

A Love So Amazing

By Billi Eaton

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Source:

A Love So Amazing by Eaton, Bili.

BP610.M432E18 1984 299'.93 (B) 84-23597

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A Love So Amazing

Memories of Meher Baba



by Bili Eaton

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Front cover illustration by Robert Locklear from photograph of Meher Baba
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Highway 17 North By Pass, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina 29577.

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data:

Eaton, Bili.

A Love So Amazing.

Bibliography: p. 131

1. Meher Baba, 1894-1969. 2. Gurus-Biography. 3. Eaton, Bili.

I. Title.

BP610.M432E18 1984 299'.93 (B) 84-23597

ISBN 0-913078-55-7 (pbk.)

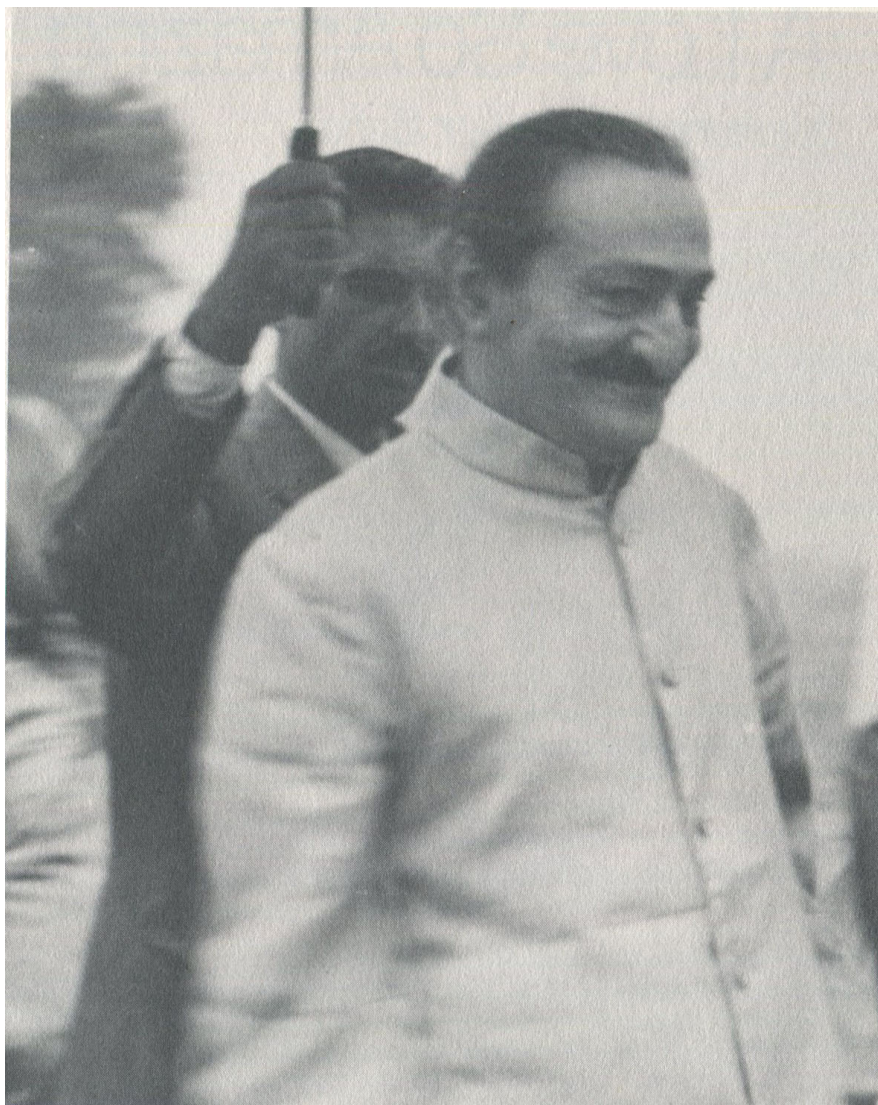
A Love So Amazing

Memories of Meher Baba



by
Bili Eaton

Sheriar Press



Meher Baba at Meher Mount in Ojai, California, in 1956

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
A love so amazing, so Divine
Demands my soul, my life, my all.*

Excerpt from *There Is A Land of Pure Delight*
by Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

Introduction

All stories of relationships with Meher Baba are love stories because love, after all, is what Meher Baba is about—that divine love which both encompasses and far surpasses all the small loves of our lives.

Part I of *A Love So Amazing* is a story of such love and of the tug-of-war that goes on between it and the small loves until, when one is fortunate enough, the realization comes that "A love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all." And, perhaps most difficult of all, demands it in the midst of an ordinary life, made extraordinary by the addition of one ingredient, divine love.

Bili Eaton's story is cut from this pattern, one of the unplanned journeys to God which starts with a sense of "What am I doing here?" and goes on to an acceptance of the fact that there isn't any other place to be. Along the way she brings to candid, funny and poignant life the lengths to which Meher Baba will go to persuade an individual to accept the gift of divine love.

Part II of *A Love So Amazing* consists of excerpts from the many letters written to Bili Eaton by Meher Baba's sister, Mani S. Irani, during an 18-month period in the mid-1950s. The letters were the basis for a periodic "family letter" sent by Bili to Meher Baba's western followers. They served as a tangible contact while His followers waited for one more personal meeting.

Ann Conlon
Myrtle Beach, South Carolina
October 1984

Acknowledgements

I want to thank Mehera Irani and Meher Baba's sister, Mani S. Irani, for consenting to share their letters to me, which form a very important part of this book. I am also very grateful to Mani for the time she has spent in making corrections and suggestions for their publication. Without their love and understanding, these letters would never have materialized in the first place.

In the second place, without Ann Conlon's encouragement and support, I might never have written these experiences. I am particularly grateful to her for her suggestions and the long hours she has contributed to its editing and bringing it to its final form.

Meghan Blakemore Eaton
New York, N. Y.
May 1, 1984

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PART ONE

Baba's Call

Prologue

"Do you realize it's God we're going to be living with?" I asked Filis Frederick as we were planning to leave New York with Meher Baba for the Meher Center in South Carolina in the summer of 1956. "How can we act normally? How will we be able to eat and sleep knowing that God Himself is there with us? I can't believe it!"

I felt as though I were in a dream; this couldn't be real. How could this be happening to me? These were indeed incredible but wonderful and amazing times, when God stooped down to be among us. Even now, many years later, I sometimes ask myself if it could really have happened.

But it did happen and it was possible because Meher Baba made it possible by being so perfectly God and man. And we did eat and sleep, but I am not sure we acted normally, because I am not sure that ecstatic happiness is normal.

But what I am sure of is that the experience changed my life, my outlook, my goals, and only He knows what else.

CHAPTER ONE

Unplanned Journey

I started my unintentional journey to Meher Baba as a confirmed atheist at the age of 13, when I decided to leave the Episcopalian Church. I maintained my lack of interest in religion for some years after that until I began a four-year stint as a dance instructor at Arthur Murray's Studio in New York.

During those years I developed a curiosity about the various religions. Another Murray instructor with whom I became friendly was a Catholic and she persuaded me to visit the Catholic Church and study their tracts. I did so for a year, even attending novenas and mass, but eventually decided Catholicism was not for me. I also read widely in many other religious beliefs and even went back to my own church for a year. All the religions seemed to have some merit, but I was not satisfied; something was lacking and I couldn't accept any of them for myself. Throughout this time I was quite happy dating, going to parties, nightclubbing, dancing, drinking. Although there may have been some underlying discontent I was not aware of it and again I gave up on religion and devoted myself to having a good time. I married one of my dance pupils and he also became an instructor at Murray's.

Just as I had advanced to the point of being offered management of a branch Murray's studio, the Murray teachers went on strike. During the strike, my husband and I and a few

other striking instructors sustained ourselves by using space in the Maya Boleyn studio, which unbeknown to us accepted us readily because it was in financial difficulties and needed the rent money we provided.

When the strike at Murray's failed, my teaching future looked bleak. The management job was swept away and even teaching at another studio was out of the question, as no studio at the time would hire a union member. I was disgusted with the dance business as a means of making ends meet and decided to try some other type of work. My search led to an offer as manager of a slenderizing salon. At the same time, Maya Boleyn unexpectedly asked if I would be willing to manage her studio for a percentage of the gross.

I was wavering between these two offers when one of the Boleyn teachers urged me to take Maya's offer as she and the other teachers wanted me to be their manager. I told her about the other offer and said, "No doubt I'll choose the wrong one; I always do."

"Well, why don't you pray for guidance?" she asked.

I laughed outright at that. I said I didn't believe in God.

She replied, "What if you didn't have a family, or a job, or your health, and had no friends, what would you do?"

That hit me, but I hid my reaction and said I would think it over. But I asked myself, "Yes, what would I do?"

The next day the studio's treasurer, Andy, asked if I had made up my mind about the studio's offer. I told him I would take the job if they would give me a base salary and a larger percentage of the gross. I really did not think they'd do it, but it would provide me with a way out of making a choice. Andy said he would talk it over with the studio board and let me know.

That night, I went home and decided to try prayer after all. Very sheepishly, I made a deal with God: "If you're God, if you really exist, you'll give me some sign. If by tomorrow at 9 o'clock the studio agrees to the salary and percentage I asked for, then I'll know you heard me. Then I'll believe in you." I felt very awkward talking to someone I doubted had any existence, and I would have died of embarrassment if anyone had caught me doing it.

The next morning at ten minutes to 9, the telephone rang. It was Andy and the studio had met my demands. However, being a skeptic, I said to myself, "This was just a coincidence. It doesn't prove there's a God." But since I'd made the promise to myself, I took the job.

Maya and Andy were Religious Science practitioners. I was vaguely aware that they had some sort of belief, but I wasn't interested enough to find out what it was. For their part, they were aware of my atheistic attitude and they left religion out of our conversations. A month or two went by and one day I picked up a book which was lying on a desk in the studio. It was "The Edinburgh Lectures on Mental Science" by Judge Troward. The title appealed to me because it seemed to promise an intellectual treat.

When I opened the book, the world was its usual self. But when I had finished the book, the world had become something else; it was now full of endless possibilities and hope. I felt that the book revealed a great truth: one can do anything with the mind; one just had to learn how.

Up to this point I felt I had no control over my life, and now here was a possibility for gaining control and turning things around. I began to read everything I could find on the subject and I even took a two-year Religious Science practitioner course. At graduation I received a diploma entitling me to hang out a shingle and heal the sick for a price. I never used it professionally, however, because I didn't quite trust it and I needed to prove the results of the discipline to myself first.

I did not consider my new belief to be spiritual or religious in spite of the fact that its title was Religious Science. To me, it was the science angle that was important because I felt it embodied a metaphysical-mental method of becoming healthier, wealthier and wiser. A personal God had nothing to do with it, as far as I was concerned.

Nevertheless I was enthusiastic, as most new converts are, and I decided to try out my new "skills" on those closest to me. My mother was crippled with arthritis and could only go out-of-doors in a wheelchair. She had to very painfully get herself down our front steps and then sit in the wheelchair because my sisters and I were not strong enough to get the

chair down the steps with her in it. The problem was complicated by the fact that there were no railings on the steps.

I felt this was a chance for me to be of help, so I set about giving mental treatments to my father, trying to influence him to have a railing installed on one side of the steps. Within a week or two, the railing was installed. I then decided there should be a railing on the other side of the steps, and I gave my father another mental treatment. The second railing was installed. It is quite probable that my father had the idea himself, but I found it rather strange that it happened the way it did. Actually, I could have simplified the whole process just by asking my father to install the railings.

Another time I decided to treat my husband with whom, by this time, I was quite dissatisfied. Sure enough, after a few mental treatments aimed at changing his character and disposition, he became mellow and so much more likeable that even my family noticed it. But for some reason, it suddenly struck me that I shouldn't be doing this, that I had no right to interfere with someone else's mind. So I stopped my efforts and he reverted to his old ways. I never tried it again with anyone else.

The first summer after I had become devoted to Religious Science, Maya suggested that I go with her to Camp Farthest Out in New Hampshire where a meeting was being sponsored by the Council of Churches in the United States. Many of the leaders of this New Thought movement were to attend to discuss ways of promoting their ideas in the various churches.

I went and while there I was particularly drawn to one woman, Lynn (not her real name). The attraction was mutual and we became close friends. Much later, Lynn was to meet Meher Baba, but she did not take to Him. Within a few months after meeting Lynn, the studio closed and I was out of a job again.

After Lynn and I returned to New York from the New Hampshire conference, she and I and Andy would meet regularly to discuss mental science and healing treatments. We were searching for a method that would bring better results than we were getting from our meditations and

practice. We decided that what we needed was more power and that the best way to generate it was to work with more people, specifically with those who believed as we did and who were interested in the same goals.

Lynn said she knew a man, a Mr. Frederick, a former editor of Printer's Ink, whom she described as interesting, an intellectual, a dynamic speaker, and most importantly, someone who knew a great many people. Perhaps through him we could find those who would be good for our purposes. It was decided that Lynn would invite Mr. Frederick and several of his friends to Lynn's apartment for an evening of conversation, entertainment and refreshment.

The evening was arranged and Mr. Frederick gave a talk about which I remember nothing. He then cooked a delicious meal which we all enjoyed very much. After that, we met bi-weekly at Lynn's apartment, following much the same program. But after several months, Andy, Lynn and I still had not found the people we were looking for. One night, Mr. Frederick suggested that we have his daughter, Filis, an editor and writer, come and give a talk, because we must be tired of hearing him all the time. He told us that she had met a spiritual master from India who seemed to be having a good influence on her, although he assured us that he himself did not find the master's philosophy appealing. We all agreed that having Filis Frederick talk might prove to be an interesting evening and so it was arranged.

