus, I could also see Patrick clearly, standing next to Baba. I was surprised that he wore different clothes from the ones I had brought for the funeral director to clothe the body. Small irrelevant details seemed to stick in my mind. Why was he wearing blue jeans and a dark blue shirt? I had brought a crimson shirt.

Patrick stood next to Baba for several seconds, also smiling, relaxed, and untroubled. Smoothly and silently his form moved in front of Baba's and then disappeared. I remained absorbed, gazing at Baba for several minutes, His eyes mirroring everything that I had ever known and much more. He suffered all the pain I felt, and

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all that I would come to feel in the days ahead. I understood at that moment that it never had been me creating those images in the Tomb, but Baba who had given me precious gifts. After a few minutes, Baba's image faded, but I felt comforted by His presence.

I have never been able to see Meher Baba's face or form again as I did in earlier days, at those moments when I most needed Him, but Baba sometimes makes His presence known in other beautiful ways, teaching me to look everywhere for Him. One day, for example, not long after Patrick died, I went to a *sahavas* on the west-coast near Los Angeles. I had wanted to be in the company of Baba-lovers, but knew very few people there. It was also the first time I had been away from close friends and family since Patrick's death. At one moment I felt suddenly very alone and unsure whether my coming had been a good idea. I begged Baba to stay very close to me, to let me know He was always with me, as He had done many times in painful moments.

Hughie MacDonald suddenly walked up to me, a magician's hat on his head, and spread a pack of cards out in front of me, face down. He wordlessly invited me to pick a card, any card. I touched them all, absorbed in the choice and anticipation of Hughie's trick, and pulled out one. When I turned over my card, I realized once again that Meher Baba was more than close. It was the King of Hearts. During my final trip to Meherabad with Patrick, I had written a song for Baba with the chorus line: "I weep and I laugh, I hold out my hand, He's dealt me the King of Hearts!"

Love, The Language of the Heart

Bal Natu

Starting in 1959, Meher Baba began spending the summer months at Guru Prasad in Poona (Pune). This was a mansion on Bund Garden Road, given for His use by the Maharani of Baroda. Throughout the early 1960's, He compassionately allowed His lovers to come for His darshan on some weekends. Frequently, P. Madhusudan of Poona, who was regarded by Baba lovers in India as their singer-laureate, would visit Guru Prasad to sing for Baba at small and large gatherings. He had composed many songs dedicated to Baba which Baba enjoyed hearing. The lively tunes made the words of praise even more appealing and Baba would often have Madhusudan, accompanied by others, sing for Him and the assembled group.

One of his songs which was well-received was "Meher *Ekam*." An interesting feature of this song was that all the lines, as far as I remember, ended with the letter "m." This struck Baba's fancy. So much so, that for a while He took to adding an "m" to the names of those residing with Him at Guru Prasad. For example, Pendu became Penduem, (not the same as in the earlier years when Baba had nicknamed him as Pendulum), Vishnum, Meherjeem, and so on.

One weekend, in the group of lovers who had assembled, was a High Court judge, a Mr. Mukarjee from Calcutta, along with his wife. When he returned home after the darshan, he wrote Baba a letter in which he said that he had been so taken with the song "Meher *Ekam*," that he and his wife now sang it themselves everyday.

When Baba heard this, He suddenly looked concerned. "What kind of impression will people get," Baba wondered, "if they hear this song being sung? It is a mixture of languages," Baba gestured,

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"Marathi, Sanskrit, and Hindi. When people hear this song with its unusual words, what will they think of Me? Will it give them the wrong impression?"

Baba turned to me and asked me what I thought. I said "Personally, I like the song, Baba. It has a nice tune and the words seem heartfelt, and I think people will understand that it's only a song."

"Is it grammatically correct?" Baba asked.

"Baba, it seems okay to me," I replied again, but Baba was not satisfied.

"Do you know Panduranga Shastri?"* He asked me. Of course I knew of him. He was a well-known Sanskrit scholar working at the Deccan College Research Institute of Languages. In addition, he had started visiting Guru Prasad to have Baba's darshan whenever he could, since he lived nearby.

"Do you know where he lives?" Baba asked me.

"I don't have his address," I replied, "but I know he is living somewhere on the Deccan College campus."

Baba seemed pleased. "Go and ask him his opinion of this song," Baba gestured. I accepted this command, but perhaps I didn't seem eager enough, for Baba gestured, "Don't wait until tomorrow. Go now."

So, after getting a copy of the song, I took a rickshaw to Deccan College and found Panduranga Shastri's quarters. He was surprised to see me, and we made casual conversation for a while before I came to the point of my visit. I showed him the song and explained Baba's concerns about the ungrammatical use of Marathi, Hindi, and Sanskrit words in the song. Shastri replied that he also liked the

* When Panduranga Shastri came to Guru Prasad, Baba would sometimes have him, or his son, recite the famous hymn of *Adya* Shri Shankaracharya, "*Shivoham*," which contains the essence of Vedanta. Later, Shastri translated all of *Adya* Shri Shankaracharya's hymns from the Sanskrit into Marathi. In response to Shastri's letter requesting Baba's blessing for the book, Meher Baba gave a brief message which was included in the book. In it He authoritatively stated, "I am the Goal and I am the Way.... Those who lose their all in Me, find their all in Me, ever after. My love blessing to you."

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song and thought it was a good one.

"Yes," I agreed, "but what about the use of language?"

"It is written in the language of the heart," he replied, "so ordinary rules of grammar don't apply."

I was happy to receive a verdict which I could relay to Baba. I stayed for a short time, as Shastri offered me some refreshment. Then, as soon as I could politely take my leave, I hurried back to Guru Prasad. It was as if Baba had been waiting for my return. As soon as He saw me He gestured, "Well, what did he say?"

"Baba," I replied. "He says it is written in the language of the heart awakened by Your Love; and ordinary rules of grammar don't apply."

Baba appeared to be very relieved to hear this. He smiled and gestured, "Then it's okay if the judge and his wife continue to sing the song." He then asked Eruch to reply to Mukarjee's letter. Baba seemed pleased with the end result and gestured to me to come closer. He gave me a fresh, sumptuous grape symbolizing His divine bounty.

The language of the heart inspired by love is truly beyond all rules, as Beloved Baba has conveyed to His lovers:

The prayer God hears is the prayer from the heart.... God does not listen to the language of the tongue, nor to the language of the mind, He responds to the language of the heart. The language of the heart is the song of love for the Beloved. The Beloved can only be found within you, for His only abode is the heart.

The Blessed Moment of Lifetimes

Shtrughan Kumar

In the 1930's, before I knew of Meher Baba, I was totally devoted to politics and played an active part as a revolutionary, trying to free India, my motherland. The British, who were then ruling over India, put me in jail twice. Altogether, I was imprisoned for over ten years because of my political activities.

In 1940, the second time I was put in Tihar Jail in Uttar Pradesh, I did not have proper documentation, and was simply incarcerated as a "state prisoner" with no term set to my imprisonment. After five years, I learned that some of the leaders of the revolutionary movement were being released. As these men were considered much more dangerous by the government than I, who was not an important leader, I began to expect that I, too, would be released soon.

Instead of being set free, I was shifted to a deep underground cellar from which prisoners were not generally released. I knew this was the end of the line for me. I thought of my lovely young wife, Subhadra, and my widowed mother whom I loved dearly, having to till our acres of farmland, waiting patiently and lovingly for me to come home—but now I knew that I would never see them again.

If I could only get out, I thought, I might even give up my revolutionary activities. I had really grown tired of being in jail and had begun to crave freedom. But I knew it was no use thinking in those terms, for I would never get out and my loved ones would never even know what had happened to me.

I became very depressed. Then one day, I suddenly sat up with a jerk and proclaimed, "God, only God, if He exists, can help me!" The thought came to me that the only way out of jail was to

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ask God to help me. I had been brought up in a spiritual environment at home, but after joining the revolutionary party and spending a long time in politics, I had become an agnostic. However, that night, when the other prisoners were asleep, I prepared myself to request something of God for the first time.

I either didn't know, or by then had forgotten, how to address God, so I simply said, "Mr. God, if there is a God, I request that you please get me released from this jail." Simultaneously with this request came the thought that every punishment and pain is man's own karma according to his deeds; if jail was my own fate, then why should God interfere? Yet right on the heels of this thought came another—that if I promised to accept some binding outside of jail, then that would repay the karma. I felt I had found the solution.

So I began my request again, "Mr. God, please get me released from this jail and in exchange I promise to abide by and obey any binding whatsoever, which You impose upon me outside this jail." While I was making this promise to God, I began to feel strongly that God was going to accept my bargain.

Then another thought entered my mind. "How will I know if my bargain has been accepted by God? Even if I am released, what proof will I have that it was God's doing?" So I added, "Please God, if You have accepted my promise and bargain, then get me released early in the morning, as soon as the prison gates are opened. If I am released any other time, the following day, tomorrow evening, or even a few hours after the gates open tomorrow morning, I will take it that my release was all by chance and not Your doing." Actually, it would be an impossibility for me to be released at dawn, for the superintendent, who would have to sign my release papers, never arrived until at least ten in the morning.

Despite this, after so much conversation with God, I became so sure that I would be released early in the morning, that I started to pack my belongings in my two large trunks. I spent the whole night praying, requesting, promising, bargaining, and packing.

As dawn approached, I was becoming extremely tired. I then heard the key being turned in the lock, my cell gate opened, and a guard handed me a slip of paper on which was written, "Mr. Kumar, get yourself ready with your bag and baggage." I couldn't take it all

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in at once. I was simply trying to understand what was happening, when some prison officials came and took me to the superintendent's office.

I remember it was still dark and a lamp was burning in the office. The superintendent had me sign some papers for my release and traveling expenses. My trunks were given to two prisoners to carry, and I was allowed to pass out of the main gate. My trunks were put down, the prisoners returned inside, and I was left there, free!

In the east, the sky was just lighting up. The superintendent left the prison after releasing me. I think I must have been the only prisoner to be released at such an odd hour, because the office hours were normally from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Yet here I was, out of prison before 5:00 a.m.! To this day, I do not know what led the authorities to order my release in that way and at that hour. At the time I was simply dazed. I got a ride into town and caught a train for Dehra Dun, U.P. I was home the next day.

Gradually, I forgot my promise to God and moved to my present home in the village of Manjri Mafi, which is now called Meher Mafi. Five years later, towards the end of 1949, I saw a horse car approaching my house one day. The people in it called on me and asked me if I could help them purchase some land within a period of twenty-four hours. This was easy for me to arrange, and within two hours, they had bought the land.

Then they asked me if I would arrange for meals to be given to a gentleman who was coming to live on the property they had just acquired. I said I could do that and, to my surprise, they insisted on giving me five hundred rupees for this, in spite of my refusal.

Some days later, the gentleman they paid me to look after arrived. This was Kaikobad Dastur. Either I or someone in my family would take his food to him. One day as I was bringing his tea, he showed me a photograph of Meher Baba and said, "He is the Avatar, God in human form, and you are fortunate to serve Him." Regarding himself, he said, "I am His slave."

I don't know what happened, but from that day, I began to see Meher Baba in my dreams every night until I actually met Baba in person. Later, Baba Himself asked me whether I had ever seen

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Him in my dreams. I replied, "Yes."

Baba asked, "As I am?"

I said, "No, Baba. I dreamt of You with a beard, looking very lean and thin as if You had been fasting." Baba laughed at this and I thought I must have said something very foolish. But later on I came across a Baba button in which Baba had a beard and was very lean and thin as in my dreams. At once I purchased it and since then I have always kept that button with me.

I began to love Meher Baba more and more, and in 1954, about eight years after my release from prison, Baba called me to Satara in Maharashtra to spend one week with Him. But once I arrived, Baba kept me there for almost one year. He imposed upon me many restrictions and bindings, such as to have no correspondence with anyone and never to step out of the premises unless I was to accompany Baba as His umbrella bearer.

Several months passed like this; my clothes were almost in rags and I had grown a beard. One day it occurred to me that I had so many restrictions on me, it was as if I were in prison! I became upset. I had spent so many years in jail, and now it seemed my life had not changed at all. That very day Baba took me along with Him in His car while He went for *mast* work. On the way, Baba asked me out of the blue, "How long were you in prison?" Without thinking about why Baba asked me such a question, I spontaneously replied, "More than ten years on two occasions; on the first occasion I was released after completing my sentence, but on the second occasion, which was during the Second World War, I was put in prison for an indefinite period."

"How did you get released then?" Baba asked.

All of a sudden it came back to me. I had completely forgotten my bargain with God, but now I remembered everything—my request, my bargain, and my promise. I said, "I requested God to release me."

Baba gestured, "Only requested? Didn't you say something more to God?"

I looked up into Baba's eyes. He was smiling. I said, "Yes, Baba. I promised, also."

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"In what manner did you request God, and what was your promise to Him?"

I explained that I didn't know how to address God, so I had begun my request by saying, "Mr. God, if there is a God, I request that You please get me released from this jail. And, in return for this, I promised to abide by any binding whatsoever imposed upon me outside of jail."

. All along Baba had been smiling, but suddenly He became very serious. He took my right hand and placed it upon His and made me repeat the promise three times. "Don't break this promise," He gestured. "I am God; I am that 'Mr. God' to whom you made the promise. I have kept My side of the bargain; now you keep yours."

Something like an electrical current passed through my body and I began to perspire until I was completely soaked. Baba then caressed me lovingly. Up to that time I had served Baba and loved Baba as my Master, but now I knew with conviction beyond question that I had found God, the Highest of the High. It was the most blessed moment of my lifetimes.

The preceding story was related to Bal Natu in the 1970's at Meherazad by Kumar. The following events were related to Bal by Kumar's daughter, Amrit Irani.

*** **

During Baba's public darshan programs in Andhra, Hamirpur, and other places in India, Kumar was made the Commander-in-Chief to control the crowds. He performed his duty diligently. Whenever Kumar would come and stay with Baba, he would be Baba's "umbrella man" protecting Him from the sun. Kumar's life is full of incidents revealing his love and total conviction in Baba as the Avatar—God in human form.

The weeks before Kumar's death were very painful for him, but reflected his love for his Beloved. One day Kumar was lying in bed very much depressed and in great pain. His daughter, Amrit Irani, and his son, Samarth, were in the room quietly playing cards thinking that Kumar was asleep. Suddenly Kumar called out, and when Amrit rushed up to him, she saw that he was radiant. He

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said, "Baba was here just now; didn't you see Him? He came and told me, 'Don't you have trust in Me? I will give you as much pain as you can bear, and no more.' You see, dear daughter, I had been complaining to Baba about the pain and asking Him to take me away."

From that day, Amrit said Kumar was different. It was Kumar now who gave the family strength, bearing whatever pain and discomfort he had quietly and with his Beloved Master's name on his lips.

A few days after this incident, Kumar was doubled up with pain in the region of his heart. After some time, when he could talk, he told Amrit, "Just now when I had this spasm of pain, in my mind's eye came the vision of a Britisher whom, during my revolutionary days, I had kicked in the chest and caused to literally double up and roll on the ground with pain. I even felt sorry for him in spite of my fiery and violent acts. Yes, beloved daughter, Baba the Compassionate One, is cleaning my slate of karmic impressions before He will release me from this body."

A few weeks before Kumar passed away, he had a dream. In the dream he saw Baba standing before a wall. On the wall was a black square, and inside the square were still darker jet-black circles. Baba was pointing at the square and telling Kumar, "This is you," meaning his impressions.

Two days before he passed away, Kumar had another dream. In this dream he saw a lake. The lake was filled with pure milk and there were no ripples on the surface. The surrounding area was also pure white. Kumar was swimming in the lake and Baba was standing on the opposite shore of the lake, beckoning to Kumar and opening out His arms to receive him.

In the morning when he got up, Kumar knew his end was near. After this dream, surprisingly, he had no more pain. He stopped taking medication and had a full bath instead of a sponge bath, for the first time in weeks. Then he went in his wheelchair to the "Baba room" in his house. He asked to be taken around the whole house and the property, and met with all of his family. The next day, on October 3, 1985, he quietly passed away with his Beloved Meher's name on his lips.

The White Blood Cell

Michael Le Page

I was born into a Baba family in Melbourne in 1951. My parents had come to accept Meher Baba in the late 1940's. My sisters and I grew up in Sydney, as part of the worldwide Baba family. Our links with Baba and His mandali were maintained through Baba's visits to Australia and our family visits to India.

In 1996 I was blessed with a unique experience, which I shared with Meher Baba's sister Mani. Here is the letter I wrote to her on May 5, 1996:
Dearest Auntie Mani,

I have a little anecdote that I thought might bring a smile to your face.

I had a very broken night's sleep several weeks ago (Thursday April 25; Anzac Day to be exact). As I tossed and turned, I was aware of the busy day I had coming up and worried about getting through the day with very little sleep. I called out to Baba to help me get to sleep; nothing happened, and I was awake until dawn.

I had an appointment at 8:00 a.m. that Friday morning with a naturopath named Garth Harris, who has been treating me for the chronic fatigue syndrome condition that I have had for several years. Garth's main diagnostic method is "live blood cell analysis" in which he takes a pin prick drop of blood that he examines under a microscope. The microscope has a video camera connected to it so that the magnified images of the blood can be seen on a TV screen.

Looking at the TV screen, Garth and I first discussed my red blood cells, which looked fine. He then moved to the microscope slide to focus on a neutrophil, which I understand is one of the types of white blood cells. The white blood cells help protect the body

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against infection. The image of the neutrophil filled about one third of the TV screen, and Garth made several comments about the healthiness of this blood cell.

As soon as I looked at the neutrophil, I saw Baba's face clearly in the top third of the cell, with His arms extending down, also visible but less clearly defined. I stared at the image of Baba for about five seconds, somewhat in a daze (partly from lack of sleep, I guess). For some reason, I didn't actually feel startled or surprised.

I then asked Garth what he saw in the cell. He looked at the screen and said "a face." He paused for a few seconds, then he said: "It's the Christ." He paused again and then said, "It's the Child Christ." After another pause he said, "It's the face of God."

We both sat there for a few minutes marveling at this image, murmuring from time to time to each other that it was the face of God. We agreed that we were both looking at the same part of the slide and were seeing the same features. We talked about trying to photograph or videotape the image, but unfortunately he did not have the equipment in his office to do that. I decided not to tell him in that moment about Baba, but will do so soon. I found out later that he has heard Baba's name from my sister Jenny, who is also a patient.

I may not have gotten a good night's sleep, but I got something much more wonderful—the image that Baba is in my cells helping me fight my illness!

Surrender Unto Meher Baba

Shalig Ram Sharma

From the earliest I can remember, I longed for something, though I knew not what—something more real and meaningful than the life I was living. Material possessions did not have much attraction for me. With my fondness for solitude, I found great pleasure in contemplating the sky and the vastness of the land which it canopies, wondering at the mysterious and hidden forces which had brought everything into existence.

Early in life, I encountered a social leader who was interested in spiritual matters and who, perceiving my nature, encouraged and assisted me in developing my awareness. Through him I saw the folly of the caste system and learned the value of discipline in daily life.

With this nourishment of spirit, it was not long before I began to yearn for some deeper satisfaction, and very soon it occurred to me that I should renounce the world and journey to the Himalayas in search of God. This was quite a bold step for one who was only twelve years old at the time. However, this fantasy of mine collapsed as soon as I put it into action, because Meher Baba, I now believe, had drawn up an entirely different blueprint for my life.

I had embarked on the train for Badrinath in the Himalayas, but during a stop at Gwalior station, a blind stranger of commanding mien and dress, whom I took to be a saint, entered the compartment in which I was seated. Within minutes he inquired of me, "Boy, where are you going?"