For some reason we met at someone else's apartment somewhere on East 47th Street. It was a much larger apartment than Lynn's and there were many more people, most of whom I had never seen before. There was a grand piano on which some people played their own compositions; others sang; some recited poetry and there was a great deal of conversation.

Filis was the last one on the program. She sat on a cushion on the floor and simply talked about Meher Baba. I didn't understand who Meher Baba was, but there was something about Filis and what she said that impressed me. First, she gave very logical reasons for the existence of suffering, especially that of experimental animals, of the Jews under

Hitler, the Armenians under the Turks and of people in general during wars and other catastrophes. These questions had always bothered me, and she was able to answer them. No religious leader had ever been able to do that to my satisfaction.

Second, some of the people at the meeting didn't like the answers Filis gave to their questions and some even became quite angry and abusive. But Filis remained unruffled and answered them calmly and gently, no matter how rude they became. Nor, when a difficult question was put to her, did she retreat behind the words, "We just have to believe." I liked her.

At the end of the evening, Filis announced that meetings about Meher Baba were being planned and asked that those interested leave their names and addresses with her and she would see that they were notified as to dates and places. Lynn and I left our names and addresses.

About the time of that first contact with Filis, I had an experience which helped to prepare me for accepting what Meher Baba said in *The Discourses* on the differences between occult and spiritual experiences, about bliss and higher states of consciousness. At this time I did have a philosophy of sorts. I still did not believe in a personal God, but felt that man's mind was the supreme power that made things work. I also thought that at death, human life, which I equated with a form of electricity that is all around us, dissolves into this sea of electricity and is then used over and over again to create more lives. I thought that the self-conscious individual disappears forever.

One cold night in January, 1952, my husband and I were on our way to the cinema. Although we were separated at the time, we still saw each other occasionally. But I was irritated with him that night and the bitter cold forced us to walk at a brisk pace. Neither of these conditions was conducive to the experience that followed. As we approached the theater, everything suddenly changed, as quickly as if a switch had been thrown. Actually, nothing looked different; it was just that I knew and felt everything to be different. The street lights and the marquee lights, the sidewalk, the trees, the stars in the sky, the sky itself and even the air seethed with vibrant life. And I was all of it; I was in everything and I was

everywhere. The whole universe, the whole of creation was my home. I was in ecstasy. I was so blissful that I couldn't help smiling at everyone, even my husband. Strangers must have thought I was mad, but I loved everyone whether I knew them or not. I knew I was safe forever; there was nothing to fear. I also knew, without knowing how, that this state wouldn't last, and that I would have to come "down," although I had never heard the word "down" used in that context before. I read about it for the first time several months later in Meher Baba's *Discourses*. I suppose this state of bliss lasted about 15 minutes. I remember clearly that we bought our tickets and took our seats to see Walt Disney's film, "Nature's Half Acre." After the film started, I gradually came back to my normal consciousness. Although this experience must have been just a tiny glimpse of the divine bliss Meher Baba describes, it helped me to accept the truth when I later read about it.

That evening with Filis Frederick turned out to be the last of our group meetings, although I didn't know it then. Actually two years passed before I was really aware that those biweekly meetings had ceased. By then I was attending regular meetings about Meher Baba at the home of Fred and Ella Winterfeldt. One night I met Mr. Frederick at the Winterfeldts'. He said, "Aren't you Lynn's friend?"

"Why, yes," I replied, "I remember you. You're Filis' father, aren't you? Come to think of it, didn't we used to meet at Lynn's apartment?"

"Of course, I remember now," he replied. "But whatever happened to that group of people and the meetings, and whatever happened to Lynn?"

"You're right," I said, "What did happen?"

It was then that we realized that none of us had ever met again after that meeting with Filis and, strangely enough, none of us, as far as I know, had even noticed it.

A week or two after I had left my name and address with Filis, I received a notice of the Baba meetings held on Monday nights at the Winterfeldts' apartment. Immediately I wanted to go, but when I telephoned Lynn, she said, "Oh, let's not go. I'm sure we won't find what we're looking for there. It's just another one of those weirdo religious groups you see on 57th Street."

"Oh," I said, my excitement subsiding. Another week went by and again I received notice of the meetings. Again I called Lynn. "Listen," she said, "I went to one of those meetings and there's nothing there. I even saw a picture of Meher Baba. Why, he's beginning to get old and lose his hair. If he can't keep his own hair, how can he help us?"

I was a little annoyed at this news, because she hadn't told me she intended to go and she knew I was interested in attending a meeting. I thought it rather sneaky of her to go on her own. Still, I thought she was probably quite right in her estimation of her visit and I, for one, was not interested in becoming involved with any blind-alley religious groups.

But I continued to receive the notices. Finally the pull became so great that I wouldn't listen to Lynn any more and I told her, "You do what you want, but I'm going."

"Okay," she said, "I'll go with you."

When we rang the Winterfeldts' bell, someone came to the door and very gruffly asked for our "credentials," saying the meetings were not for just anyone, and barred the entrance. Highly indignant, I spat, "Come on, Lynn. Let's go. I've been thrown out of better places than this."

But Lynn was stubborn. "No," she said, "I'm here and I'm staying."

Just when I had about decided to leave without Lynn, Fred Winterfeldt came to the door and very lovingly invited us in. This mollified me somewhat and we entered. The first thing I did was to look at Baba's picture on the wall to see if what Lynn said about Him was true. In the picture, Baba was sitting on the limb of a tree. I didn't find Him at all old and bald, and I liked Him straightaway.

After the meeting, Fred was very understanding and listened very patiently to all my woes. My mother was dying of cancer; my father had suffered a cerebral hemorrhage from which he never fully recovered; my marriage was on the rocks; and I was not in good health and was convinced I had not long to live. Things were beginning to close in on me.

CHAPTER TWO

A Wave of Love

Meher Baba had not manifested publicly at the time. I met the Monday Night Group in early 1952 at the Winterfeldts' and He had not yet made His declaration of being The Highest of the High.¹ During the previous year, I had begun to hear about yogis and their powers and thought that one of them could teach me how to attain these powers. When I heard more about Meher Baba, I felt I had to meet Him. I had arrived at a point where I knew I was groping in the dark and was unable to help myself any further. I needed someone who really had experience himself, someone who had "been there." What and where "there" was, I had no idea. I was tired of those who had only read and maybe even studied extensively, but who had had no experience of their own, yet were trying to instruct others. I felt that Meher Baba might have the answer. Filis had said He was a Perfect Master. But to me, a Master, whether perfect or not, was a sort of maestro such as one might be of music. Of course, Baba was this, and more, but I was totally ignorant of the extent of His knowledge and consciousness, let alone of His divinity.

In April of 1952, my mother died. My father was still very ill and would die 12 years later without ever recovering from his stroke. The family broke up. So here I was with no family, no job, bad health, no marriage, no anything. I was at the bottom of the snake pit, the very place in which I was afraid I

would be that day when my friend had asked me, "What if you didn't have a family, or a job or your health and no friends, what would you do?"

Our family home was being sold, and I was moving to a rented room in Manhattan. During my last day at home, I received a telephone call from Frank (not his real name). I had met him and his wife a year before through an old flame of mine, Pierre. Frank was calling me on this day to invite me to lunch to discuss Religious Science, which he had heard me talking about at a party. Thinking he might be a recruit for Lynn's, Andy's and my search for power, I agreed. The following week we had lunch, during which Frank told me his wife had left him and gone to Europe. After lunch we walked in the Cloisters gardens and he told me of his interest in supernormal phenomena. He asked me to have dinner with him. I did, and we talked a great deal more. I told him about my meetings with Lynn and about the Baba meetings. Then we talked about God. He was curious as to why I was so desperate to meet someone who could tell me whether or not there was a God and if so whether He was conscious of His creation. At the time, I believed that the collective power of all minds was God and that each person, if he knew how, could use that power through his own mind.

I also told Frank that I had been informed by my doctor that I needed an operation. Possibly because I was generally run down and depressed, I interpreted this to mean I would not live long. When Frank asked me why I didn't go ahead and have the operation, I said I first intended to find out if there was a God. If there was a God, then all right; if there wasn't, then there was no use living any longer. If God existed, He could heal me; if He couldn't heal me, He wasn't God. I was truly desperate and going around in circles. Frank and I started dating shortly after this meeting and I soon introduced him to Lynn.

After I had been going to the Monday Night Meetings for a few weeks, I heard that Meher Baba was coming to the United States and would be going to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, where a Center had been established for Him by Elizabeth Patterson and Norina Matchabelli. Lynn, Andy,

Frank and I planned to drive down to the center to meet Him. But Frank couldn't leave his business; neither Lynn nor I could drive; and Andy didn't want to drive all the way himself without relief. So we abandoned the idea. But I felt sure Baba would come to New York and that we would meet Him then.

After His visit to the Meher Spiritual Center in Myrtle Beach in early May, 1952, Baba and some companions started to drive across the United States to California in two cars. Just outside of Prague, Oklahoma, Baba's car was involved in a collision with a car driven by a paraplegic. Baba, His closest woman disciple, Mehera, and Elizabeth Patterson, the driver, were seriously injured. After treatment at the Prague Hospital, Baba and His party returned to Myrtle Beach to recuperate.

Then Baba decided to stop in New York on His way back to India. I told Frank about it and he was very excited and wanted very much to meet Baba. I, however, was beginning to cool off as far as spiritual matters were concerned because I was falling in love again, or thought I was. So I was suddenly not overly concerned about meeting Baba. It was Frank's enthusiasm that finally led me to the meeting.

Frank and I were told we could see Baba along with the Monday Night Group on July 20 at Ivy Duce's² apartment on West 67th Street. However, Frank had to catch a flight to Texas that same afternoon on business and would miss the appointment with Baba. Since he still wanted to meet Baba, I called Ivy Duce and explained the problem. She said she would arrange for us to meet Baba an hour earlier. This surprised me because I'd heard that no changes could be made in appointments.

The heat was unbearable that day, more than 100 degrees. Dress was more formal than it is today and both Frank and I led the type of lives that called for formal dress. In all that heat, I wore elbow-length black gloves.

When we arrived at Ivy's apartment, we were told we could not ask any questions of Baba, nor even speak to Him. We would be introduced to Him and then would pass on. So I was unprepared for what actually happened. I preceded Frank into the room. I was later told that some of Baba's mandali

(close disciples) were in the room, but I wasn't aware of them or anything else. Baba's personality blocked out everything and everyone else. As soon as I crossed the threshold, it seemed as though I had stepped on a live wire, for a shock went right through me from my feet to my head. But there was no time to stop and wonder about it. I was impelled forward, no doubt by Frank. Baba, dressed in a long white *sadra*, was half-reclining on a couch, His leg in a cast. As His large, dark flashing eyes looked at me, I felt a tremendous warm wave of love flow from Baba and break over me. It wasn't just a feeling; it had a physical impact. He looked at me with such love, greater than any love I'd ever experienced. It was greater than the love of my parents, brother, sisters, lovers and friends combined. It was overwhelming and it left me in mild shock. Time stood still and yet it seemed hours were going by, although it could only have taken me a few seconds to reach Baba. All around me was in a haze; only Baba was clear. He turned His head to one side as though He couldn't contain His joy at seeing me. I was reminded, as bizarre as it may seem, of a pet dog I had years before who would do the same thing on seeing me again after an absence. She was so delighted that she wasn't able to move, but would just stand still, wagging her tail so that it shook her whole body, her head turned to one side in ecstasy and her eyes scrunched into slits. Looking back now, I'm sure that Baba used this memory as a means of drawing me to Him.

Baba looked at me as though He knew me. He seemed to have expected me, not just another scheduled interviewee, but me. Why me? I was bewildered and flustered. I thought, "It's not possible. He couldn't have expected me. He doesn't know me."

Baba held out His hand. Not expecting this, I had not removed my glove. Embarrassed now as well as confused, I was forced to shake hands with my gloves on. Later, to my chagrin, I lost the glove. Baba, who had then been silent for 27 years, motioned to Frank and me to sit down on two low seats next to Him on His right. Baba was using an alphabet board³ at the time, and He spelled out, "I know them, but they don't know me." Much later I learned that when a Master draws his followers to him, they are unaware of it, but he knows where

they are and will use all sorts of means to draw them.

Pointing to Frank, Baba said, "He looks like an uncle of mine." Inexplicably, this small attention to Frank evoked a tremendous feeling of jealousy in me. I didn't want Baba to pay more attention to Frank than to me. This was confusing because I thought I was in love with Frank. Nevertheless, at the moment I could have killed him on the spot. Why should I care about Baba's attention? After all, I didn't even know Him. All the same, I simply did not want Baba to prefer Frank to me.

I had come to meet Meher Baba for healing and also to learn how to become wealthy and wise, and all these unexpected emotions were upsetting. I felt compelled to look at Baba. When I turned to Him, He looked into my eyes, and that look went right down to my depths. Something deep inside stirred in fear, like a trapped animal. This thing, this feeling—whatever it was—was something I had not known was there. It was as if I were two separate people. Then I suddenly knew that Baba would not physically heal me; He was not for that. Then that was swept out of my mind and, quite inexplicably, the most horrible sex images came into my mind. I struggled to thrust them aside. I was embarrassed because I felt Baba knew. Baba was dictating on His alphabet board and I was floundering in such a flood of emotions that I didn't absorb all He said. All I remember is that He said something about the work that Frank and I would do for Him. This just confused me further, and I had no idea what He was talking about. Then, Baba shook hands with us (by this time I had removed my gloves) and dismissed us.

Lynn had met Baba the day before I did. Filis told me that Lynn asked Baba what she should do to help people, and Baba replied, "Those who know, know they don't have to do anything." I tried to call Lynn but she had moved from her apartment, and none of our mutual friends knew where she had gone. I have not seen her since.

After Baba dismissed Frank and me that day, we went out into the street, where the temperature had reached 104 degrees. I broke out into a cold sweat; then I had gooseflesh and started shivering; my teeth were chattering so that I could

hardly talk. Frank was alarmed. "What's the matter?" he asked.