I answered respectfully, "Baba, my heart finds no solace in the world. Hence I am renouncing the world and going to Badrinath in search of God."

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The stranger replied, "What will you gain there? If you go there at your tender age, you may be cheated, misguided, and subject to beggary." With further conversation he convinced me of the futility of seeking an abode for peace at the religious places and assured me that since God was so overwhelmingly present in my heart, He would one day reveal Himself to me in family life. Taking this message to heart, I left the train at Agra, and with no regrets retraced my steps home.

Who that stranger was, where he came from, and where he went, remained a mystery to me until I met Meher Baba and became convinced that it was He who had contacted me in the form of that saint in order to guide me at a very critical point of my life.

The tensions within me, however, did not abate, so even though I resumed my studies in school, I developed an urge to join an ashram where I could satisfy my spiritual hunger. An opportunity did occur, but all I got out of it was the chance to pass through Manmad in Maharashtra, a train station I was to use quite often in later years when I visited Meher Baba in Poona (Pune) or Ahmednagar.

In 1954, at the age of twenty-six, after eleven more years of study, I graduated in law and married a pious young lady. While training at Allahabad, I had the opportunity to contact various saints, but I found none to whom I could entrust my life.

Then I joined the service of Assistant Public Prosecutor. At this time I was living alone, for my wife was staying with her parents, and this offered me the opportunity to explore my feelings of needing to make a radical change in my life in order to appease my spiritual longing. So for the purpose of self-purification as a way to attain God-realization, I decided to stop eating cereals and subsist on a diet of only fruit. Simultaneously, I withdrew from social life and devoted most of my time to studying Hindu scriptures.

Within a couple of months, I received a transfer to Hamirpur. One day while my supervisor was introducing me to various officers posted in the district, he casually mentioned that the wife of one of them was much devoted to Meher Baba. At the mention of Meher Baba's name, there appeared in my vision a beautiful, smiling divine person wearing a white flowing garment and a pink coat. However, since I had never heard about Meher Baba before or seen a

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picture of Him, except for the thrilling sensation I felt, I did not know what to make of it.

Soon much information about Meher Baba came to me. Within a few days, I met the manager of the printing plant where a magazine and literature about Him were published. I read whatever I was given, and this created a great curiosity in my heart to know all about Meher Baba.

I was thrilled by the stories which were related to me, especially about those close to Meher Baba who had dedicated their lives over so many years to this Master whom they had accepted as God Incarnate. And when I had completed my reading of *God Speaks*, I was so awed by the breadth and depth of Meher Baba's gnosis, I knew without a doubt that my search for someone to whom I could entrust my spiritual life was over.

Everything now contracted into a single longing to meet Meher Baba. But, alas, He was in seclusion at the time and correspondence was strictly prohibited. Thus, I was forced to content myself with enjoying the company of His devotees who were plentiful in Hamirpur, and participating in various activities reflecting their love for Beloved Baba.

During this period it so happened that Meher Baba had arranged for a meeting on a certain date in Ahmednagar with some specially chosen devotees, and one of the select, whom I had come to know well, thought that he might be able to take me for Meher Baba's darshan. Unfortunately, Baba's brother Jal learned of the plan and strongly vetoed the idea. He felt that since my name was not on the list, I had no business of even thinking of being present for darshan. It was clearly a matter of being obedient to Baba's order. Seeing my acceptance of this, Jal was so moved by my resignation and earnest longing to meet Baba, that he promised to see what he could do. However, it turned out that the meeting was later canceled by Baba.

Nevertheless, Jal made good on his word, and within a short time I received a very encouraging letter from him. He wrote that he had seen Meher Baba at Meherazad for a few minutes on December 25, 1960, and that even under the existing restrictions he managed to show Baba the letters, telegram, and my photograph which I had sent to Jal. The message Meher Baba sent me was that I

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should not worry in the least, as He knows all about me. He wanted me to know that one day He would call me at the proper time, when the seclusion period was over.

"You are really very fortunate to have His *Nazar* on you," Jal concluded, "so be happy about it."

This letter conveying Baba's love and grace increased my longing to see Him. My relationship was further reinforced, when I had the opportunity, for the first time, to observe His request to His lovers to repeat His name five hundred times a day for twenty-one days.

Then quite by chance I learned that even though correspondence was prohibited, there was no restriction on telegraphic birthday greetings to Baba. So I availed myself of the opportunity to send Him my first direct communication: "Avatar Meher Baba, by Your mercy I surrender myself to You as birthday greetings."

To my growing joy, it seemed that Baba began to count me as one of His lovers. I received a telegram from Baba's secretary stating that Meher Baba wanted me to stop the fruit diet on which I had been living and resume my normal food diet.

The year 1961 was, for me, a very auspicious time indeed, for Baba let it be known that He would give darshan to His lovers from May 15th to 31st at Guru Prasad in Poona. My heart was full to bursting in anticipation of this blessed event and I was especially happy that my father wished to join the Hamirpur group. But Baba had an even greater surprise for us when we arrived on May 14th. He had decided to add the bonus of a very special darshan on the afternoon of our arrival. I can still vividly recall my first sight of Meher Baba, dressed in a white *sadra*, sitting in His chair in the room on the right side of Guru Prasad. My entire sense of being seemed to be suspended, as I felt the flow of love, peace, and piety radiating from Him. I was experiencing Him, it seemed, not through my normal senses. When there were conversations with Him, they flowed from heart to heart.

I made a point of sitting at the end of the carpet close to Baba's feet and I was introduced by Pukar, the head of the group, who mentioned how my abstinence from cereals for one year had made me weak. Baba inquired whether I had followed His instructions about resuming a normal diet. He wanted to know why I had

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embarked on such a course. I was so dazzled just being in Baba's presence that my memory seemed to fail me and I became tongue tied. Lovingly, Baba did not press me for an answer, and as the room was getting overcrowded, we moved to the larger hall in Guru Prasad.

In the interim Baba had put on His pink coat, which I was told He used when He was doing significant work, and once again He interrogated Pukar about me, after which He pointedly asked me, "What do you want?"

This time I was alert and replied promptly, "I want to be absolutely true to my surrendrance to Baba."

His response brought me still closer to Him. "None like this," Baba gestured, "have I met 'til today..." and He went on to explain about surrender, about becoming like dust in the face of the obstacle that the mind presents.

But Baba was not quite finished with me. "Why do you want it?" He asked. "If you get it, you will become useless to the world." Then He requested one of the mandali to expand on the statement with a quotation from Hafiz.

I answered, "Baba, I have seen Your world. Now make me useless to it." Hearing this, Baba asked Pukar about my wife and children and wanted to know if my wife had any opposition to Him. I explained that she had none but had not been able to come at this time.

Baba once more returned to my request, "After getting what you want," He asked, "what else remains in the world?"

"That I do not know," I replied, "but I want nothing besides what I have stated."

Then Baba surprisingly asked Pukar, "How is his throat?" and Pukar thinking of a song I had composed which he particularly liked, said, "Baba, he has a sweet voice." However, I was really in no mood to sing, and since Baba seemed indifferent about listening to my singing, Pukar's idea of entertainment was forgotten.

Again Baba asked me to tell Him whatever it was I had in my heart. I could feel the goose bumps as I realized fully the unique opportunity afforded by the Divine Beloved, and I let my heart speak

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out once more. "Baba," I said, "if You are to give, give me complete self-surrender, give me Your shelter, and give me the capacity."

At that moment Baba raised His right hand with two fingers pointing upwards. Simultaneously there was a profuse flash of lightening, and a loud peal of thunder filled the room. Baba gestured, "*Khuda* [God] has heard your voice; everything is granted and this is its proof!"

My joy was boundless, for during my very first appearance before the Divine Beloved, the grace of surrender was bestowed on me. It was the fulfillment of my life-long yearning. I had no idea such a bounty would befall me on that occasion!

From Glow International, November, 1994.

Balance and Cleanse

Missy Briggs

During the 1980's, I was at a very low point emotionally. I was depressed over marital and money problems, and very unsatisfied. I was frustrated that I didn't know what I could do to improve my situation. At the time, I was fascinated with the study of quartz crystals. Someone had loaned me a book on the subject and one night, not being able to sleep, I was reading the book until about 4:00 a.m. When I went to bed I put a crystal under my pillow and did a sort of relaxation meditation to get to sleep. The next thing I knew, I was dreaming that I was in a classroom where a woman teacher was telling all about crystals. This was unlike other dreams—it seemed very real. As the class was dismissed, a tremendous smiling man embraced me and said telepathically, "I'm so glad you *finally* made it!" Excited that finally I'd met my Master, I asked, "Who are you?" The name "Baba" came to me. "Baba?" I thought, "What kind of a name is that?" Then the name "Meher Baba" came to me from Him. I related my problems to Him and my desperation of not knowing what to do. All during my explanation, He beamed and smiled compassionately, as if to say, "Don't be silly! It is all illusion!" Then came His answer to my question of "What can I do?" He said, though not in words, "Balance and cleanse."

I had always felt the closeness of God as a sort of guardian angel. For as long as I can remember, I was very drawn to Eastern wisdom, particularly Indian—the Buddha, Krishna, and the *Bhagavad Gita*. I had been meditating for years and hoped very much to meet my Master. Although I felt Him near at times, He hadn't actually appeared until now. Imagine my excitement! I'd found Him at last, although I hadn't an inkling of who this Meher Baba was. As far as I knew, I'd never even heard the name.

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So the next day I asked a friend on the telephone, whom I hadn't spoken to in fifteen years, who Meher Baba was. He said, "Are you ready for this? Missy, you've met Christ!" I was stunned and ecstatic! Now that I had a Master, I was eager to get my hands on a book about Him. So I called my Unity Church bookstore. Although they had no books in stock, they knew of a Baba group that met once a month, and that night was the very night it was to meet! I felt as if a magnet were pulling me to that meeting. I went there and talked with a woman who had met Meher Baba at Myrtle Beach when she was twelve years old. I felt so fortunate to meet someone so close to the Source. She helped me interpret my message of how to "balance and cleanse." I've not been the same since. My life changed dramatically from the moment I saw Baba in my dream, and my whole family now loves Baba. My children were especially open and accepting of Him as God, and I found out from my mother that my first word was "Baba."

One other "coincidence." At that time, I was reading a book full of spiritual ideals called *The Road Less Traveled*. The first book of Meher Baba that was loaned to me was *The Narrow Lane*. The similarity of titles was not all. As I read both books, they seemed to say the same thing, and I knew it to be the Truth.

Now I know He has been with me all along and was only waiting for the right time to appear. It's been like an exciting detective mystery, putting together clues from my past, that helped lead me to Meher Baba.

On Mohammed the Mast

Ward Parks

In August of 1936, Kaikushru Pleader, one of Meher Baba's mandali, found a *mast* on the streets of Bombay and brought him back to Rahuri, where Baba had recently established His first ashram for the mad and the God-intoxicated.

Mohammed, as this young man was called among the community of Bombay Muslims on whose shore the whim of divine intoxication had washed him up, proved to be, in the words of William Donkin, very much a "problem *mast*, entangled in the brambles of the spiritual path." For as Baba subsequently explained, he was at this time caught between the third and fourth planes of consciousness in a particularly difficult *hairat*, or state of enchantment, from which it is almost impossible to extricate oneself without the help of a master. The sublimities and sensitivities of this condition no doubt help to account for his behavior, which, again to use Donkin's word, was "grotesque" even by *mast* standards.

Thus, in Rahuri, Mohammed would sit near the door to the ashram and pour torrents of vituperation and abuse at anyone who approached him; at other times, for hours together, he would scratch and pick in the dust, looking for what he called, "*deesh*," (Mohammed's hunched and stooped form today attests to this life-long habit.) Yet "however contumacious and difficult he may have been towards everyone else, he really seemed to adore Baba, and long for His daily visits. Every day when Baba came, it was as if a flame were kindled in the depths of Mohammed's being, that for a moment lit up the dark and tangled ways...." (Wayfarers, p.48).

In this fashion, Mohammed took his place among that original group of *masts* through whom Baba's fifteen-year phase of sustained and concentrated *mast* work was inaugurated. Today, more than

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sixty-three years later, when all the other *masts*, saints, and spiritually advanced souls whom Baba contacted have long since disappeared from the scene, Mohammed is still among us, living at Lower Meherabad as the ashram's longest-term permanent resident and (presumably) carrying on with his spiritual work there. All of this suggests a very unique connection with the Avatar and His work. Indeed, as a *wali* of the fifth plane, Mohammed carries the further distinction of being the only current ashramite whom we know to be spiritually advanced. He is, beyond this, a man of great destiny, for Baba conveyed about him that he would become a Perfect Master in several more lifetimes.

One would hardly guess such rare distinction to see Mohammed today, who, with his bent form and slow shuffle, looks like nothing quite so much as a Maharashtrian version of "E.T."* Over the years the irritability and *jalali* fieriness have subsided, and he has become more obviously childlike, both in appearance and manner. Yet even a superficial observer could not help being struck by his eyes, and the ancient feeling that saturates his atmosphere and ambiance continues, as it has always done, to command a sense of respect and even awe.

Who is this remarkable man? Apart from what William Donkin recorded in his magnificent book fifty years ago, what do we know about him? Where does he come from, and how did he become as he is?

On a hot summer's morning in 1999, I put these questions to Eric Nadel, a resident of Meherabad since the mid-1970's who lives in the room next door to "Mo," as he calls him, and who is intimately involved in the *mast's* personal care. Fluent in Marathi, which is Mohammed's mother tongue, Eric is adept in the art of *mast*-wheedling, through the practice of which he has, over the years, gleaned much information about the great man's youth and earlier life. What follows, then, are a few pickings from Eric's biographical treasure hoard. Since "*mastology*" (or the study of *masts*) is very much an infant science, these details are particularly interesting, since they illuminate, from an advanced *mast's* own point of view, how he

* A character from the American movie, *E.T. (Extra Terrestrial)*

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came to inhabit the world of higher awareness which is his true domain and field of action at the present time.

"Don't think," Erico began, "that Mo told us about himself directly and all in one sitting. At the beginning it was very difficult for him to recall anything from his earlier life, because his mind is functioning in a completely different fashion now than it was when he had these experiences. Also, the mind of any *mast* functions slowly: that is one of its characteristics." As Meher Baba Himself explained,

Mind stopped is God.

Mind working, is man.

Mind slowed down, is *mast*.

Mind working fast, is mad.

In certain respects, Mo—like other *masts*—is quite childlike, and the process of inducing him to recall and reminisce requires patience, a certain kind of charm, and a talent in attuning oneself to the rhythm of his consciousness. "I would ask him a question," Erico said, "and have one of the Marathi-speaking servants repeat the question, gently nagging him; and then I would ask him again. He would answer us—in Marathi, of course—saying, 'I'm recollecting, I'm recalling.' After this had gone on for a while, he would say, 'Shall I tell you? Shall I tell you?' and we would say, 'Yes, please tell us!' This would repeat several times: 'Shall I tell you?' 'Yes, tell us!' Finally he would say, 'I'm telling you!' and he would begin to come out with his answer. Once he had gotten going, he would not only answer our questions but sometimes would volunteer his own reminiscences.

"For example, he might say, 'Shall I tell you? Shall I tell you? In my village the houses are made of leaves and grass.'

"By encouraging him in this way to recall his early childhood and describe it to us, we learned that he had been the youngest in an extended family of fourteen children. Thus he was called '*Nana Bhau*,' which means 'little brother.' Knowing this became very useful to us. It made it easy for us to encourage him to eat or drink water or sit outside or exercise. We would just say to him, '*Nana Bhau*, come and have your milk.' He gets immense pleasure from this."

In fact, Mohammed's "real" name—the name given to him by

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his parents—was Tukaram Lakshman Chavan. Thus, despite the sobriquet "Mohammed" given to him later, he was by birth a Hindu and not a Muslim at all. He grew up in Ratnagiri, a small coastal town in southern Maharashtra not far from the Goan border. His father was a potter, and he still remembers some of the rudiments of pot-making taught to him as a boy.

"After the wheels of memory had been greased a bit by several sessions of recollection," Erica went on, "I asked him how he became a *mast*. The actual word that I used was '*deva*' (a 'god'): 'How did you become a *deva*?' For the third plane (from which station Mohammed began his spiritual journey in this lifetime) is the abode of *devas*, and he used to see them there.

"When I asked him this, Mo snapped his fingers, as if to imply that it happened very quickly: 'Just like that!'

"I asked where he was at the time. He told us that he was at home in his house. His wife and two children were sleeping.

"I asked him what was the time of day. He answered, 'Early in the morning.' Having just woken from sleep, he stood up to tie on the red piece of cloth he used as underwear. When he finished tying on his underwear, he told us, he became a *deva*.

"'What did you do then?' I asked him. Mo replied with animation, 'I put up my arms like this!'—and he raised both arms above his head.

"'How long did you do that for?'

"'About ten days, two weeks.'

"'And then what did you do?'

"'I put on my shoes and I went to Bombay.'

"'Why did you go to Bombay?' I asked him.

"And here, Mo told me—these are the words in Marathi—'*Pushkal dalinder bawaji ahay tita*,' which means, roughly, 'There are many unkempt respectable old men there.' The literal sense of these words was easily enough understood, but it seemed that there was something more to be grasped than this. What made this answer especially confusing was that Mo uses the word '*bawaji*' to refer to old Parsi gentlemen. Why would the presence of old, unkempt, respectable Parsi gentlemen be something that would attract him to

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Bombay?

"Puzzling this over for a few days, suddenly I realized what Mo was saying. He was not talking about unkempt Parsis or unkempt old men in Bombay. What he meant was that there were plenty of *masts* there. And when I asked him a question to this effect later, he gave answers that confirmed this interpretation."

So Mohammed left his home and family and took up residence in Bombay. During this period, as William Donkin recorded, Mohammed was much pursued by number bettors who gambled on the "day-to-day fluctuations of cotton prices" and who, for this purpose, would pester men perceived as spiritually advanced for profitable hints and tips. At the time Pleader found him, Mohammed was living in the streets of the city, sleeping under a small stall at night, and providing tips to these cotton speculators in exchange for meals. "It seems that one of his problems when he became a *mast*," said Erico, "is that he no longer knew exactly how to get food to eat." In fact, Pleader gave Mohammed the first good meal that he had had for years.

"Mo told us that, when he met Baba in Rahuri for the first time, he didn't recognize Him, but he nonetheless wanted to embrace Baba, and Baba wanted to embrace him. They did embrace, Mo says, and they both were very, very happy. And after some days, Mo recognized who Baba was: '*Dharma cha Dada*,' that is, 'the Elder Brother of the ancient faith of mankind.'"

All these recollections derive from the earlier years of Mohammed's life, in the 1920's and 1930's. "So now today," says Erico, "We have a delightful '*Nana Bhau*' (Little Brother) sitting on his chair on the back verandah of a 1948 bungalow at Lower Meherabad. He doesn't appear to be doing much, but when I ask him causally, 'What are you doing?' sometimes he'll reply, '*Danda chaloo hay*,' which means, 'I am practicing my profession.'"

Mohammed the *mast* is now about ninety years old. He can still be found "practicing his profession" on the verandah of Mandali Hall.

As the years pass and the life of the Avatar of the Age gradually passes out of first-hand memory into the realm of history and written record, Mohammed the *mast* is one of the last living reminders

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of one of the most significant phases and aspects of Beloved Baba's work. What Baba was really doing with the *masts*, no one can tell. Even if someone could tell, the vast majority of us locked in the plane of gross consciousness could never understand. Whatever that game may have been, Mohammed the *mast* appears to have been one of Baba's first-string players. Through the ages to come, his name and memory will be cherished as one of the beloved children of the Eternal Beloved of all mankind.