He had no sooner gotten the words out than he clutched his stomach and gasped. Through chattering teeth, I replied, "And what's the matter with you?"

"I think I need a drink," he replied. "As a matter of fact, I think we both need one." I agreed, for this was the way we solved problems in those days.

We got into a cab and went to the Commodore bar where we ordered hot whiskey sours and watched baseball on television. We didn't talk and then unaccountably I began to cry, and then to sob. I had never done that before, even when my mother died. I couldn't stop crying and, still worse, I didn't know why I was crying. We were both embarrassed; people were beginning to look at us, probably thinking we were having a quarrel or that Frank was mistreating me. Frank sat there looking helpless. We left rather precipitously and took a cab to the airport.

When Frank returned from Texas, he told me that he had had an extraordinary vision of Baba sitting on a cloud outside the airplane window. Whatever it was, it stayed there even after he rubbed his eyes and looked again. It remained visible, he said, until the sun went down.

About a week after I met Baba, I was reading *The Discourses*, and it was raining very heavily. As I read, I began to feel electric shocks start from the top of my head and run down my spine straight to my feet. I didn't pay much attention at first, but they began to get stronger and stronger until I became alarmed and ran out into the street. By then it had stopped raining, but there were large puddles of water and mud in the street. I started to walk and I felt so blissful and full of love for everything that I had to restrain myself from falling down and kissing the mud and the puddles. By this time, the electric thrills were gone and only the bliss remained. Apparently I was not temporarily insane, because I knew that to allow myself to be seen kissing mud puddles would probably earn me a stay in Bellevue. So I walked very quickly from East End Avenue to Central Park. By then, I had calmed down and was normal once more.

But for about three months after meeting Baba, I cried

every day for no reason and without warning, most of the time, unhappily, in public places. And I never knew why.

It took Frank and me six months to come to any idea as to who Baba really was. We had been avidly reading *The Discourses* and we accepted them, all except the ones on sex and marriage. Aside from *The Discourses*, which were read at the Monday Night Group meetings, no literature on Meher Baba was available. One or two members of the group had copies of *The Discourses*, which had been printed in India, but there were no copies for the rest of us. So I went to the Oriental Section of the New York Public Library on 42nd Street where I was able to copy *The Discourses* in shorthand. I then typed them up at home and made copies for other members of the group.

Frank and I accepted the fact that Baba was a Perfect Master, but we were not clear as to what a Perfect Master was, and I was a bit muddled about spiritual things altogether. To illustrate, a long time ago when I was following Religious Science, Maya told me that a spiritual experience was seeing a blue light and that this was the purpose of meditation. However, gradually, the truth about Meher Baba and what He stood for dawned on me and on Frank as well.

During dinner one night, Frank and I discussed the question. Frank looked alarmed and said, "Do you have any idea who Baba is?"

"Not really," I replied, "but I think I'm beginning to suspect."

We looked at each other. "Well, who do you think He is?" Frank asked.

"Well, if you must know," I replied, "I think He was Jesus and has come again. If He is, I'm scared. His followers were thrown to the lions. How do we know it won't happen again?"

"I'm not sure I could face a lion," Frank said.

"Me, either."

"What have we gotten ourselves into? What are we going to do?" he asked.

"I don't know," I replied. "We can't unknow what we know. How can we turn back now? It's too late."

"That's right," he said, "but I don't like it."

"Neither do I."

We decided to go on with it, but not very bravely. Baba had won our love. He had hooked us. It *was* too late.

Shortly after this, I woke up one night with a tremendous rattling in my head. I had become fully conscious, but I couldn't move or get out of bed, nor could I open my mouth or cry out. It was as though I had been turned to stone. I was very frightened. The rattling was like a pneumatic drill making a hole in the top of my head. In spite of my fright, I remembered to call Baba's name. Unable to speak or move, I struggled and struggled until, finally, I managed to move my tongue enough to call His name three times through clenched teeth and closed lips, and the rattling abruptly ceased. Released from the spell (for I don't know what else to call it) I bounded out of bed and put on the light, my heart pounding like a trip-hammer. This was the only time I had such an experience.

After this incident, I had several out-of-the-body experiences. Each time, I could see nothing, but I could hear and feel, and I was fully conscious, more keenly aware than in my regular waking state during daily activities. But I did not have any control of the experience. I could not leave or come back into my body at will, nor could I control my activities while out of my body. On each occasion, I called Baba's name and, on the third call, was pulled back into my body.

I began to suspect that it was Frank who was causing these experiences, because he had told me he could exteriorize or leave his body at will. At first I took all this with a grain of salt. But one night when I was out of my body I decided to try to visit Frank. I had been flying, I know, not because I saw anything that would make me think so, but because I felt the wind blowing past my face and my hair blowing, and there was the sensation of movement. As soon as I decided to visit Frank, I felt myself turn and fly in another direction, so I thought I was going to him. But then I began to descend rapidly and found myself, not at Frank's place, but back in my own body, in my own bed.

The last experience of this type was when I had again awakened flying, but in addition someone was stroking the back of my head, and I could feel and hear the crackling of my

hair against my scalp. I tried to see who it was, called Baba's name and found myself quite quickly back in my body.

The next morning, Frank called me at my office, a bit odd since he usually called me at night to arrange our meeting for dinner. We never met for lunch, but this time he wanted to have lunch with me. When we met, he asked if anything unusual had occurred the night before. I told him of my experience. He smiled with a satisfied look and I was convinced that he was somehow involved in all this.

But Baba did not approve of our being involved in occult experiences and, gradually, these things dropped out of my life.

Frank had made contact with a close follower of Baba's who later left Him. This follower told Frank that he, Frank, and I were not disciples of Baba, but of another Master of the hierarchy who had lent us to Baba for His work. This upset me terribly, particularly since it came from someone who I thought was close to Baba. I felt ill from the shock. That night I dreamt I was standing next to a large disc, much like a lazy Susan. A Buddha was seated in lotus position on the disc, but the Buddha's back was toward me. I had to tip my head back to look up at it. As I did so, the disc slowly turned so I could see the Buddha's face. It was Baba's face. I looked at Him and asked, "Baba, are you my Master, or is there another?"

Baba replied, "I am your Master."

I woke up feeling much relieved, as though a great weight had been lifted from my chest. But skeptic as I was and not putting much stock in dreams, I still had some reservations about the dream. I was determined to ask Baba in person about my relationship to Him if I ever had the opportunity. It finally came in 1956 at Holiday Lodge in San Francisco, during Baba's visit to the United States that year. The mandali had just left Baba's room and I was alone with Him. I told Baba that someone had informed me that He was not my Master, but that I was lent to Him by another master for His work. Opportunely, Eruch Jessawala returned in time to translate Baba's answer. Baba turned to me, looking very tall and majestic in his white *sadra*, and gestured, "Master? I am your God!" And that settled that.

CHAPTER THREE

The Whole Truth

About six months before Baba called a small number of Western men to a *sahavas* in India in 1954, I began to feel that Baba would separate Frank and me. I told Frank about the feeling, but he said I was crazy. Nevertheless, when the 1954 *sahavas* was announced I was sure it would fulfill my apprehensions about our separation.

Frank went to India with the men from the West, and Baba told him not to return to the United States, but to go back to his own country, where his mother was very ill. Frank never came back to the United States. It was an unhappy time for me, but I clung to Baba and it worked out for the best. I realize now that I couldn't find happiness with Frank. I wasn't happy when I was with him, but habit and attachment die hard. We did correspond for about two years, and the break did not really come until 1956 when I had fallen in love again, this time with David (not his real name) whom I met at my office. It was through telling David about Baba that I became emotionally attached to him. At first David was interested in Baba, or pretended to be, and seemed to understand my closeness to Baba and to accept the fact that Baba came first in my life.

At first I was in a dilemma about what to do about Frank. I'd have to tell him about my new love, but how? Luckily, I was saved from making that decision when Frank and I had a serious falling out by correspondence, and we called off the

relationship. So, I was free to continue with my next mayavic entanglement.

Shortly after Frank returned to his own country, he wrote to me that when he met Baba again at the *sahavas* in India, Baba did not seem to know him. If this was so, I concluded, Baba did not remember me either. And if He didn't remember me how could He love me?

I went into a deep depression and stopped attending the Monday Night Group meetings, which I hadn't missed once since I began attending in 1952. I suppose this disquieted some of the group members because Filis telephoned me to find out if I was all right. When I explained to her about Frank's letter and my reaction to it, she suggested we have dinner and discuss it. I agreed, and she reasoned with me during dinner, as did the Winterfeldts when we visited them the same evening. All three reassured me, brought me to my senses and out of the doldrums. Their reasoning is reflected in a letter to me from Meher Baba's sister, Mani, on July 27, 1955. Mani always started her letters with Dear ... and the drawing of a cat, which Bili means in Hindi.

Dear (drawing of a cat)

Turn or no turn, I'm going to write. Just received the second installment of your air letter and must put you right on the little incident you mention. What an awful thing to happen just before your vacation. I do understand and wish I was there "to kiss the place and try to make it well," like Filis must have done.

I do want you to remember one thing, Bili. Never, never believe that Baba does not remember anyone. He may *show* He has forgotten; He may want you to believe He has forgotten. His reasons are unfathomable, but—well, just don't believe it. He is all Perfection and, when He becomes Man, He plays the part to Perfection—for His work, for us. He knows all, and He knows that we know He knows, yet how often Baba will ask us to tell Him something, as though He doesn't know a thing about it. He wants you to say it even though He knows it, and we have learnt that, at such times, we must say "all"—hide nothing. For, if we really know that He knows, there is nothing

to hide. Perhaps that is what He teaches us. Only, sometimes it is we who don't understand. Krishna says:

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

And, Bili, my sweet, He is aware of you. Look how He told me to send you the pictures. He does love you—and you are one of His loved ones. How can you measure that with the number of minutes you were with Him? I've known people to be with Him much longer and yet "miss the bus"—come away as poor as when they entered, untouched by His precious Love. It is only the fortunate ones that receive it. See how He had to pick you out (as He does with His near and dear ones) from the whole group Filis lectured to! These links are not made on the spur of the moment. They are forged through many lives.

I'm so glad you wrote to me though, and as He is more than ever in your heart and thoughts and you love Him more wholeheartedly than ever, it was quite worth the experience, wasn't it? Oh, yes, it is true; we are more than one person within us or we might have been bored with ourselves. At least, I am, like these lines of the poem:

Within my earthly temple there's a crowd
There's one that is humble and one that's proud,
One that's heartbroken for her sins
(I don't remember the rest.)

Many of Baba's people—East and West—seem to be going through a rough time. This is a critical period for Baba, and it is reflected in some form or other in those connected with Him. I wonder what He will decide when July ends. He works with Kaikobad⁴ for some hours each morning and looks quite preoccupied even when He's outwardly relaxing. How did you

like "*The Die Is Cast*"⁵? Weren't Baba's words beautiful? From one of His explanations (an earlier one), emerges a fascinating picture: Once the soul has passed through the evolutionary process and becomes man, he is God. There is nothing to prevent him being God-conscious, except the muck of impressions picked up on the way. There's nothing more to add, but, oh, so much to take away! I don't suppose any Avatar has put these things as plainly and clearly as Baba...

As I've been quoting from the *Bhagavad Gita* today, I think I'll end with that, too, for I love the end of your letter when you say the only important thing is to love Baba. They are the ones He loves most:

... but most of all I love
Those happy ones to whom 'tis life to live
In single fervid faith and love unseeing,
Drinking the blessed Amrit of my Being!
—Mani

CHAPTER FOUR

"Do You Love Me?"

Just before Meher Baba came to the United States for another visit in 1956, and before I fell in love with David, I had a dream in which I was talking to Baba. We were holding hands and throwing kisses to each other. There was a great feeling of love and bliss throughout the dream.

"Do you love me?" He asked. "Yes," I said.

Then the scene changed and He was no longer near me but sitting on the floor away off in a corner of a large room. He had changed. He no longer looked like Baba, but I knew it was He. His eyes had become very pale grey instead of black, and the pupils were pin-points. I felt that terrible things were happening all around us. He looked at me with those cold, cruel eyes and said, "Do you still love me?"

"Yes," I replied. And I did.

Baba came that year in the spring, planning to spend some time at the Meher Spiritual Center in Myrtle Beach, to make a short visit to Washington, D.C., and then fly out to California.

He arrived in New York on July 20 and David and I and many others met Him at the airport. Up to this time, David had kept the silences and fasts Baba asked of His followers occasionally, and he wanted to meet Baba. Somehow we managed to get out onto the airfield after the plane landed. We could see Baba with His pink coat looking out the window. He looked so sweet and loving and full of anticipation. It had been

four years since I had last seen Him, but my love for Him had grown tremendously. I was presented to Him again by Elizabeth Patterson after He came through customs. He took me in His arms and held me close. An eternity went by but it wasn't long enough for me. While I was in His embrace, it seemed as though a bubble in my chest slowly expanded and very softly burst, bringing a feeling of relief and peace. Then He let me go.

During the years I was at the Murray studio, I used to stay at the Delmonico Hotel overnight after a late night in the city. It was a quiet, clean, pleasant residential hotel and I had always liked it. When Marion Florsheim was casting around for a suitable place for Baba and the mandali to stay while in New York, she asked me if I knew of a good location for Him and the men. Everybody's apartment was either too small or not well located, so there remained only hotels. I suggested the Delmonico; it had everything we needed. And so it was settled. Baba and the mandali (Adi K. Irani, Meherjee Karkaria, Eruch Jessawala and Dr. Nilu Godse) stayed at the hotel and it was there that Baba received His devotees and newcomers.