From Meherana Messenger, No.8, Issue 1999.

Avataric Coincidences

Hasan Selisik

How I came to Baba all begins with my older sister who lives in the United States. She had moved from Turkey to Chapel Hill, North Carolina, to work on her Ph.D. in drama. One day in the 1970's she had an appointment with the dean of the Drama Department, and while she was waiting in his secretary's office, she saw a picture on the table. It was a man, with long hair and a big mustache. She was so attracted to this picture she thought, "I remember this face, but I do not know where I have seen this man."

So she asked the secretary named Leah Florence, who this gentleman was. Leah told her it was Meher Baba. She realized she did not know this name, Meher Baba, but the face felt so familiar. She thought there must be something to this; she was curious what it meant, so she inquired further. Leah then told her that He is the Avatar.

She asked, "Avatar, what is that?"

Leah began to explain, but my sister's appointment time came and she had to meet with the dean. She was accepted as a graduate student at the university and thus had more opportunities to see Leah. Each time they met, Leah continued to explain more about Meher Baba. She was happy to hear these explanations, as she had always had spiritual inclinations.

One day, Leah invited her to a talk at the University by Adi K Irani, Meher Baba's secretary. My sister felt she was not ready to meet such a person, so she thanked Leah for the offer, but declined the invitation.

Leah spoke with Adi and mentioned my sister. Adi said that he wanted to meet her. Leah told my sister the next day what Adi had

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said, so she felt she had no choice and agreed to attend the talk. She came to the program and met Adi and spoke with him. As soon as they spoke, she became convinced that Meher Baba is the Avatar.

That summer she came to Turkey and was full of stories of Meher Baba. She told us all about who He is. I was a little bit wary of it. I thought, "My poor sister is all alone in America. She needs to hold on to something." I felt very sorry for her and told her I did not want to hear anything more about this Meher Baba.

Two years later, I was studying in France. One day while working at my desk at about three in the morning, a question came to my mind, which I knew was not mine, because at that time I would never have asked that sort of question to myself or anybody else. The question was: "Who am I? What am I doing here?" I stopped and tried to listen again, but the voice came and was gone, as if it were an illusion. So I just kept on working. Five minutes later, the same question came again. "This is not my type of question," I said to myself. "This is very bizarre. But the question is correct. I know I am Hasan, this body, and this face. What am I doing here? I am doing my architectural study, this I know. But in this world, in this universe, what is my function? Why am I here? For what reason? This question has true meaning; so how can I find the answer?"

These thoughts ticked all night in my brain. The next day I went to school and talked to my friends. I told them of my experience. One friend began to laugh and said, "Do you want to find out?" "Yes," I said. He then told me that he was doing Transcendental Meditation and invited me to join, saying that it would help me find the way.

"What is this Transcendental Meditation?" I wanted to know, because in my family we believed in God, but we rejected religion or traditions. So all these kinds of things were very new for me. He told me what it was, repeating a mantra twenty minutes each morning and evening to open my *chakras* (energy centers).

So I decided to try it. I practiced it for one and a half years, but was not satisfied. I wanted to experiment with spiritual powers because I thought that was true mysticism. However, the courses of Transcendental Meditation were often so expensive that I couldn't afford them. Also I began to argue with the teachers and started to

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see their shortcomings. "This is not true mysticism," I thought, so I cut off from it.

For a few months I practiced Zen Buddhism, but it was so disciplined and strict I didn't feel it was for me. I had to find something that fit for me. What could it be? I began to search within my own cultural traditions of Turkish mysticism, reading Hafiz, Rumi, Zuban, and other Sufi masters. I was pleased and happy with them; feeling like they spoke more to my heart. I finally felt I had found my way. However, I realized that just by reading books I could not attain my goal. I had to find a guide or a master. But how could I find such a one in the materialistic world of Marseilles?

Suddenly I remembered Meher Baba, whom my sister had told me about years ago. Maybe she could help me. So I wrote her a letter and asked her if she knew someone living in France who either had met Meher Baba or had knowledge of Him. The day she received my letter, she was on her way to Myrtle Beach, so she took the letter with her, because she had no idea about Baba followers in France. She thought she would get some information from Kitty Davy or Elizabeth Patterson.

Kitty told her she knew of a lady named Yvonne Antoni who lived in Paris, but she had since heard that the woman had left Paris, and Kitty did not know where she was currently. At that moment, a young woman entered and, hearing this conversation, apologized for interrupting, but said that she knew of Yvonne because she had written to her while in Quebec, asking her for French translations of Meher Baba's *Discourses*.

"She has just sent me some copies, which have her new address in Marseilles," the woman commented.

Kitty just smiled and said, "You see, now you have her address. You can send it to your brother."

When I received Yvonne's address, I was so amazed, because her home was just one block from my building! I thought that all these things seemed too bizarre. I wondered what was happening here. Everything seemed too programmed. Suddenly I felt I couldn't go there immediately. I needed to digest all that had happened.

By the next day, I could no longer wait, so I went to visit Yvonne.

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I rang the bell, and a very old lady opened the door. I asked her pardon for disturbing her, and told her that Kitty Davy had referred me. Hearing Kitty's name, she invited me in. As soon as I entered, Baba captured my heart. I felt Baba's love through Yvonne. Yvonne was so happy with our meeting; she felt she had found her purpose in being in Marseilles. She canceled her plan to return to Paris, feeling that remaining in Marseilles was truly Baba's wish. Yvonne's story of how she came to be in Marseilles at that time, to answer my knock, is very interesting.

Yvonne was born into an aristocratic family in Marseilles in the early 1900's. Her father was with the army, and she received a Catholic education. She had a difficult time with the nuns at her school. They were very harsh with her, so at an early age, she got fed up with religion itself. A few years later, at age fourteen, her father died. Later her mother remarried, and after some time, her stepfather, who was very unstable, shot and killed her mother in front of her eyes. Yvonne was completely distraught after that, and decided to leave Marseilles forever.

At eighteen, with only five francs in her pocket, Yvonne went to Paris. Fortunately, she found a job in a factory near Paris. The manager and his family were very kind to her, and she loved them very much. She remained in Paris, and after some years the Second World War broke out.

During this period she began to feel a tremendous urge to find a living master. She was convinced that sooner or later she would find such a master. However, due to the critical political period, she was prevented from seeking one out. During the war, Yvonne began working for the French Resistance. At that time she met her future husband, Robert. As was often the case at that time, sirens would ring, signaling all to retreat from their flats and go underground. They would remain there until the second siren sounded, signaling them to safely return to their flats.

One day, as Yvonne was returning to her flat, she passed by the room of a woman who was repeating, "Thank you, Baba. Thank you, Baba." She observed this several times and grew so intrigued by it that she wanted to know to whom the woman prayed. So after the next siren, she went to this woman and asked, "Madam, whom

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are you thanking?" The woman replied, "Meher Baba." Yvonne said, "Yes, I have heard His name. This intrigues me very much. Who is Meher Baba?"

The woman replied, "He is the Avatar."

"But what is the Avatar?" Yvonne asked.

"Are you interested?" the woman inquired.

"Yes," replied Yvonne. So the woman invited her into her flat, and she began to explain to Yvonne who Meher Baba is.

This lady told Yvonne that she and her family had been living in Poland, and just before the war had begun, they received a telegram from Baba saying that they should leave the country immediately and pass over a big sea. So they obeyed Baba's order and left the country immediately. They came as far as Paris and established themselves there for the time being. After the war broke out, they understood the significance of Baba's direction.

This lady gave Yvonne a little card with Meher Baba's photograph and address. She told Yvonne to write to Him as soon as the war was over. As Yvonne looked at the photograph, she suddenly felt certain that this was the Master she was seeking.

Yvonne never saw the Polish woman again. Perhaps she and her family finally crossed the big sea, but no one knows.

Yvonne waited until the end of the war and then wrote to Baba explaining how she got His photo and address. She received a reply from Baba saying, "I always knew you; you were always with Me." This increased her second conviction that He was her Master.

Over the years, Yvonne continued to hear about Baba from letters which were shared with the Paris group. In 1952, when Baba planned to come to London, she told her husband they must go to see Him. Her husband was concerned that perhaps Baba might be a charlatan. "Why should we go?" he asked. Yvonne felt convinced she needed to see Baba and would go with or without her husband. Though she wanted him to come, he refused. Finally, after much discussion, he agreed to accompany her.

So they arrived in London for a private interview with Baba. As soon as they entered the room, Yvonne saw only white light, not Baba's physical form—not His face, not His hair or clothes, only the

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bright glorious light of His resplendent Being. Someone called them to approach Baba and they bowed down to Him. As Yvonne bowed, Baba put His hand under her chin and looked at her face to face. At that moment, she saw His face, although the light was still strongly there. She heard a translation that Baba gestured, "Whatever you do, do in the name of Meher Baba." At that time Yvonne and Robert were helping educate street children. Baba knew that this work was really hard for them and wanted to take this burden to Himself, and make them just a channel.

The moment they heard this message from Baba, Robert started to cry—not ordinary tears, but tears of love. He went on crying for days. He couldn't sleep; he just cried and cried. Yvonne joked with Robert that instead of finding Baba to be a charlatan, he had recognized the divinity of God in Him.

This was the first and last time that they saw Meher Baba. But they always remained in His contact. Yvonne had complete conviction of Baba as the Avatar, because from the beginning her recognition and obedience to Baba were from her heart.

A few years after their first meeting with Baba, Robert fell ill and was hospitalized with a severe sickness. He was very weak and felt hopeless. He asked Yvonne to write to Meher Baba, to ask Him whether he would survive. Yvonne argued, "We do not ask Baba this kind of question." But Robert insisted, so she wrote the letter just to please her husband. A few weeks later the answer came. Baba conveyed, "Don't worry, Robert will be alright." So she came to Robert and said, "You see, you will be alright, why do you worry?" Within a few months Robert was fine, back to work and to his life.

A year later, Robert fell ill again from the same sickness and was hospitalized. He again pleaded with Yvonne to write to Baba about his health. Finally Yvonne said, "Robert, you are going to die, so accept what will happen." He said, "Yes, I accept my death, but still I want an answer from Meher Baba." So Yvonne agreed to write, and Baba's answer was, "Robert should accept his fate." Robert then felt that he could happily accept Baba's wish.

A few days later, Yvonne called the hospital to check on Robert and the nurse said rather abruptly, "You have no idea? Your husband died last night." Although Yvonne had felt prepared for

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Robert's death, the rudeness of the nurse made her feel very depressed. She hung up the phone with tears in her eyes, when suddenly there was a knock at the door. "Who could it be at this early hour?" she thought. She opened the door to find a telegram from Meher Baba stating, "Robert is with Me." She cried because of Baba's omniscient presence and benevolence, and was so happy to know that Robert was finally with Him.

Some years later, Don Stevens suggested to Yvonne that she move to Marseilles, but she refused, saying she would never go back there. Don said, "As you know, Baba came to Marseilles and even brought Mohammed the *mast*. He did a great deal of work there, so we must do something there." At first Yvonne was hesitant because of all the pain she had suffered in Marseilles, but finally after much coaxing, she agreed to think about it, if Baba showed her it was His will.

Yvonne felt sad to leave Paris, and all her friends and the Baba community, to go to Marseilles, where she knew no one and had no family. "What am I going to do there?" she wondered. Don assured her it would work out. She then remembered she had a cousin in Marseilles, and she called to tell her that she would come and visit for a few days. Her cousin was very surprised to hear from Yvonne, as she had not seen her in so many years.

Yvonne visited Marseilles and found her cousin was living in a beautiful area with a view of the sea. Yvonne liked the place and asked her cousin if she could find a similar big flat with a view of the sea for her. Her cousin said it was impossible, as they were rarely up for sale or rent. "Try to find me one," Yvonne repeated. "I will come to Marseilles only if you find me such a flat." Yvonne set up this challenge to Baba, with the hope that she would not have to leave Paris; being sure that her cousin would not be able to find such a beautiful flat. But somehow, a few months later, her cousin called and said, "Yvonne, I found a huge flat with a big terrace and view of the sea." Yvonne said, "Okay, I accept. This is Baba's wish."

For the first few weeks after she arrived in Marseilles, nothing special happened. Her cousin was busy and couldn't contact Yvonne very often. Yvonne found herself feeling very lonely and sad. One day she was on her way to the market when a thief on a motorcycle tried to snatch her purse. As she resisted, she fell down and broke

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both her arm and leg. Again she began to wonder why she was in Marseilles, when she had always hated this city. "My problems here continue to get worse and worse," she thought. "None of this suffering seemed to happen to me in Paris."

Finally, Yvonne had had enough, she decided to go back to Paris. As she began to pack her things, there came a knock on her door. It was me, and she is still in Marseilles today at age ninety-five sharing Baba's love. What divine coincidences!

From a tape recording of Hasan Selisik at Meherabad in July, 2000.

My Coming to Meher Baba

P. Madhusudan

The night before seeing Meher Baba for the first time, I had the only dream that I remember in my life. It was a wonderful dream and thus impressed me, otherwise, I don't generally give much importance to them. In the dream, as I was going for a walk, I saw a beautiful white marble temple. It was very large, and there were many small white temples inside it. All the people gathered there were wearing white.

Bhajans were being sung and lectures were being given there. Some old ladies were discussing something in Hindi and one of them asked me, "What do you want?"

I said, "Do you know where God is?"

She replied, "Do you want to see Him?"

"Yes, I want to see Him."

"Do you want to see Him in human form?"

"Is it possible?" I asked.

"Yes, but there is a condition. Once you visit Him, you will not be able to go back. So get permission from your mother and father, and then come."

I practically ran to my house. I found my mother doing some household work and told her what had happened. I asked, "Shall I go?"

She said, "You dear fool! Why do you come back to ask such a thing? Go!"

I ran back to the temple and said to the ladies, "Now I have permission from my mother. Tell me now the way to go. Where is God?"

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They gave me directions, and after I had gone a certain distance, I saw a most beautiful sea. Never in my life have I seen such lovely water, rocks and colors.

As soon as I saw the water, I took off my clothes and dove in. I don't know how to swim, but I did in my dream. And as soon as I entered the sea I saw the waters part high on both sides, just like in a scene from the movie, *The Ten Commandments*, which I saw later. After taking a few steps, I saw a huge person standing before me. I could not even see His face. He was so beautiful, attractive, and marvelous. At first I could only see His feet. Then I was able to see His resplendent face, with His beautiful eyes, smiling at me. And He had four hands, with something in each hand. He asked me, "Oh you fool, where are you searching for Me?"

"I have been directed by those ladies," I replied. "That's why I have come here."

"But this is not the way to search for God."

"Then?" I asked.

He said, "Follow me."

I saw Him going and said to myself, "I have just found Him!" So I ran towards Him, but as soon as I got near, He disappeared. "Oh, What a fate!" I thought. "I was just catching Him, and now He is out of sight. But I was fortunate to at least see Him once—though I didn't touch Him."

Then I saw that His halo remained; it was moving, and it drew me to the big temple which it entered. The temple had a small door, so I put my hands on the portal and looked in. I saw the halo start moving around a black statue of Krishna holding a flute in a graceful posture. No one else was inside, and everything but the statue was white. Then the words came, "Sing a *bhajan*." So I sang in a *bhairavi* (Indian classical music) tune. While I was singing, I felt someone shaking me, and I opened my eyes. My brother was saying, "Wake up, you are to go to Ahmednagar. What are you doing? The whole night you were muttering—I was trying to wake you."

It was four a.m., and someone came to take me to Ahmednagar. I was in a most joyous mood. I was beginning the most precious day of my life, and the dream had been such a wonderful experience.

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Eight of us journeyed to Ahmednagar, and were greeted by Adi K. Irani, Avatar Meher Baba's long-time secretary. He came, just like a prince, and asked sharply, "You came from Poona? You know that Baba is in seclusion. Who is the fool who directed you to come today?"

As soon as I heard Adi, I thought—is this a sadhu? What kind of a secretary is he? Look at the way he is talking to us! I said to my friends, "Come on, I don't want to see Baba."

My friends said to Adi, "We have seen Baba, but we have brought some new people. We don't want to ask anything, but just from a distance we want them to be able to see Baba."

Adi said, "All right—but I can't promise it; it is against His orders. Baba has gone to Meherabad today, and when He is returning you might be able to see Him. So you can try."

We asked, "When will He be going back to Meherabad?"

Adi replied, "I don't know. He might go at any moment."

"And who will be driving the car?"

"I will be," Adi said.

"Oh, that's a good thing. When you see us, please slow down the car."

"That much I will do," Adi promised.

So we went to the city, had our lunch, and then waited on the road by the railway station. One o'clock... two... three... four... five... six... seven...

I finally said, "I won't wait here after 7:14 p.m., because I must take the bus to attend to my duties in Poona."

At 7:14, it was nearly dark, I stood, and asked my friends, "In which direction is your Meher Baba now?"

They pointed out to me the direction to Meherabad. I folded my hands, and said, "Wherever You may be, these are my salutations. I am going."

As soon as I bowed my head, He came. I saw a beautiful and tremendous light before me—the same light I had experienced in my dream. It was coming from Baba as His car approached. I could see that His was the form I had seen in my dream. I was so startled

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that I fainted.

But everyone else was running behind the car, and no one noticed me lying by the road. After some distance Baba motioned to Adi to stop the car. Baba opened the door and pointed to where I was lying.

Some of my friends came back, and picked me up and took me to Baba. Baba then called me over very close to Him, put His hand on my head, and conveyed, "I know you. I love you."

That was all. Then, afterwards I was called to Mahabaleshwar to sing *bhajans* for Baba, and so many other times since then. But I did not see Baba again as I had seen Him on the 21st of August, 1949. That first darshan, that was a beautiful and wonderful thing. That I can't forget. With Baba's grace, I have been singing His glory through songs ever since.

From The Awakener Vol. 14, No. 2.

"Strive to See Me as I Really Am"

Rick Chapman

It just so happened that I heard about Meher Baba while being interested in mysticism in college. I had taken Him to be my Master and the Avatar. I was twenty-three, just a kid. How much do you know at that age? But my heart knew that I was Baba's and that Baba had opened the door for me to come in. The year after I finished college, I applied for a Fulbright scholarship to teach English and to study Meher Baba in India. I wasn't by any means the most qualified, but Baba in His compassion made this possible for me to do.

In August, 1966, I had ten days of vacation from my teaching duties in Ahmedabad (in Gujerat), this set me free to immediately hit the rails to visit some Baba lovers in Bombay (Mumbai) and Poona (Pune). After a typically third-class night on the train, which galloped the Ahmedabad-Bombay 250 miles in nine hours, I arrived at Bombay Central and was met at the station by Kishan Chand Gajwani and Sorabji Siganporia of the Bombay Center. No sooner was I in the car and trying, early-morning eyes-blurry, to sort out who was who and who was myself, when I heard the most precious words, second only to The Word: "Baba has called you to see Him for ten minutes on the 17th." Was I still dreaming?

Now the 17th was seven days away, this being the 10th of August, 1966. That gave me a full week to watch my heart turn handsprings and my mind dance its silly jig at double its usual speed.

By great coincidence, Don Stevens (author-compiler of *Listen, Humanity* and co-editor of *God Speaks*) was due to arrive in Bombay

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on the same day that I had. After Siganporia and Gajwani had shown me to my lodging, and I had washed and eaten breakfast, I walked across the street to leave a message for Don at his hotel.