All the time that Baba was in the United States, I could not keep my mind on David at all. Baba was in my thoughts all the time, crowding out all else. I neglected David and he felt it. I introduced David to Baba, but David was not impressed and even seemed to resent Him. From that day, he turned away from Baba and, in many small ways, tried to turn me away, too. I believe now that he was jealous of Baba.

One day, Baba sent many of us out of the room where He was receiving new visitors, but I hid behind some shrubbery where there was just a little space through which I could look at Him between the leaves. As Baba greeted each visitor, it was as though He opened the floodgates of His love. Watching in my hideaway, I received some of the residue and was quickly becoming intoxicated. I was there about twenty minutes when suddenly Baba spied me. His eyes focused on the small space between the leaves and caught me peeking at Him. His eyebrows shot up and, with a broad smile, He pointed His finger at me, wagging His head from side to side as Eruch hauled me out. I was sure I would be sent away, but Baba let me stay a little longer with Him. I can readily

understand why Baba would put a distance between us and Him after we had been with Him awhile: I don't think our physical beings would have been able to stand the strain and the power that emanated from Him along with His overwhelming love. Only those who, like professional athletes, have been through the rigorous training of life and work with Him, could possibly stand it.

Another day, Baba granted each of us a private interview in His room with just the mandali present. When my turn came, I sat at His feet with my hands on His knees, and He said, "You know, Mani loves you very much." (Mani and I had been corresponding rather heavily in what I called the Operation Topsy era, a period of years in which Mani wrote to me with news of Baba and I turned it into a sort of newsletter and sent it out to Baba's followers around the country. (See Part II of this book.)

I replied, "I love her, too, but I love You more."

He seemed pleased with the answer. Then I thought I would ask Him for something which, if I could get it, would mean I had it made. "Baba," I said, "I'd like to love You more than I love myself."

"Do that," He said, "and you'll have everything."

The day we all met at the Delmonico to accompany Baba to Myrtle Beach and across the country to California, Baba was concerned about an altercation that had occurred the night before between Beryl Williams and Sylvia Gaines, two of "The Five." "The Five" were Filis Frederick, Adele Wolkin, Beryl Williams, Sylvia Gaines and me, whom Baba always called as a group to be with Him from time to time during this trip.

By the time we had arrived at Newark Airport, Sylvia had not appeared and Baba was concerned. Nothing escaped Him. He had Eruch ask me, "What do you know about this I argument between Beryl and Sylvia, and why didn't you tell Baba about it?"

I told Eruch that I hadn't heard about it until that very morning. I offered to call Sylvia at her home and ask her to come with us as she had originally intended. Baba agreed that I should do so. But when I called, there was no answer. Baba

then had me send her a telegram requesting her presence at Myrtle Beach. She arrived there the next morning. Baba did not like disharmony among us.

On the bus to LaGuardia Airport and on the plane to Wilmington, N.C., I couldn't keep my eyes off Baba. He would continually catch me at it, widen His big black eyes, smile and wave back. This was the time when He was "courting" us, and He would use all sorts of ways to get us to focus on Him so He could win our love. Simultaneously, we were trying all sorts of ways to get His attention. We were like moths around a flame.

Baba was playing on each individual's feelings at the same time, and there were hundreds of us. Each felt he or she was getting all or most of His attention. This was quite an accomplishment, especially without speaking.

Baba always knew what was going on in one's mind, even if He asked you what you were thinking. He wanted you to be aware of some of these things, too. When we disembarked from the plane at Wilmington to continue by bus to Myrtle Beach, I stood staring at a sign over a restroom. It said, "Colored Women." I had never come up against the color question in so direct a way before and it was the first time I'd seen such a sign. Just hearing about discrimination was not like experiencing it, even in such a small way.

Quick as a flash, Baba gestured, "Bili, what are you thinking?"

Startled, I said, "I was just looking at the signs, Baba."

But it was not the whole truth, because I was wondering how Beryl, who was black, felt having to use facilities with those signs. My not telling Baba my thought was a small omission, but with Baba, every detail was important. I noticed that although Baba could have used the white men's room, He did not; He used the one marked "Colored Men."

There was no time to make amends for my omission. Everyone was piling into buses and Baba didn't want to be delayed. Promptness and time were important to Him in dealing with maya and in doing His work, for Baba was always working, even when He seemed to be playing or resting.

On the bus going to the Center, I was miserable. I felt that

I had ruined my whole time with Baba because I had, in effect, lied to Him, even though unintentionally. I had not told Him the whole truth, and that bothered me. I wanted everything to be perfect on this occasion. What a way to start after all the waiting. I decided I'd have to make it right. At the first opportunity, I would ask to speak to Baba.

However, when we arrived at the Center, we were late for lunch, and Baba instructed everyone to go immediately to the dining room so as not to delay the kitchen staff any longer. There was no time to beg an interview.

Just then, Eruch brought me some typewritten papers and told me that Baba wanted me to edit them immediately, before lunch. So I took the papers to the Guest House where I was told I could work, and began correcting them, all the while feeling very sorry for myself. "I'm hungry, too," I thought, "It looks as though I'm not going to get any lunch, and everyone else is eating." And on and on, complaining to myself. Then I thought, "You big baby! So you're going without lunch. Isn't that too bad! What a tragedy! It'll probably do you good to miss a meal for once. A fine way to act the first time Baba asks you to do something for Him!"

I then set to work in earnest, and forgot about lunch. But almost immediately, Eruch came to tell me that Baba said I was to stop correcting the papers and go right away to lunch. I never saw the papers again and I don't know what happened to them. Another lesson in obedience. Also, an indication of how Baba sometimes let one off the hook when you were ready to do His will. He never belabored a point once you'd learned the lesson.

During this stay with Baba, I was given a great deal of typing and editing to do, which was not the work I was doing in the world. But very soon afterwards, I was promoted to an editing job and had charge of all the publications put out by my organization, including the annual report, press releases, radio and television spots, publicity and public relations and a short movie.

While at Myrtle Beach, I and several other women were put up at the Lantern Cabin, which was not far from Baba's house. I found it great fun. The Lantern was like a school

dormitory and being in the same place with Baba gave me such a safe feeling. I knew He was aware of every detail. As long as I was with Him, I could be sure everything would be all right, even if the world blew up.

Kitty Davy, one of the first of Baba's western disciples, came in to visit us the first night. I was already in bed, and she sat on the edge of it. Her face was transfigured, beaming with joy.

"Happy?" she asked.

I couldn't speak, but nodded "yes." There was no need for words; we were with the One we loved.

The next day I got my interview with Baba. He called me over to Him on the porch of the Guest House and said, "Ours is the most intimate of relationships. There should be no shadow between us." He then motioned to the mandali to leave. I protested that it was not necessary to send them away, that I wouldn't mind their hearing what I was going to say. It was only much later that I realized that Baba may have been opening the way for me to tell Him about my relationship with David and to ask Him what to do about it, and that He was only trying to save me embarrassment. Since He must have known about it, it may also have been an invitation for me to tell Him about it simply because He wanted to hear me say it, which was His way. At any rate, if that was so, I was too dense at the time to get it. My mind was only on Baba, and I never thought about David at all. My concern was the fact that I had not told Baba the whole truth at the airport.

After sending the mandali away, Baba leaned His ear toward me. It was such a gentle, loving, understanding gesture that I almost forgot what I wanted to say and just stared at the ear, inches away. I had an almost overwhelming impulse to kiss it, instead of saying anything. But I restrained myself when I realized that Baba was waiting. I told Him about the incident of the signs and that I had neglected to include the fact that I was wondering how Beryl felt. Baba heard me out, clapped His hand to call Eruch back to interpret, and said, "Don't worry about it. The mind is always playing tricks. It is nothing. Take Me with you. I am within."

To this day, I am amazed that Baba was so willing to take

His valuable time from His more important work to listen to my worry about such a small thing.

I loved sunbathing and swimming, and I was tempted by the lovely white beach and lusciously warm water at the Center. One morning, Baba dismissed us until lunchtime, and I took this to mean we would not see Him until after lunch. Having nothing to do, not even the usual editing, I decided to go to the beach, and mentioned the fact to Adele and some others, for I was ignorant then of Baba's ways and expectations of us. However, before I could start for the beach, I was given some typing to do for Baba, and Kitty told me there was a small cabin in the woods with a typewriter that I could use. I suppose I must have typed for an hour or so and when I had finished I started looking for Eruch. I hadn't gone far when I met Meherjee. When he saw me, his face became very red and he yelled, "Where have you been? Baba is angry with everyone because you went swimming. He sent people to the beach with the station wagon looking for you."

"No, I didn't go swimming," I replied. "I've been doing some typing for Baba." I kept on walking, with Meherjee grumbling away at my heels. I wasn't in the least disturbed, however, because I had begun to be a little wiser by now about Baba's ways and had an inkling of what was going on. I knew He knew where I was, so He had to be up to something.

A little farther on, we met Adi, who said, "Bili, Baba is furious. Where have you been? You shouldn't go swimming when you have the Avatar."

"But I didn't go swimming," I said. "I was typing for Baba."

Still farther on toward the Guest House, we met Eruch. "Bili," he said, "the whole Center is mad at you. Baba threatens to go back to India because nobody loves Him when they go to the beach while He is here. You went to the beach, and Baba has everyone looking for you."

Again, I explained to Eruch that I had been typing and hadn't gone anywhere. Still, I wasn't upset because I knew I had done what Baba wanted. He was creating a situation to get everybody in a turmoil. I was just dying to know why.

At last we arrived at the Guest House and there was Baba

all in white sitting on the sofa in the living room with the whole encampment sitting around looking like the Last Judgment. But Baba was smiling and happy—not at all angry—looking as cheerful as a birthday cake. I stood in the doorway and smiled at Him, and He smiled back at me. I looked around at the assemblage and saw Margaret Craske among them. He followed my eyes and looked at her, too, with that quick, flashing look that those who have been with Baba know so well. Then He looked back at me and patted the sofa beside Him, gesturing for me to come and sit next to Him. With great delight, I did, trying not to look like the cat who swallowed the canary. He said not a word about my going to the beach. He had known all along, of course, that I hadn't gone, and I knew He knew it. And He knew that I knew that He knew it. It was a game, and He held all the cards. Why He had gotten everyone into such a stew He never revealed to me. But I did learn something from it and I think everyone else did, too. He was saying in effect, "Don't even think of doing anything else other than to think of Me and be with Me as long as I am around. Even if I say I won't be around, wait for Me anyway. Take advantage of your opportunity." It reminds me of the parable in the Bible containing the words, "No one knows when the bridegroom cometh." I spent a beautiful afternoon bathed in His love.

When Baba later dismissed us, Margaret Craske stayed behind with Baba for awhile. When she left the Guest House she approached me and said, "I have something rather unpleasant to tell you." My heart sank; I thought Baba was going to send me away. "Baba said we should see more of each other," she said. I perked up. Margaret and I had been seeing each other in New York and I could think of nothing I would like better than to see more of her, so I said, "It's not I who will have an unpleasant time. The unpleasant news is for you." We smiled and wondered what it was all about, at least I did, and it was one order I've enjoyed obeying ever since. A few years later, Baba asked Margaret if I could be one of the dancers, meaning could I be part of the unorganized group of dancers who followed Baba and were associated with Margaret. Margaret replied, "Yes, of course, if she wants to."

However, I did not learn of this second conversation until thirteen years later after Baba dropped His body in 1969. During those years, from time to time, one of the dancers would mention that Baba had said I was to be in the dancers' group. I would reply that they had it all wrong, that Baba had only said that Margaret and I should see more of each other. However, in 1958, about four months after that second conversation between Baba and Margaret, I went back to dancing and took classes at American Ballet Theatre. In 1982 I finally asked Margaret why she had never told me about the second conversation. She replied that she thought I asked Baba if I could be one of the dancers. But I had never discussed the topic with Baba. The suggestion had come directly from Him. He knew all along that dancing was where my heart lay and I believe He led me back to it. By 1958 I was planning to take modern dance and classes to strengthen my back and hip, which I had injured years before in a fall from a horse. A friend wanted to take classes with me, but she suggested we go to American Ballet Theatre School instead. I thought ballet was too difficult and demanding for adults to start, but she said there was an adult class for beginners. After some persuasion I decided to try it. We went to the first class, and my friend never took another and dropped out of my life completely as well. I stayed at the school for 10 years. It was through the school that I met four other people who became interested in Baba.

To go back to 1956 at the Center, Baba was a good actor and a comedian as well. One day, after I had typed a discourse, "Divine Bliss and Human Suffering," I brought the finished work to Baba, who was standing with the mandali, Marion Florsheim and some others near the Original Kitchen. Baba took the papers and asked me what was the title of the discourse. I replied, "Divine Suffering and Human Bliss." I realized immediately that I had made a mistake, and Baba looked horrified. His eyebrows shot up. "Try again," He said.

So I tried again, but I did worse than before. For the life of me I couldn't remember the title I had just typed. Baba made another face, a real hammy one. I began to sweat. Baba had Eruch repeat the title. Still, I couldn't say it. It went on and on,

Baba getting hammier and hammier and Marion Florsheim laughing her head off. I just couldn't manage to say it. Finally Baba let me off the hook.

Baba's sense of humor was evident in so many things. He had recovered quite well from his 1952 accident and He often walked with us at a brisk pace. At one time, we were practically running after Him as He went at a great clip along the path to the Barn. We had a most difficult time keeping up with Him. I was right at His heels and was determined to stay there. Beryl had the same idea in mind. And so we whizzed along, huffing and puffing in Baba's wake and everyone else stringing along behind. Beryl accused me of pushing her. I said I hadn't. Then I accused her of pushing me, and she denied it. We carried on this mini-war, trying to maintain our positions close on Baba's heels. Suddenly Baba made a sharp, right-angled turn to the left, stopped and stood watching with arms akimbo as we kept right on going, sailing off into the woods. On this same walk, Baba stopped suddenly and accidentally I trod on His heels while the rest of the crowd piled up like dominoes. "Oh, pardon me, Baba," I exclaimed. But He appeared not to notice. One could never be alert enough around Baba.