I had met Don just over a year before in San Francisco, where, you might say, I first fell in love with Meher Baba. It was in San Francisco, just a week or two after I had first heard the news of the latest Descent of the Ancient One, that I talked at length with Ivy Duce about Him. I also saw Baba in Don's movies, and decided on the spot to accept His increasingly rare offer for *sahavas* with Him, scheduled for December, 1965. (And what a *sahavas* that turned out to be—with Baba forcing everyone to take His darshan inside their hearts, where we ought to and ultimately have to, by canceling the outer trip to Him, owing to the strain of His Work and the frailty of His health at the time.)

Don arrived late in the afternoon from his work in Cochin, and we talked for about three hours in his hotel room. As we talked, he mentioned that two key books of Baba's were about to come out in new editions. The original five volumes of Meher Baba's *Discourses*, which were almost completely out of print, were soon to be reprinted in three volumes in Japan. *God Speaks* was also going to be reprinted again in the U.S., as the second revised edition.

That night we had dinner with Dr. and Mrs. Ram Ginde. Ram was a leading neurosurgeon in India, and he was frequently called to treat Baba. He said that the physical pain alone which Baba regularly experienced would be absolutely intolerable for an ordinary man. Often, he recalled, when Ram had gone to Meherazad to examine and work with Baba, nothing whatsoever would appear to be wrong with Him, and Baba Himself would say that His pain had gone away. According to the mandali, however, this sudden change in Baba's health would last only as long as the doctor was by His side; no sooner did Ram turn his back to go than Baba's Parvardigaric pain would take up residence in His body once again.

The following day, Don and I talked about the year that had passed since we had first met. At lunch in the Taj Hotel, I met Nariman and Arnavaz Dadachanji and Katie Irani, three of Baba's oldest and closest lovers. When Don left for the airport in the afternoon, I went to their house to spend the evening talking of Meher

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Baba, the only One worth filling one's mind with. They recalled Robert Dreyfuss' visit eight months back, when he had hitchhiked from Boston on his way to the December *sahavas* and had ended up with his own private one in November instead; and I recalled Robert's return to Boston, laden with Baba's Love-blessing to Allan Cohen and myself—we had all come to Baba at about the same time—and with advice from the God-Man about the use of drugs: "If drugs could make one realize God, then God is not worthy of being God. NO drugs."

Six days remained, I told Nariman and Arnavaz, before my glimpse of our Beloved... and just then the telephone rang. It was Adi K. Irani, Baba's secretary, calling from Ahmednagar, saying that the program for my seeing Baba on the 17th was canceled, and that my meeting had been moved up to Monday the 15th, at nine o'clock in the morning at Meherazad.

On the night of the 14th, I attended the weekly meeting at the Bombay Center before having dinner and boarding the night passenger train for Poona. Literally up to the eleventh hour, when the train left Victoria Station, I was on tenterhooks, but there was no further change of plans. I was now actually on the way to the Wine Itself!

The train reached Poona at 5:30 in the morning, and I found Adi and Bhawsar, a Poona lover, searching the platform for me. Immediately, I was taken to Adi's car and the drive of about two hours to Ahmednagar began. We arrived in Ahmednagar with the sun now entirely out of bed. After a glimpse at Adi's office, as he quickly checked the mail, he hurried us to the house of his cousin, Sarosh Irani. There I washed and ate breakfast with His Name continually popping both out of my mouth and into my ears between mouthfuls.

"Baba is very particular about time," Adi said as he settled in for a second helping. "Don't worry though," he said, "He'll blame me, not you, if we're late for your nine o'clock meeting time." I was much less concerned about where the blame would go than about being in time to savor the timelessness of this long awaited, first-time this-time appointment with the Ageless One, and I finished my breakfast in a hurry.

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We drove the nine miles from Ahmednagar to Meherazad quickly—they appeared to be like eastern Kansas miles with the exception of the distant plateaus, the mud villages, bullocks and villagers on the road, and, of course, God Incarnate at the end of it. The car took a private road off the main one which led to Meherazad— "Ezad azad" —namely the earthly abode of the Freeing One Who Alone is worthy of worship. Here was God's home. When we first arrived I saw a few one-story, stone and plastered buildings with a dusty courtyard between them. There was no one but a couple of chickens and a dog, who looked up as a trailing cloud of dust caught up with the stopped car.

Eruch came out to meet me in the courtyard with a big smile as the car pulled up. I recognized him from movies and photographs and he said, "Great that you could be here." I was thinking that it would be a few minutes before Baba called me to see Him, and I added my shoes to the ring of *chappals* at the threshold of Mandali Hall, and walked in. I figured out almost immediately that Baba was in the room, and after wasting two or three year-long seconds, I finally saw Him sitting in a chair in the corner to my right.

Baba was in seclusion at the time and yet He had allowed me to come. He brought and embodied the very meaning of compassion—the thing that happens that you don't deserve and that can't be measured. The opportunity to meet with Him, He granted. When I met Him it was like meeting somebody extremely intimate, the combination of a dearest relative and the most close friend. There was no sense at all of strangeness, just immediate closeness. And of course, how could it not be? The Master of all, in all, had His arms out and was smiling His beaming Baba-smile. I just crossed the distance—that I always described as fifteen feet, that is really about two and a half feet—to His chair, into His embrace.

I was well aware of the frailty of Baba's health. I had read in the Family Letters how much He had been suffering physically. So when I leaned over to embrace Him, I put my hand on the arm of the chair and just rested my chest on His chest very gently. You know how when you embrace someone the head goes past the head of the other person. Well, as I was in that position, a voice in my head said, "Stop, you fool! Look at Him." So, I turned my eyes to His face, and

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His eyes were also looking directly into mine. It seemed just like light was pouring from Him, and there was a beautiful smile in His eyes. It was a moment of beautiful exchange and that's all that I can describe. Then Baba kissed me on the forehead as I embraced Him on His other side. Eruch had said, "Baba wants you to embrace Him and then sit down." So that's what I did. That literalness wasn't quite what Baba had in mind. I saw in His face a little look of consternation because I was sitting right at His feet and Eruch said, "No, no, we sit over here." So he had me back up against the wall, opposite Baba, with my legs folded.

When I pulled back, Bhau moved forward to massage Baba's calves a little bit. Eruch began to interpret Baba's gestures. Seeing these gestures was like witnessing hieroglyphics for the very first time. Although I had read repeatedly of Baba gesturing and had seen it in films, the effect was as if every gesture was a frame and the hands, fingers, and arms of Baba were creating hieroglyphic messages which I couldn't quite absorb. It had a profound impact on me, just looking at the way Baba was communicating—so seamless. There was no pause, there just seemed to be a fluid flow of what Baba was saying.

The first thing that He did was gesture with His mustache and look at the men mandali who were seated around, as if to say, "Look at this." Because here was a kid with a mustache at a time when it was not common for young people in the West to have any facial hair. I had grown a mustache, no doubt encouraged by the fact that I had seen one on Baba. Eruch said, "Baba is admiring your mustache." Then He asked how I had slept on the train the night before. These were my first words to Baba. I said, "I slept fine Baba, but I have been very excited."

Baba asked, "Why?"

I responded, "Baba the chance to see You now, with lovers all around the world longing to see You, is a great thrill. If I were to give You an embrace for every one of Your lovers who sent their love as I came from America to India, I would be here for a month!" Because of this heavy seclusion it had been quite a while since Baba had seen His lovers and His work in seclusion was dragging on. Baba did not respond with small talk in His expression or comment.

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It was just as if He had heard it and it didn't matter. He gestured, "Yes, it is your great fortune that you are here at this time. I am in strict seclusion, and from this day on I will be seeing no one outside the immediate mandali—not even any of My close lovers in Ahmednagar."

Baba then began to gesture the message that seemed to be an encapsulated essence of spirituality. In it, I felt He told me and gave me everything I needed to know, forever more.

Referring to my saying I'd been very excited, Baba gestured, "Pay no attention to the thoughts of the mind, it's the nature of the mind to have every kind of thought, good and bad. You must long for Me with your heart." In fact, He added, "You should pay no attention whatsoever to the spiritual Path, or to the planes of consciousness, or to any spiritual experiences."

I was sitting there with the only Source of knowledge I had ever had about the spiritual path because Baba had written about it. I'd read about these matters in *God Speaks*. And now He was saying to pay no attention to it, or to the planes of consciousness—which I only knew about because of what He'd written about them! "Or to any spiritual experiences," none of which I'd ever had!

Baba continued, "Because they're nothing but toys for children, because they are nothing but illusion. You must strive to see Me as I really am." I heard that and I felt such a sense of, "Yeah, I see."

Eruch was on his knees translating Baba's gestures flawlessly. Baba asked, "But how will you see Me as I am?" And the way He looked was so puzzled that you would think that He had just come up against the greatest conundrum. He was so human with me that I thought He was directing the question to me. I didn't want to be just like a wallflower, so my mind was wondering what to answer, but He spared me the indignity of saying anything by making it a rhetorical question. He gestured, "By longing in your heart for Me."

"But how do you get the longing?" He gestured. "By loving Me."

And then He gestured once again, "You must strive to see Me as I really am." Baba was being quite serious and I felt a sense of completion. That message was done.

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The next thing Baba gestured was, "God proposes, but man disposes." I sat there blankly because He said it with a straight face. Then He smiled and repeated the backward saying, "*God* proposes, but *man* disposes." Then He explained, "I proposed to have you here for only a few minutes, but you disposed of that proposal! I want you to stay a little bit longer. Have you met Francis Brabazon?"

Francis was sitting next to me, so I turned around and I hadn't even seen him until that time. It was gently dim inside the hall so when I first entered I couldn't see anybody but Baba. I found out later that Pendu and Aloba were there. I said, "No Baba." As a matter of fact, up to this time I had not taken my eyes off Baba. Baba gestured, "Meet Francis." So I took that as a cue, like "Come on, relax and look over." I had read his book *Stay with God*. I reached over and shook Francis' hand. Francis was kind of a crusty guy. He read a recent poem of his which had a reference to LSD:

Don't try to hold me up by offering me a 'trip' on LSD.