The buildup of love that had been occurring during that stay at the Center came to its climax one day when a group of us were walking with Baba from the Guest House to His house at the north end of the Center. When we came close to the gate of His house, He sent us away. But somehow, this time I was not able to obey Him. I felt such a strong pull toward Him, much stronger than usual. Baba and the mandali passed through the gate, the mandali walking ahead and Baba following. This was unusual since the mandali usually followed Baba. I stopped at the gate, not daring to go any further. Then I looked back at the others, who had stopped to talk some way off. I was puzzled that they didn't seem to feel this pull from Baba, but they didn't seem to notice anything and neither did the mandali. I looked again at Baba. He turned around and looked at me, and I felt as though He were a large magnet pulling me to Him. Yet, I didn't dare to move forward because He had sent us away. He motioned to me to leave, smiled and turned away,

following the mandali. I tried to go, but I just couldn't. Still He pulled me. Trying to tear myself away was torture. Baba kept turning around, smiling with such love—and pulling. It was only Baba and me; the rest of the world didn't exist. This bittersweet tug-of-war went on for awhile until finally I could bear it no longer and I gestured to Him, "Why do you send me away and pull me to You at the same time?"

He smiled with incredible love in His eyes. He made a short gesture of dismissal and only then was I able to leave, although not easily. I often wonder what would have happened if I had not asked that question. My honeymoon with Baba had reached its peak.

No detail was too small for Baba to notice and be concerned about. Concerned is not really the right word, because Baba was never concerned in the usual sense of the word. He knew everything, past, present and future, and controlled everything, so He could not be concerned. I suppose the word "mindful" might be better. Baba was always setting an example for the rest of us; also, it was through these little attentions that He drew us closer to Himself in love.

On the first day at the Center, Baba noticed that I was wearing thong sandals, which left most of my feet exposed. He motioned to my feet and said that I must not wear open-toed footwear at the Center because of the snakes and to go immediately and put on covered shoes. I obeyed and later Baba checked my feet to see that I had done so, and nodded approval. I saw only one very small, half-dead snake at the Center several years later, but I am sure that, if I had disobeyed Baba, one would have somehow bitten me. Baba never released me from this order, so I continue to wear covered shoes, which I don't enjoy, at the Center. Baba calls this "castor-oil obedience." Still, it is worth wearing closed shoes to have gotten His attention. The closed shoe admonition became a general rule at the Center at the same time.

One of the amazing things about Baba was that He made each one think He was paying attention only to that one all the time. Yet, this couldn't be the case, since He was making everyone feel the same way. That is, everyone except those He was trying to impress with the idea that He was ignoring

them. I've suspected that, in doing this, He was arousing some sleeping *sanskaras* (impressions). But we don't know anything, really, and He has never enlightened us.

Before breakfast one morning, I asked Kitty where I could work on some manuscripts I was editing for Baba. "Go to the verandah of the Guest House," she said. "You can work there quietly. No one will be there."

I hadn't been on the verandah long when Baba appeared at the door into the living room. Startled, I began to rise. It was very difficult to remain seated in Baba's presence, even if He told you to be seated, and it took an effort of will to do so. Baba, too, appeared rather astonished. But He motioned me to stay and to sit down. Soon the mandali appeared, had a long discussion with Baba, I presume in Gujarati, and then disappeared. Then while Baba sat in the doorway having breakfast, I continued correcting the manuscripts. This was one of many incidents during this trip when by accident I had the luck to be alone with Baba. I noticed that Baba ate in a rather off-hand manner, as though He were performing a duty. He ate as though He were putting gas in a car. I don't think He could have eaten much, since He didn't seem to stay at the table for more than five minutes.

One thing of which we were all terrified was that we might do something to displease Baba and make Him cut short His visit or that He might get a cold and return to India. He had said He would leave immediately for India if He got sick.

We had many gatherings at the Barn which was quite a distance from the places where we ate and slept. It was where Baba received newcomers. It was far enough away so that some people rode there. One afternoon when Baba was in the Barn interviewing people, He had given a message to Margaret Craske, telling her to repeat the message to each person who came into the Barn. I was standing in the doorway and saw Baba gesture to Margaret and point to His throat. I interpreted this to mean He had a sore throat. I panicked. I thought, if we don't do something about this, and soon, He will go back to India. Inquiries among various people for throat lozenges for Baba elicited the information that Kitty and Elizabeth would most likely have some at the Guest House.

Hurrying as quickly as I could toward the Guest House, I met Harold Rudd coming in a car in the opposite direction. He asked where I was going and I told him about Baba's sore throat and of the possibility of His returning to India if we didn't do something about it. Harold panicked, too.

"Get in the car," he said, "I'll drive you to the Guest House." But it seemed we would never get there. People on their way to the Barn continually stopped us, asking for a ride to the Barn. We kept refusing. Harold, swearing under his breath, perspiring and red in the face, was almost in a state of apoplexy, and I was no better. Finally we arrived at the Guest House and I told Kitty and Elizabeth why we had come. Kitty gave us some lozenges for Baba, but Elizabeth warned us not to go around telling people that Baba had a sore throat. I replied, "We aren't, but Baba can have a sore throat if He wants to, can't He?"

"Of course," she replied, "but a lot of people wouldn't understand."

I knew what she meant because there were new visitors to the Center that day and they might not understand. Many people seemed to feel that if Baba was God then He wasn't subject to human ills. They did not grasp the fact that, when He becomes man, God assumes the weaknesses of man and plays the role of man fully. This is the problem many people have with Jesus dying on the cross: if He was God, then it should not have affected Him. People do insist that God conform to their own ideas of Him, and violently reject any thought of the God-Man having a human side.

Harold and I finally got back to the Barn with the lozenges and I delivered them to Eruch to give to Baba "for His sore throat." I thought Eruch looked rather mystified, but I didn't think too much about it, being too concerned about Baba's throat. Half an hour later, Baba announced to everyone that some of His lovers had gone mad, since they were bringing Him tablets for a sore throat He didn't have. I was so embarrassed. I found out later that the gesture I had misinterpreted was meant to express Baba's concern for Margaret's throat because she was having to repeat His message so often. If Harold had never believed anything I said after that, I

wouldn't have blamed him.

On that same day in the Barn, I was looking at Baba and must have revealed in my eyes what I was feeling because Baba, with His usual quick perception, caught it, pointed to me and said to Eruch, "She loves me very much."

Another time I was talking to the husband of one of Baba's close followers. He told me that he thought Baba was a very great soul, but he wasn't sure if Baba was God or that he loved Baba, and that he only came to the Center because of his wife. I had been watching this man and how he behaved with Baba and how much he tried to please Him and amuse Him with jokes. I was convinced that he really did love Baba, but didn't realize it. That evening at late dusk, I sat in the Boat House on Long Lake and, lo and behold, Baba walked in—alone. He sat down opposite me and, because I had been thinking about my conversation with the husband, I said to Baba, "Baba, some people love you, but they don't know it." Baba's eyes glowed, even in the dusk. He smiled and nodded, indicating He knew and understood my meaning, and that He agreed. A minute or two later, the mandali came in.

What appeared to be a very small incident occurred one evening when we were all to meet with Baba in the Barn. But Baba seemed to think it had some importance and for that reason I record it. Everyone had taken his place in the Barn and was waiting for Baba. I was sitting cross-legged on the floor with my back against the wall to the right of the front door, but close to the fireplace. Baba appeared in the doorway and He motioned to us all to remain seated. He entered the Barn and moved to the right of the room near the wall, with the mandali following. He walked with a measured tread and passed right in front of me and some others who were sitting on the floor. Just as He came in front of me, Baba's sandaled right foot slipped ever so slightly on the bare boards. I doubt that anyone noticed but me, and I did so only because He passed so closely that His foot almost brushed my knee. Baba stopped, retraced His steps and left the Barn. I touched the spot to see if there was grease or something there to make Him slip, but there was nothing. Then Baba reappeared, walking very precisely over the same area and His foot fell in exactly the

same spot as before. This time there was no mishap and He continued on to His chair.

One morning after breakfast, He had us all stand around Him in a semi-circle near the Original Kitchen. He had removed His pink coat and was in His white *sadra*. He told us to concentrate on His eyes. We did so, standing there quietly, concentrating. All of nature seemed to have become still. I heard no leaves rustle, no bird or insect cries. Just silence. No one moved. I don't know how long it lasted, probably five to ten minutes. Then Baba clapped His hands and everything went back to normal. He did not explain why He had us do this.

Most of us who were at the Center then flew with Baba to Washington, D.C., where He was to meet with members of the press. Meanwhile He had arranged a bus tour of Washington for those of us not involved with the press meetings. Apparently, there had been some dissension about this sightseeing trip, and Baba took the time to ask each one of us what we preferred to do. When He came to me, I said, without thinking, "I want to be with you, Baba." Even as I said it, I realized it wasn't possible.

Baba lifted His shoulders and eyebrows and turned the palms of His hands upward in a "What can I do?" gesture. I felt He sympathized with me.

From Washington we took a night flight with Baba to California, via Texas. We stopped in Los Angeles first, where Baba received His lovers and met newcomers.

One day while walking down the corridor of Baba's hotel, I ran into Baba and He was alone. We walked along the hall for a short distance and I couldn't resist saying, "I must have some good karma, Baba, since I'm always meeting you unexpectedly." Baba looked at me with those big eyes of His. They spoke volumes and then some.

Baba and the entire entourage took a one-day bus trip to Meher Mount, Agnes Baron's hilltop retreat in Ojai dedicated to Baba. In the morning before we left, Kitty was having some trouble preparing Baba's breakfast. I was sent out to look for a particular type of stove, which I couldn't find. While I was out, I began to worry about what Baba would eat, since the stove couldn't be found. I thought I could solve the problem by

buying the right kind of food, a pure food. Why I should have thought that I could decide what a pure food was, I can't imagine. Nor even why it was necessary for Him to have a pure food. But I went to a health food shop and bought some comb honey, thinking it was pure because it had not yet been touched by human hands. It never occurred to me that the bees might not have been pure enough to make it. I also bought some organically grown, stone ground whole wheat bread. The fact that the bread had been touched by "impure" human hands didn't occur to me either. The only explanation for all this muddled thinking is that, when one was with Baba, one was not in one's right mind.

When I returned to the hotel, I gave the bread and honey to Eruch to give to Baba for His breakfast. Just before we started out on our trip to Meher Mount, Eruch brought me the bread and honey and said, "Baba said you and the rest of the Five must eat the bread and honey *with* lunch—all of it! The poor Four. They had to share the result of my idiotic action along with me and they hadn't done anything to deserve it. I don't know about them, but it was a long time before I could face bread and honey again.

That day at Meher Mount, we had all assembled around Baba in the living room at Agnes' house. Just before we gathered, Dana Field had brought some fruit to Baba, advising Him to eat it because it was very healthful. Apparently Baba ate it to humor Dana. After we were all settled around Baba, He said we should have a meditation, a rare thing with Baba. We all closed our eyes and prepared to meditate. In the silence, Baba's stomach gave a sonorous rumble, everyone broke up and the meditation was over. Baba explained gently and lovingly how He had eaten the fruit given to Him by Dana and that His stomach rumbled because the fruit didn't agree with Him. I suppose such incidents must have occurred hundreds of times, so one can imagine what might have happened to Baba's digestive tract if He concurred in all our well-intentioned meddlings.

We flew on with Baba to San Francisco where we visited the Muir Woods, an ice show and a puppet show. One afternoon, Marion Florsheim and I were sitting with Baba

and Eruch in Baba's living room at Holiday Lodge. Baba thanked Marion and me for our work. Marion had been chairman of the Meher Baba Hospitality Committee and had taken care of all the logistics for the people traveling with Baba from New York as well as for Baba and the mandali and had also coordinated with committees from other parts of the country. It was a tremendous job. My part was only in helping to disseminate information to all groups in the United States pertinent to Baba's coming to the West, and aiding Marion in small ways. So compared to Marion I felt I had done very little and I said to Baba, "It was nothing, Baba." Baba made a face and shook His head, as if to say that I was trying to be too modest. But truly I felt too embarrassed to accept thanks from Baba for something which was a privilege and a joy in the bargain, since it gave me the extra advantage of being near Him on many occasions.

On Monday, August 6, 1956, the Avatar Meher Baba Hospitality Committee, which consisted of the New York, Myrtle Beach Center, Sufism Re-oriented, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Schenectady, New York committees and various other individuals from all over the United States, met with Baba and the mandali to discuss finances. The most important and soul satisfying statements were, of course, made by Baba at that meeting. As secretary of the meeting, I was fortunate enough to record them as excerpted here:

"I couldn't rest for one single minute last night as I was working. This morning when I got up from my bed, I was thinking that today is the last day to be with the groups as much as possible and I wanted to take the group outside for a drive as I am leaving tomorrow. This morning, something cropped up concerning finances. There is a question concerning all the groups' expenses, receipts and balances. I want to clear up this matter. I therefore asked for another board meeting.

"My coming to the West and all that involves was a small affair, and the responsibility of the board is nothing compared to what Baba intends to do in India for the great meeting He spoke about yesterday. If there is confusion about the small affair of Baba's trip here, how will you manage the big affair

in India? There should be no misunderstanding concerning Baba's affair there at that time. When Baba comes down to your level, because of the familiarity and intimacy of Baba coming down to your level, you completely forget about His Divinity and you forget that Baba knows every little thing. You forget about that when you see Him coming down to your level. When Baba inquires after your health, you forget that you must inform Baba of every detail, but, at the same time, you also forget Baba knows everything. Don't worry about your children. You must take my word that God knows everything. I am God. When God says, 'Don't worry,' you should not worry—not give it a second thought. Suppose Baba turns His key and there is an earthquake tomorrow and within five minutes you all vanish, then what about your worries for your family and children? Stick to Baba's word. Whatever instructions He gives, just stick to them. Today, I want to clear up all about finances. All confusion must be cleared...