I always travel unencumbered, guided alone by love—see!

Baba at that point, looked over at me and asked, "Did you receive a copy of My recent letter to Richard Alpert?" In this letter, Baba had answered Alpert's questions about LSD. I said, "Yes Baba, it was wonderful." And Baba smiled and literally turned pink, He looked so pleased. And that was the only exchange about drugs He had with me, though I had been working for the previous several months spreading His message about drugs.

Baba then gestured, "Francis is going to read another poem, a *ghazal*. Do you know what a *ghazal* is?" And this time it wasn't a rhetorical question and I said, "Baba I think it's the song that a sixth plane saint sings to His Beloved God when He sees God all around, but can't cross the distance to Him." Baba gave me a look, and of course that was the most ridiculous explanation I could have given, but Baba is the Compassionate One. Francis started reading a *ghazal* and to hear it was quite unusual. It had a rather slow cadence, Francis never spoke quickly, and had kind of a raspy voice.

Mandali Hall became a little bit of a wine shop. I was listening and I looked up and Baba, eyes closed, was sitting there tapping some rhythm that He recognized in this *ghazal*. He was swaying in the chair and every once in a while would open His eyes and look at

"STRIVE TO SEE ME AS I REALLY AM"

me, as if to say, "Wasn't that something?" Baba would snap His fingers as a line would come to its close. It was an unbelievable experience. One part of the *ghazal*, I remember, was something like this:

One time I had been here as a young man and
I received a glass of wine poured by the tavern keeper.
Ever since that time I've been hanging around,
trying to make myself useful,
even sweeping the floor with my eyelashes if need be,
in search of one more drop.

So that was the character of the room. Baba was making it very intoxicating. He suddenly reached out with His right hand, to the right side of the hall, and the next thing I heard was a burbling. I had never heard the language, and I couldn't see who it was coming from. It was Aloba reciting a couple of lines of a *ghazal* in what I now know was Persian. The intoxicating atmosphere was deepened and Baba had Eruch translate:

Millions of men of God stand in a queue
to gain entrance to the God-Man,
and out of millions, only one crosses the threshold.
Out of millions who cross the threshold,
only one can see Me as I really am.

And He gestured for the third time, "You must strive to see Me as I really am." I knew then that was the theme of the meeting, because it was so obvious that Baba was emphasizing it.

Then with a look of seriousness, which I have never seen before at any time, and which I won't forget—a look of suffering which only God could express—Baba gestured: "Don't let Me down."

I told Baba I would be in India for a year and would like to use the time as He wished. As I told Him these things, He said nothing. He just heard me. I poured out my heart a little bit and then Eruch said, "Now the time for your meeting has come to a close. Baba wants you to know that the most important thing for you to do is to hold fast to His *daaman*. Do you know what the *daaman* is, Baba said?" Then Baba gestured, "It means obeying Me implicitly, doing everything I say." And His last gestures were, "My Time is coming nearer and nearer. I am God. I am Truth."

TALES OF MEHER BABA'S LOVE

I remember the gesture for "T," meaning Truth. This put the seal on everything that had happened. It felt like everything that had occurred was within the room from which the universe was conducted. God was revealing the high road to finding Him and He simply identified Himself. As I was leaving I had the chance to embrace Baba again and I kissed Him on the cheek. He then had me bow down and kiss Him on the knee, and then I went out with Eruch.

Later, before Baba retired from the Mandali Hall, He called me back for a final love-glimpse and *namaste* of the hands and heart. "Thank You," I said, and I would have added, "for coming" if my tongue had been operating properly. Or, if truly working properly, it would have refused to move because as Baba has so often said, "Things that are real are given and received in silence."

From The Awakener, Vol. 11, #4, 1966, and from a talk taped in Mandali Hall, February 22, 2001.

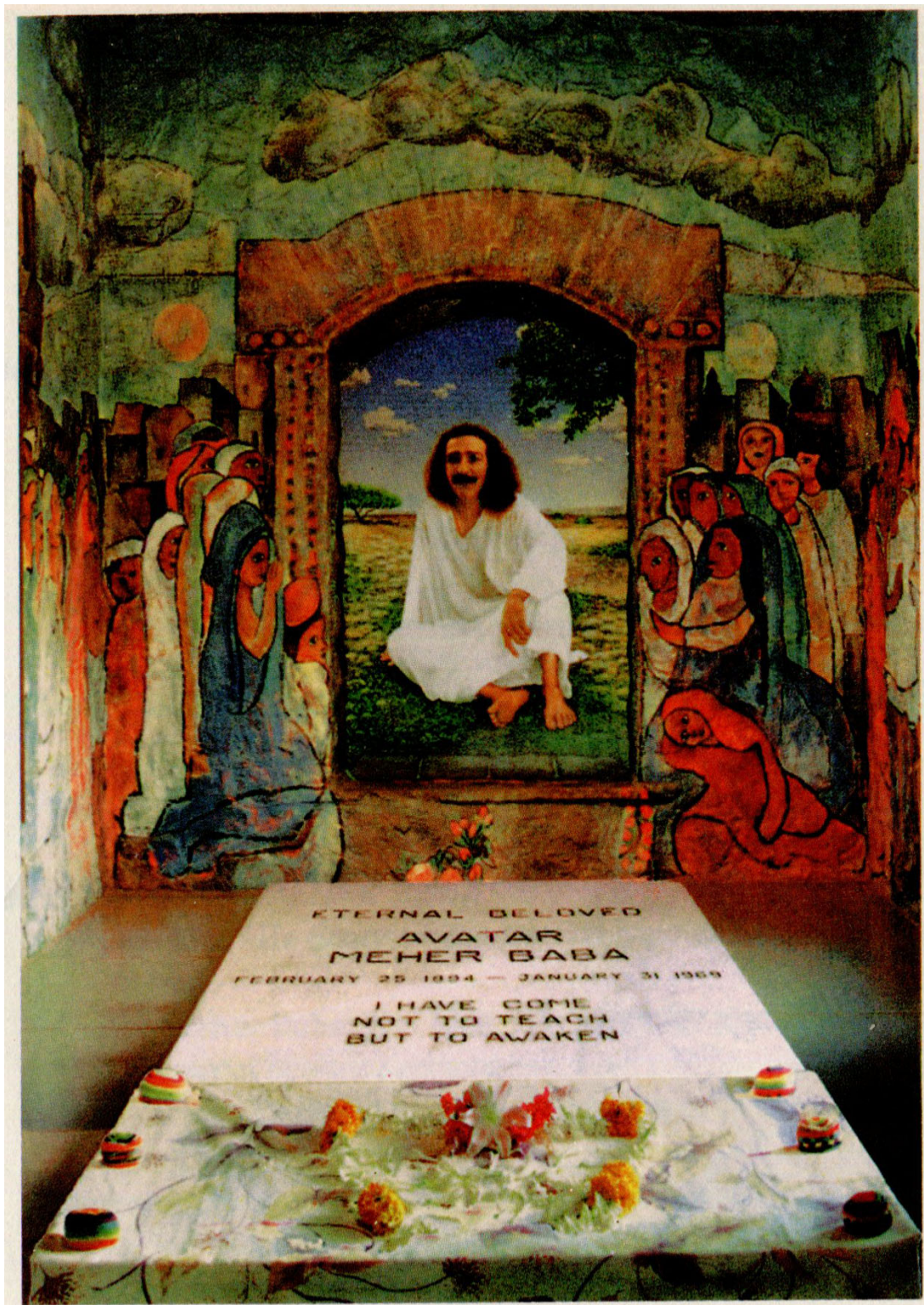
*Pure Love is matchless in majesty; it has no parallel·
in power and there is no darkness it cannot dispel.
There is no sadhana greater than Love. There is no law higher
than Love. And there is no goal beyond Love.
God and Love are identical.*

—Meher Baba

An Amazing Secret

*A moment spent in Meher Baba's Samadhi
holds the eternity of His presence,
for there reposes the "Cloak"
that housed Reality;
now more active to work
in a different dimension
in the hearts of humanity;
and ever impatient to respond
to the call of the heart.
As you bow down at His feet,
pour out all your feelings of
accomplishment and failure,
all your moments of pride and guilt,
without any reservation.
Then may He fill your heart with
His luminous, creative Love—a love
which awakens His divine presence.
This is the miracle of His Grace.
Most simple, most profound!
What a gift!*

AVATAR MEHER BABA KI JAI!



**The Interior
of
The Samadhi,
The Tomb-Shrine of Avatar Meher Baba.
Meherabad, Ahmednagar, India**

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Listed here are some of the books
by and about Meher Baba.

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The Path of Love

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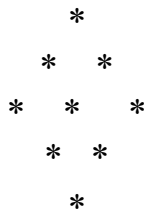
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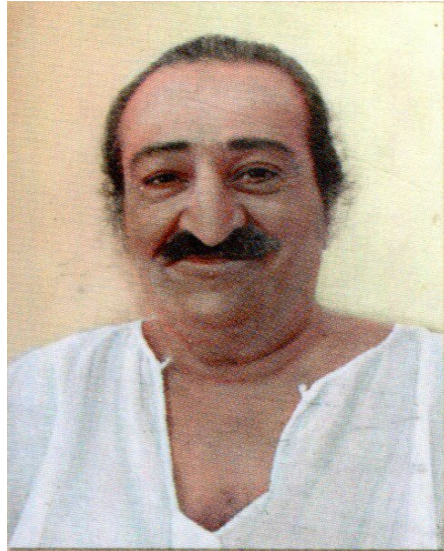
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Everything else may fail; Love never fails.

—Meher Baba



All paths are Mine,
and all lead eventually to Me.
But the shortest way to Me
is the No-path of self-annihilative Love.

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

The Ocean of My Love is yours to fill
your hearts with.
Drink deeply of My Love and keep happy.

—Meher Baba

Register of Editorial Alterations

Page 131, para 5, line 3 slap changed to slab

Page 145, para 1, line 2, bare changed to bear