"Keep your hearts clean with all that Baba decides. Do not keep back anything. There should not be any lingering misunderstanding after this meeting. Everything should be clean and cleared up. If you all have faith, belief and love that I am the Christ, which I am, then you must obey Me, you must love Me. If you are not prepared to obey Me or you have doubts and wish to carry out your own will, then you must leave Me. If you love Me, you must hold fast to Me.

"This morning, I lectured the mandali for one-half hour on having breakfast—having meals twice. We should have had our tea or coffee in the morning, then our lunch in the afternoon. We called for a second breakfast in the morning.⁶ When I saw the breakfast on the table, I gave them a lecture: 'If you want to be a help, then you must not use money that was contributed!' In the morning in India, we have one cup of tea. For lunch, we have curry, rice and gravy. In the evening, we have four chapatis (Indian bread) and one vegetable. On Friday, I ask them to eat only once and keep a fast the rest of the day. This morning, I became annoyed with the mandali because they wanted a good breakfast today. The mandali are near Baba, knowing Baba is the Christ. Having that, they must not call for breakfast. Most of the people of the world, all they have is only one square meal a day. In India, many don't even have that. If you want to stick to Me, you must have a

clean heart. There is no use sometimes having faith and sometimes having doubt. It is best to leave Me then, and you can lead your life in the world and be free. If you want to love Me, you should not try to create confusion among yourselves. All of you love Me. But, by loving each other, you will be loving Me the best. The best is to love each other. If one is to say something behind the back of the other, then how can you tell the world about My Love? If you cannot all love Me as I want you all to love Me, it is best not to speak to the world about Me. Let's put an end to all hypocrisy. Let hypocrisy be completely wiped out from your hearts. I would love to see that. Someone says something, the other person naturally feels about it. Then the other person tells someone else what the other has said about him or her. You should have one heart—a clean heart. We are one family.

"Baba wants you all to work harmoniously with clean hearts, without prejudices. Baba will be leaving you all tomorrow. Today is the last day. Let us ask pardon of God for our misunderstandings, for unnecessarily hurting the feelings of others, for our faults. May God give all of you one percent of the infinite patience of Baba."

During Baba's entire visit, He had the Five write letters every day to Mehera and Mani in India. It was Baba's custom to call us in and have each of us read out the letters we had written before they were mailed. We had been used to writing only to Mani up to this time and we naturally addressed our first letters to "Mani and Mehera." But Baba very sweetly told us to address the letters to "Dear Mehera and Mani."

Beryl's first letter was very businesslike, because she had been writing to Mani about photographs for Baba lovers in the United States and had to keep accounts straight. However, Baba didn't want these letters to be businesslike. When Beryl read her letter to Him, Baba made a very sour face, which was really very comical and Beryl couldn't be hurt by it. Baba told her to rewrite the letter and to make it more loving.

One day in San Francisco, I couldn't think of another thing to write about. So, I began to make train-of-thought notes in the hope of coming up with some idea for a letter. I recalled that earlier that morning, I had seen Baba's eyes cross

in a look of utter ecstasy. It was only a flash but I'd never seen anything quite like it; I had a glimpse of His inner state of bliss which was going on all the while, concurrently with His normal consciousness. My notes contained the account of the experience. While I was doodling, Eruch knocked on my door and said, "Bili, come right away with your letter. Baba wants you."

I was stuck. What was I going to do? I had no letter, only those awful notes. But Baba expects immediate obedience. So I went and when my turn came to read my letter, I told Baba that I didn't have one, only stream-of-consciousness notes from which I hoped to compose a letter. I hoped He would let me off this time. But Baba signalled that I should get my notes. I did and began to read. When I got to the part about the crossed eyes, I stopped, too embarrassed to go on. But Baba said, "Go on." I said the rest was not very important. But Baba was adamant. "Go on," He repeated. I finished reading the notes, half expecting disapproval at the very least. "Send it," Baba said. He smiled and seemed pleased.

Another incident at Holiday Lodge revealed Baba's intolerance of intolerance. Margaret Craske's dancers gave a performance for Baba, with one of the dancers doing a mildly erotic dance with seductive hip movements. I happened to be sitting next to a man who, just before the performance, had been criticizing dancing altogether, saying that he thought dancing was too sexual and unspiritual and that no one should dance if they wanted to follow the spiritual path. After the performance, Baba congratulated the dancers and asked, "Do you know the dance I liked the best?"

"No," someone said. "Which one, Baba?"

Baba replied, "The one with all the movements," indicating with flashing eyes and waving hands the movements of the erotic dance. He shot a piercing look at the man who had said he didn't approve of dancing. There were no more critical comments about dancing after that.

Baba also used the smallest things to make you feel His love. One day someone had brought Him a box of sugar cookies in all shapes and sizes. The word went around that Baba was giving out *prasad*,⁷ and we all gathered around Him like flies around a honey pot. When I drew near, He looked at me, then

searched through the cookies for some time until He found a huge heart-shape. Triumphant, He held it out to me. I took it and ate it in one gulp. I felt He had handed me His heart.

The time of leave-taking came. Baba was to fly from San Francisco to Australia, and we gathered around Him at the airport. He stood in the middle of the circle, giving a pat or two here, a smile there, a nod. Most were in tears. I had steeled myself for this separation and was congratulating myself on remaining calm. I did well until Baba turned to me and put His hand on my shoulder. That did it; I broke down and had to put on my dark glasses to hide the tears. I'll never forget watching His plane take off. If love and longing could have done it, that plane would have been pulled out of the sky and back to us. We watched, bathed in tears, until it was out of sight. My honeymoon was over.

CHAPTER FIVE

A Matter of Choice

At the end of August, 1957, Baba gave orders that no one should indulge in any lustful thought, word or deed from September to March of 1958—six months.

I didn't like that at all. Nor did David, whom I had resumed seeing after I returned to New York from San Francisco. I didn't trust myself, nor David for that matter. I decided that if I was going to be able to obey Baba, it would be best that David and I not see each other during the period of abstinence. However, after I had strictly obeyed Baba for the first six weeks, David and I did happen to meet. The meeting was too much for us and I disobeyed Baba for the rest of the six-month period. Guilt lay heavily on me, spoiling everything I did. I was not happy.

Needless to say, it was a great relief when the six months were over. I had been feeling hostile to anyone reminding me of the orders, and it seemed everyone was bent on doing so, probably because it was so much on their own minds, too. It was a ghastly time.

One week after the end of the abstinence period, Baba extended the order for four more months, to July 10, 1958. But this time married couples were excluded. Baba had given such orders before, but never so close together and never for such long periods of time, except that stricter orders were sometimes given to individuals. David was fit to be tied and so was I.

David said that since he wasn't a Baba follower, he wasn't going to put up with it. But I realized that if I persisted in disobeying Baba's orders, His *damaan*⁸ would slip from my fingers. It had become an inescapable matter of choice: Baba or David. My love for Baba was stronger and even though I knew I'd have to go through a great deal of unmitigated suffering, I gave up David.

Often with Baba, when He takes something away, He gives you no sop to ease the pain. I knew I could expect nothing. He was not testing me so much as I was learning to test myself to find out just how sincere my love for Baba was. Yet, Baba was always there. Without Him, I could never have done it. His love sustained me. Baba has said that the stronger love pulls you away from the lesser love. That does not mean that the lesser love has diminished. In the end, if you stick it out, Baba gives you something much greater than you ever imagined. But first you have to go through the karmic action that you yourself started.

My misery lasted for two years before it showed any signs of abating. I saw David only once after we separated. He brought me a lovely gift and suggested that we marry. I brushed the idea aside, even though I felt like two people, with one wanting to say "yes" and the other, "no." Ten years later, I saw David once more when he visited my office. He was married by then and had two children. I felt a real friendship for him, but everything else was wiped out. I wondered what all the weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth had been about. I did feel that I had a narrow escape.

Still, David had met Baba several times. He had been at Baba's birthday party at Longchamps in New York, had gone with Baba to see the Broadway musical, "Most Happy Fella," had taken Baba's *prasad*, joined in a fast and silence ordered by Baba and had even brought a friend to meet Him. I feel that sooner or later Baba will tug on the line that has the hook in David, even if it's in another life. No contact with Baba is without its eventual effect.

As for me, Baba had freed me to a great extent from the bondage of sex, not that He has eliminated sex attraction, but more that He has delivered me from slavery to it. Life has too

many other things in it, and sex is no longer a problem. The freedom from this special type of enslavement has brought side benefits. I have more real friendships with the opposite sex as well as with other women. I can appreciate men as friends and for themselves, rather than as objects of pleasure. I am more a friend to women because the jealousies and rivalries are finished. The war is over.

After 1958, Baba gave no more general orders concerning sex.

In July of 1958, a few months after my harrowing separation from David, Baba returned to the United States. This time, we had orders not to meet Him at the airport; we were to make our first contact with Him at the Center in Myrtle Beach.

How different it was this time! My love for Baba was just as strong, even stronger, and nothing would have kept me from being with Him. But the guilt at having disobeyed Him spoiled everything. My nerves were strained to a fine tension. Even everyday noises, voices and music were a torture to me.

On the bus to the Center, we were discussing how we would all check in, clean up first and then go to see Baba. But, as soon as we arrived, one of the mandali met the bus and told us that Baba wanted us to go directly to Him before we did anything else.

This time, Baba was accompanied to the West by Adi Irani Sr., Eruch, Dr. William Donkin and Nariman Dadachanji. Baba was still suffering the effects of a car accident in India in 1956 in which Dr. Nilu Godse had been killed. Baba had sustained injuries to His face, leg and arm. He still had excruciating pain in His hip joint and had to be carried about the Center in a chair manned by four of Margaret Craske's male dancers.

We went to Baba's cabin, where He sat looking as radiant as ever, in spite of the pain He was suffering. The room was crowded. Feeling very unworthy and guilty, I took a seat in the farthest corner of the room away from Baba. It was very difficult to look at Him because of all my guilty feelings. In a few seconds, Baba asked, "And Bili? Where's Bili?" I was pointed out to Him.

"Why do you sit so far away, Bili? Come closer," He said.

Mortified almost to tears, I came and sat at His feet. He looked deep into my eyes and said, "Do you love Me as much as ever?"

Inside I was squirming like a worm on a hook while I searched frantically for the right answer. My love for Baba seemed to be scrambled with my love for David. Incredibly, because it could have taken only a second, the following thoughts ran through my mind: How could I love Baba as much as I felt He should be loved when I had done what I had done? But then, why was I here? And why did I leave David in New York?

I wanted to tell Baba what was in my heart, but there were too many people around and, in the conflict of emotions, I didn't know how to answer Him. The hurt inside seemed to blot out almost everything else. Yet I desperately clung to Baba in my thoughts. I thought all I had to do was to make a telephone call to David in New York and everything would have been all right between us, but I couldn't do it. Baba must have known He had won. I'm sure it was to save me embarrassment and to give me an easy "out" that Baba almost immediately added, "Do you love me as much as Anita does?"

I was saved. I looked at Anita Vieillard and said, "Baba, only you know all hearts." How could I possibly have known how much Anita loved Him? My answer seemed to satisfy Baba, because He said no more.

There must have been a great deal of suffering and many guilt feelings among others during this visit because one day Baba sat in the midst of a group of us and said, "I forgive you all of all your sins to this day." Yes, Baba forgives us; the harder task seems to be for us to forgive ourselves.

During this visit to the Center, Ella Winterfeldt, Beryl Williams, Leatrice Shaw and I were chosen to clean Baba's house and change His bed linen and towels every day. We had to be up at dawn before all the others were awake and often had to dodge from one room to another in order not to disturb Baba who was up and moving about through the house. We were delighted with the task because it meant we could spend some time with Baba each morning. I more than ever needed

every opportunity to bask in His love.

One day, Baba gave me an experience of His unbounded love, which got me through the difficult two years which were to follow and which still sustains me. The Five were gathered around Him in the Lagoon Cabin, and letters were being read to Him. I was sitting very close to Him on the floor, slightly to His right. A sketch of Baba was hanging on the wall opposite me. Still suffering from my break with David, I concentrated on the picture in order not to burst out crying. I didn't want to show my misery to Baba; I wanted to please Him by showing Him a pleasant face. I've always disliked most drawings and paintings of Baba, preferring photographs of Him instead, and I particularly disliked the picture on the wall. I concentrated on it very hard, trying to work myself into an angry mood to counteract the urge to cry. I said to myself, "Why did they have to make Him look so dreary? That's not at all like Him, etc., etc." I felt drawn to look at Baba. He was looking at me and it was fortunate that I was already sitting down because the impact of the love in His eyes was so overpowering it would have knocked me down. That look alone would have convinced me of His divinity, even if it had been the only experience I had ever had with Him. It did convince me that no love anywhere on earth or elsewhere can compare with the love of God for His creatures. I am sure that He really does love me, as He does every single one of us beyond anything we can imagine. It made tangible Baba's words, "Things that are real are given and received in silence."

At another time, a few people brought problems to Baba, including a question about belonging to a group. Was it necessary to belong to a group in order to be close to Baba, someone asked.

"No," Baba replied in effect, "you do not have to belong to a group to be close to Me." As He said this, His eyes travelled around the group gathered with Him. "Kitty doesn't belong to a group, neither does Margaret nor Elizabeth, yet they are very close to Me." His eyes rested on me and I thought they seemed unusually intense. Yet, I hadn't raised the question. But about six months later, I left the Monday Night Group in New York, feeling I didn't really belong to any group.

It was announced that Baba had gifts from Mehera and Mani for each of the women attending the *sahavas* and we were to receive them from Baba at His house. We lined up in the living room while Baba selected the gifts and gave them to each in turn. Standing there in my perpetual state of guilt, I was more hang-dog than ever, having to take Baba's bounty without feeling that I deserved it. But there was no getting out of it. When my turn came, Baba very carefully selected a beautiful necklace, just the sort I would have chosen for myself. But this apparently wasn't enough for Baba. He held the necklace in one hand while He rummaged through the rest of the gifts with the other. I scrunched down, trying to make myself as small as possible. I protested, "Oh, Baba, one gift is plenty..." But Baba shushed me with a motion of His hand while He concentrated. For the first and only time, I heard Baba make a sound of frustration in His throat, as if He couldn't find what He wanted. Finally He found a beautiful pair of silver and turquoise earrings. He held them up triumphantly, turned and placed the necklace and earrings in my hands. I felt like the lowest of the low. But I thanked Him and left. Some time later in New York, I lost one of the earrings, so I don't wear either of the gifts any more, but I keep them in a glass box in front of Baba's picture.

One event that occurred at the 1958 *sahavas*⁹ impressed me and, I think, many others, very much. One afternoon, we had all been at the Barn, and the dancers had just finished putting on a performance for Baba. Baba was carried out of the Barn in his specially made chair, and quickly made a gesture to be put down. Baba sat there with the most dreadful look of pain and suffering on His face and in His eyes. It was more than physical pain, because He had that all the time. Everyone became quite still, and the mandali quietly stood in a circle around Him as though protecting Him. Something was going on somewhere in Creation, and He was needed—that was my impression of what was happening. We all seemed to sense this and we all kept quiet. Then one woman suddenly became hysterical and started screaming, "Baba, Baba!" and tried to run to Him. She was held back by her husband and the mandali. Baba did not seem to notice; He certainly was not

there in the ordinary sense. Then, Baba seemed to come back to life and He signalled to the dancers who had been carrying His chair to continue with the walk. In a second or two, He stopped them again and once more He was no longer with us. Again we all stood quietly until He motioned the boys to pick up the chair and go on. No explanation was ever given for the incident as far as I know.

In contrast to the seriousness of this event was an occasion when the boys were carrying Baba over the dunes to the beach and Baba suggested that the women should have the chance to carry Him. Several women rushed forward to grab the two long poles that were used to lift the sedan chair. They weren't coordinated in their efforts and the chair tipped forward, almost throwing Baba out.

"Take it easy, Baba," I yelled illogically. And Baba, with His usual good humor and sense of the ridiculous, put His hand in the opening of His shirt and fluttered it to indicate that His heart was racing.

On March 5, 1958, before Baba came to the West, Mehera had written me the following letter:

Dear Bili,

We arrived in Poona on the 30th. We did not feel the heat much on the way as there had been a hailstorm in Mahabaleshwar. When we were nearing Poona, Baba, holding His hand out of the car window, was glad to find the air was not at all hot. Baba felt the journey. He patted His hip to say that it hurt Him. We are glad that Baba won't have to make a special trip to Bombay for His visa. Baba likes the atmosphere of this house (Guruprasad in Poona). Baba will be giving *darshan* here on the fourth.

I think you would be interested to know about the Persian New Year feast which takes place on the 21st of March. It inaugurates spring. In olden days, the monarchs of Persia were crowned on this day; it also signifies prosperity. Neighbors visit neighbors to wish each other a happy and prosperous year. They sprinkle a little rosewater from a silver container on the person's hand whom they are greeting and offer them fruit and sweets, green leaves and flowers. A table is decorated

for this occasion with flowers, fresh and dried fruits, a variety of sweet-meats. A small mirror is placed on the table and lighted by little oil lights at evening time. The custom is to hold up the mirror to the person who then smiles at her reflection; it signifies friendship and happiness. It being New Year's Day, astronomers prophesy for the year. This year is the sign of the Dog. The Chinese also have the same sign this year. It is predicted that this year will be a very difficult one. That is, the people assume it to be so. It must be wonderful to be happily excited; each day brings you nearer to your Beloved. I think, Bili, you will find a great change in Baba this time. I mean in looks and ways. As I write this, my eyes fill with tears to think how energetic and active He used to be. For so long He has been confined to a chair and also has not been well most of the time and, lately, He has felt much weaker, too. His diet is very poor, as His digestion is weak from many fasts and the fact that now He can't move about freely does not help any. We are hoping the journey 'round the world will not be difficult anyway for Him. Bili, dear, time will come for us all to be really happy with Beloved among us, strong and active, His own sweet self again. Our Baba is the great Maha Modern Avatar.

You know that the King of Persia is divorcing his beloved wife as she has not borne him an heir. When she had come to India, she asked to see a saint who is a great one in India. The person who knew about this was the friend of one of the Baba lovers in the Indian army. But, as Baba was in seclusion and did not see anyone, they did not direct her to Him. When we brought up this subject, Baba said with a sad face that it would have been well if she had come to Him, but it was her Kismet. We feel very sorry for her, as we all like her very much. She is a nice person and was a good wife. I asked Baba if He had a message for you. He said, "Yes, give Bili my Love." As roses are my favorite flowers, Bili, you can imagine how we cooed over your lovely picture card of gorgeous roses. Baba was in the room and wanted to see it. Baba likes the folding picture of roses inside the card, and He always likes bright colors. I hope you will like this picture card of Shivaji; I had it sent for in Mahabaleshwar. Beloved has not talked of any other historical

person, but He has told us many interesting facts about Shivaji and said he was not a common man.

Dear Bili, would you like to say a few lines of a Hindi song to Beloved? You could read it out to Him. Try to get used to the pronunciation first:

A-re pee-yer va gul-lay lega-voo.

Jug may jee-na tho-da ray.

Ned-dee-ya kinaray sa russ bolay.

Mai ja-noo bolay pee-ya mo-ra ray.

My fond love and a fond embrace to you.

Mehera

I practiced the above song (without the singing, of course) as best I could, not knowing the meaning of the words or the pronunciation, before I went to the Center. When the propitious moment seemed at hand, I read the lines to Baba, explaining that they had been sent by Mehera. Both Baba and the mandali looked as though I were speaking Chinese.

In a letter, dated July 7, 1958, I received the following message excerpted from a letter from Mehera:

On His return from the West, Baba told us how dear Bili responded perfectly to His Love, and this made us very happy. We Baba lovers are indeed very fortunate to love Him.

We read to Beloved Baba the amusing lines in your letter of how you read the Hindi song to Him. You should have seen Baba chuckle with amusement. He said it was exactly as Bili says. He did not understand one word, but He was much amused at the time. I am sure you liked the meaning of the song. We enjoyed seeing the beautiful Baba film. Baba pointed out you and many others whom we had not met before. Once you wore blue shorts and jacket which was very becoming. Dear Bili, Baba sends His love to you and wants you to be happy in His love.

Baba sent me the following direct order, dated June 21, 1958:

Dear Bili,

The following are the orders I mentioned I would send

between June 10th and July 10th:

For forty days, beginning from July 14th, 1958:

1) Repeat (audibly but softly) 1500 (fifteen hundred) times a day, at one sitting any one time during the 24 hours:

Beloved God, Thy will has come to pass in that all our Baba has declared will soon come to pass this year.

(When it is not found possible to do it at one sitting, may be done in two sittings.)

2) Give up one cherished item: i.e., some special food or drink, or smoking, etc.

I might send you one special instruction in October. You should not let the possibility of this interfere with your livelihood.

You should not cable or correspond with Me or Eruch until informed otherwise.

You should not write any inquiry to India in re to above orders.

Love
BABA

And then, in a communication dated September 14, 1958, I received the following:

Dear Bili,

This is the special instruction that I said I might send you in October.

On each of the following five nights of October: the 1st, 7th, 21st and 28th, repeat for one hour, from 12 p.m. to 1 a.m.,* the following:

Beloved God, Thou art the Soul of all souls.

(Signed) BABA from Seclusion

Acknowledge to Adi immediate receipt of this.

*i.e., 12 p.m. of 1st

12 p.m. of 7th and so on.

The years 1958 and 1959 were very difficult ones for me emotionally since I was still very painfully going through the throes of separation from David. But it seems that I was not the only one having a bad time, as the following communication indicates:

Letter to All Baba Gopies

Meherazad, September 15, 1958

Dear Ella, Energy, Filis, Adele, Bili, Beryl, Sylvia, Virginia,

I would have loved to reply to each letter separately, but it is Beloved's wish that we from here are not to circulate any news about Baba's great work in His seclusion. Therefore, I am writing this letter combined.

Dear Ella and all Baba's dear ones, just before 10th July, Baba ordered one of His close disciples at Dehra Dun to go to Hardwar and bring with him the Nilkanthwala *mast* to Meherazad to be near Baba in His seclusion. Enclosed is the account of the *mast* as stated by the disciple.

Dear Ella and all Baba's dear ones, as you know, since the middle of July, dear Baba has been in strict seclusion. All external activities have ceased as well as all correspondence with Him. That is, Baba has cut Himself off completely from all except the few who are with Him here in Meherazad (Pimpalgaon).

Baba said that, during these three months, it will be a difficult time for all His lovers, a test of their love and faith, and that all have been told that they should try their best to hold on to His *daaman*. Now more than ever keep your Divine Beloved constantly in your thoughts knowing that He is with you, and His love is guiding you always...

My love to you dear ones,

Lovingly in Baba,
Mehera

During a long period when Baba said we were not to write to Him or contact Him in any way, unless for an emergency, He did allow me to send Him a Valentine in addition to birthday greetings and Christmas greetings, which were allowed for

all. Mani wrote on March 22, 1962:

Hi, dear Bili,

I got this "billi" card and can't resist sending it to you with my love and the happy acknowledgment of your cable to your Valentine.¹⁰

He sends you His LOVE. Soon after I wrote you, your letter arrived giving that lovely description of His dancers' birthday evening at Bunty's. Margaret must have wished a whopper of a wish to have to blow three times! Or, perhaps she was just out of breath trying to think up a wish for the Wishless One!

Your other letter arrived, too. I know of Valentine's Day, though it's not observed here, I think. And I have a stack of Valentine cards I can't use, for the One I love is right here! How's that for a dilemma?

I think I'd said in one of the family letters once that birthday greetings could be sent to Him. Of course, Christmas is His birthday, too, and Valentine's a special greeting, too, so it's all right as long as not much "writing" is added in it or that would be a "letter"! But, if the card says what your heart wants to say, fine!...

Then, again, on April 8, 1962, Mani wrote:

Yes, Bili dear, I hereby confirm that you can "write" direct to Baba on Valentine's Day, His Birthday and Christmas, that is, if you don't write but just send a card with your love!

Baba's birthday fell during this "no-communication-unless-for-emergency" period, and I took His order literally and did not send Him a birthday greeting. Then, a letter arrived from Mani dated March 3, 1962, from Meherazad:

...this is an urgent letter, because the Sweetie Pie missed you this morning when I read out all the names of His dear ones of Monday Group gathered at John's signed on a beautiful greeting card sent by Beryl... This morning at breakfast, I showed it to Him, and He asked me to read out the names of all those who had signed (who had been present at the gathering). He missed your name and had me read out again. He then

asked if there had been a separate card or cable from you, and I had to say "no." So, here's your chance, Bili dear. You can send Him a cable direct with any message you want to in reply."

When I received the letter, I was nonplussed and went to Margaret Craske and told her what happened. "How can I answer this?" I asked. "I thought we really weren't to write at all." Margaret thought a minute then said, "Just say, 'Thought direct messages forbidden except emergency. Didn't think birthday emergency. But love not diminished.'"

And I sent the cable exactly like that but added, "Happy birthday to my Valentine."

CHAPTER SIX

For The Last Time

Correspondence continued with Baba through Mani until 1962, when we were all invited to India. We left New York on October 26th in a snowstorm and returned on November 11th. This was during the Chinese War against India, and we were not sure we would be allowed to take off. The only hitch on the way to India was that our plane was deflected from landing in Bombay and was rerouted to New Delhi because we were carrying diplomatic mail. Thirty-five hours after leaving New York, we arrived at Poona.

Being with Baba in India was quite different from being with Him in the United States. In India, He was less intimate with us—more remote, more God than man. I felt (as I discovered later some others felt, too) that He was ignoring me. Yet, His love was still evident. I sensed that the stage of wooing us, of coddling us had come to an end, and the discipline would begin.

Every day, when the gates of Guruprasad (the Maharani of Baroda's palace) were opened, we streamed in. As usual I was the first to rush in. Expecting Baba to be in His usual seat in the hall, on one occasion I almost ran over Him seated in the doorway. I had a big grin on my face at the prospect of seeing Him, but it was quickly wiped out at the sight of the suffering on His face and in His eyes. It gave me a shock impossible to describe.

The first day of our stay in India, we were to tour the historic sites of Baba's earlier years. I was in a grumpy mood because I just wanted to be with Baba whom we wouldn't see until the following day, and I didn't like going around in crowds. One stop was at Babajan's¹¹ tomb, and I was hardly in the right mood for it. As we filed into the tomb, I was quite suddenly assailed by a tremendous feeling of love. It was so strong that it quite took my breath away. It broke over me in waves, each succeeding wave being stronger than the previous one. They became so strong that I became frightened and ran out of the tomb and stood near the bus that had brought us on the tour. Gradually the feeling subsided. Being curious about this phenomenon, I went back to the tomb alone a few days later, but I felt nothing at all.

Another time, we were all seated under the *pandal* (a large tent erected for the *sahavas*) while Baba was receiving various groups. Baba remarked that it might rain. However, it had seemed as though Baba had made a joke because the sun was shining brightly in a cloudless blue sky. Within a few minutes, a heavy rain came tumbling down. It poured like a waterfall through the cotton *pandal* and, in a few seconds, we were drenched to the skin and our feet were in puddles. But no one moved. Then, as suddenly as it started, it stopped. Baba indicated that the Western women should go into the palace, and the women *mandali* made an archway with their hands for us to pass under as we went in. Once inside, we exchanged our clothes for those of the women *mandali*. They did their loving best to fit us out, but, unfortunately we were not all the same size. I received a cotton dress which was too large for me, and we all returned to our hotels looking rather comical in our ill-fitting new rig. The next day, the women *mandali* with their characteristic love and thoughtfulness had dried and pressed our clothes and returned them to us at our hotels.

On the very last morning, before we left Poona for Bombay and we had taken our last *darshan* of Baba, Baba was seated in His car at Bund Garden, waiting to be driven to Meherazad. There was a terrific crush of people such as one can see only in the Far East. One could have walked on their heads. The crowd was surrounding Baba's car, which was

trying to move, but couldn't because of the dense crowd. I was stuck right in the middle of the tightly packed mass with my arms pinned to my sides. The Westerners seemed to have disappeared, though they must have been somewhere around. It was a little frightening at first, but then I began to enjoy it, rocking in the crowd as it swayed from side to side like lava in a volcano. There was no hope of moving in any direction. Quite suddenly and unexpectedly, a path opened from me to Baba's car. At the same moment, an old woman with white hair and a white sari fell to the ground, I suppose, at the sudden parting of the crowd. I hesitated a moment when I saw her fall, but immediately some men helped her up and, before I knew what was happening, someone pushed me from behind and said, "Go!" I ran forward down the path. Baba had His hand on the back of the seat near the open window; I reached in, and our fingertips just touched. Then, off went the car in a burst of speed. This was my last physical contact with Baba.

I didn't know then that it was the last time I would see Him. When the dancers had had their audience with Baba as a group, He told them (I found out long after He dropped His body) that they would not see Him again. I had not gone in to see Baba with any group, but had gone in alone. This came about because I was no longer with the Monday Night Group and had not yet learned that Baba had put me with the dancers. When the time came for the groups to have their interviews with Baba, I was asking around trying to find out how I would get in to see Him. I did not consider myself as being with a group and understood that Baba was seeing only groups. One man said that if I didn't go in with his group, I couldn't go in at all. The dancers said I could go in with them, since I was one of them anyhow. Still thinking they had misunderstood Baba's suggestion that Margaret Craske and I see more of each other as my being in their group, I refused. Finally, I asked Mani about it, and she said to wait a minute and that she would see about it. She went into Baba's room and returned shortly, saying that I could see Baba alone.

For some years before this, I had begun to have quite a fascination for Baba's feet and still do. They were so beautiful. I also had had some correspondence with Mehera and Mani

about this fascination, and we all felt that I should take the very next opportunity to kiss them. I had missed my opportunity in 1958 when Baba visited the West because of shyness and so many people being present. But I thought this was the time and I decided to take the bull by the horns, other people being around or not. I also had a message from someone to give to Baba. When I was ushered in to Baba, I gave Him the message and then kissed His right toe and said, "Baba, that was for Mehera.' Then, with great restraint, I gently bit His left toe and said, "And this is for Mani." Needless to say, Baba looked rather astonished. I had no intention of biting His toe, and I don't know what came over me, but I guess I have a savage instinct. I suppose I wasn't called Baba's cat for nothing. Anyway, when I was with Baba, I was not responsible for my actions.

During the following seven years, correspondence continued with Mehera and Mani, though less often than before. About two years before Baba dropped His body, I sent an article entitled "Is There a God?" to Baba, which I had cut out of the *Ladies' Home Journal*, June 1967. The article was written by Malcolm Muggeridge. Baba had asked Eruch to read out "something of interest" to Him from a paper or magazine, and Eruch read Mr. Muggeridge's article. Mani reported that Baba liked it very much. He instructed Mani to write and tell me to send Mr. Muggeridge copies of *God Speaks*, *The Everything* and *The Nothing*, and *Stay With God*. They were to be sent, not from Baba, but from me. I immediately wrote to Mr. Muggeridge as follows:

"After having read "Is There a God?" in the *Ladies' Home Journal*, June 1967, I thought you might find interesting some books I have mailed to you by and concerning Meher Baba. Please do not misunderstand. This is not some sort of trick whereby you will be billed later for the books. They are yours.

"I hope you will find as much good meat in them as I did."

I sent the books and informed Baba what I had done by cable: "MISSION ACCOMPLISHED."

I received a letter of thanks from Mr. Muggeridge who said he would read the books. I then sent Baba a copy of Mr.

Muggeridge's letter. I often wondered why Baba had me send those books. I knew that everything He did had a good reason and had a profound and far-reaching effect, somewhere, somehow. Two years went by before I found out what, at least in part, it was. Reading the January 25, 1969, copy of *Divya Vani*, an article by Delia DeLeon contained the information that, in order to attract more young people to Baba, the English group decided to invite Dr. Allan Cohen to come to England and speak to them. This was done, and Dr. Cohen arrived on September 11, 1968. On the day that Dr. Cohen arrived in England, the B.B.C. had called Delia saying they'd like to have Allan appear on Sunday on a TV religious program, "Why?" hosted by Malcolm Muggeridge. It was through this program that Baba's name was mentioned on TV for the first time in England. Delia stated further: "We cannot really yet see fully the repercussions or results of his visit, but that it was fruitful there is no doubt; for Baba was with him all the way."

Apparently, Baba had softened up Malcolm Muggeridge, making the way sure for Dr. Cohen. There may have been other things going on, too, at that time which may have brought the event about, but I am not privy to them. In any event, this is another example of how Baba works quietly behind the scenes, clearing the way for His workers.

It is only my own opinion, but I think the reason that Baba rarely lets us know what we're doing or why is because, if we knew, our egos would get in the way. It would perhaps not only hinder the work, but also earn us another sanskara of pride in ourselves. Since I learned about the incidental part I played in the Muggeridge affair two years after it occurred, I hadn't a chance to feel egoistical about it. First, I had to read all about what Baba, Dr. Cohen and Mr. Muggeridge had done before I discovered the insignificant part I had played and, what's more, didn't even know I was playing. Anyone else could have done it just as well, but I had the good luck to thicken the love cable just a little bit more between Baba and me by obeying Him in this small way.

To illustrate how "asleep" I was in the days of my contacts with Baba and during the time He was still with us physically,

I had received much evidence of Baba's love and concern for me. I was aware of it, but it took some years to really digest it. If someone had asked me if Baba ever mentioned my name or written to me without my first contacting Him in some way, I would have said, "Never." It was only after reading through some old letters twelve years after Baba dropped His body that I was able to assimilate in a deeper way His unfathomable love, as the following excerpts from letters I received from Mani illustrate:

July 29, 1959

This doesn't mean I'm seeing double except, perhaps, that I dreamt of you a few days ago. (We were by the fountain where pigeons were bathing, watching Beloved walk down the path toward us.) Also, yesterday, He asked whether Mehera or I had heard from you. So, this brings "double" love for all the fond thoughts that were sent your way, only not spoken via the ordinary post.

July 26, 1962

It made the Beloved very happy to hear your name read out in the list of Novemberites Meherjee sent us as having so far received. Just two days before that He had spoken of you and whether I thought you would be making it!¹² He sends His love to you, dear Bili. And Mehera and I are looking forward to the long-delayed treat of meeting you in person and embracing you.

Mani also recounted in the same letter the following amusing incident regarding the silence¹³ and it made me feel better about some of my own lapses in keeping the silence orders:

I guess you observed fast instead of silence, but I could be guessing wrong. I still can't make up my mind whether my slip of the tongue is considered to be "breaking the silence." because I talked to a bird on the tree, in bird language! I kept on tweet-tweeting in answer to its call at least for a full minute. Anyway, it gave Baba a big smile next morning when I related it. And Mehera talked to our dog Mastan, but it wasn't in dog language.

February 8, 1964

And now, here is the best part (which is why I've saved it for the last): Beloved Baba sends His love to you, His dear Bili, and says, "Be happy and remember that you are dear to Me."

The following two communications were obviously in reply to my writing to Him.

Guruprasad, Poona, April 5, 1965

Your Christmas card to the Beautiful One was the toppest of the top. And your own verse in it surpassed any poet! Baba sends His love to you, His very own Bili. Your cable, too, brought a wave of love into the Ocean that He is!

Meherazad, December 4, 1965

The Beautiful One was most touched by your beautiful letter. He said, "When you write to Bili, tell her that her love makes Me very happy. I send my love to her. It is always with her."

Meherazad, March 1, 1967

I give My love blessing to you, My Bili, I am with you. I am happy with your love.

This was my last message from Baba.

I will not say much about the time when Baba dropped His body on January 31, 1969. There are hardly any words that can describe the devastating effect this had on His lovers. I, for one, was stunned when Margaret Craske told me. We had been to dinner together the night that Margaret received the news. Usually, when I had been with Margaret, I felt very cheerful and uplifted. But, this night at dinner, I felt very depressed and could not imagine why this was so because invariably, a chat with Margaret was a pick-me-up. After she had called me the next morning to give me the sad news, I felt as though I had been turned to stone. Within a few minutes, Tex Hightower, one of the dancers, telephoned and asked simply: "Is it true?" "Yes, I guess it is," was all I could manage to say. There was a dead silence for at least a full minute. Then Tex said, "Well, I guess there's nothing to say." And he hung up. There seemed nothing we could do to comfort each other. I had a dinner appointment that night, and it was the last thing I wanted to

attend. I also knew that Margaret was to be at the Winterfeldts' later that evening. I longed to be with someone who had known Baba. Yet, I knew that Baba wouldn't have wanted me to have so little consideration for my dinner hosts as to cancel out at the last minute. So, I went to the dinner and explained to my hostess what had happened. I asked her if she minded if I left after dinner and did not stay for the evening. She said she understood; she knew my devotion to Baba, although she was not a devotee herself. I still couldn't believe that what Margaret had told me was true. I didn't cry; I was stony and frozen. I took a taxi to the Winterfeldts' and, when I walked into the living room and saw Margaret sitting on the sofa, the reality of it all flooded over me, and the dam broke. I rushed over to Margaret, flung myself on her and cried all over her, saying, "It can't be true! It can't be true!" And Margaret replied, "I'm afraid it is." Poor Margaret! She had enough grief of her own without mine on top of it. But this does not begin to describe the feeling of desolation that lasted for so long. I did not go to the Center in South Carolina for 13 years after I was last there with Baba in 1958. I had never been there without Baba, and I just couldn't face seeing the place again without Him. Finally, in 1971, persuaded by several Baba lovers, I took a chance and went. The lingering atmosphere of Baba still pervaded the place, and I believe my grief at Baba's passing began to be assuaged at that time. At least that first wild grief is gone, but I don't think I will ever be reconciled to the loss of Baba's beautiful form. After Baba, what can the world offer of any great moment?

I found, however, that He is still working intensely, or, at least, the results of His work are still being felt. I was put up in the Guest House on one of my visits in the 1970s, and another person was there whom I used to avoid whenever possible. She had never done me any harm and was a kind person. Still, she drove me up the wall. When I learned that she was to stay in the same house with me, I groaned inwardly. However, the first morning of my stay, she and I and a couple of other women were in the living room together and, quite suddenly, without any warning whatsoever, I felt as though a physical hand had passed over my mind erasing all previous negative feelings

and dislikes. The change was quite definite and complete. This does not mean that I don't see the faults (such as we all have) in her as before, but now they don't matter and they don't disturb me. This happened without any effort on my part whatsoever to overcome my dislike. I felt a great love for this person, a love that I feel to this day.

Just as I could not bring myself to go to the Center for so many years, I could not bring myself to go to India either after Baba dropped His body. I was used to Baba being "there" and me being "here." To know He was "there" was comforting, even if I wasn't with Him. There was always hope. Although, after He dropped His body, I knew He wasn't physically "there" any more, irrationally I didn't want to see that He wasn't "there." But emotions aren't rational. Needless to say, I didn't want to go to the Last *Darshan*.¹⁴ Not only did I construe Baba's dropping of His body as a cancellation of the *Darshan*, I didn't want to face *not* seeing Him in India. Finally, however, in 1979, I screwed up the courage to go. I visited the tomb alone and felt I had come home at last. On leaving the tomb, I broke down and wept all over the poor man who was on duty there. He was very kind and allowed me to dampen his shoulder without seeming to resent it.

Then came the day of Baba's *arti*. Here, I must explain two things in order to make the following intelligible.

First, on the way to India, I had been complaining to my travelling companion about how much I disapproved of rites, rituals and ceremonies which, I thought, stood between God and man, and also how I couldn't understand the relatively recent penchant some Baba followers had for giving out *prasad*. I had received *prasad* only from Baba and saw no reason to make any change—either in giving or receiving it—and so on, and so on.

Second, as many couples have done and probably still do, I and a great love in my life (long before Baba) had a song which we called "ours." It was "Begin the Beguine." This was always associated with my love of that time. However, when I met Baba, I began to associate the song with Him since He liked the song and, in my mind, it became "our"-Baba's and my—song.

My experience of Baba's *arti* when in India in 1962 was that a tray of flaming camphor was waved in front of Him while the *arti* was sung. I expected the same ceremony would occur again in 1979. On the day the *arti* was to be performed, as Mehera and the women mandali entered the tomb, I thought they would perform the *arti* as I remembered it and that would be that. I was standing just outside the door of the tomb prepared to watch when one of the women mandali motioned me to come inside. So, I went inside carrying my big, black, heavy shoulder bag stuffed with passport, travelers checks, money, etc. In a few moments, Mehera motioned to me to step up on the opposite side of the tomb from her. This was totally unexpected and, from here on, it was a typical Baba-inspired-Groucho Marx situation. And I believe Baba was having His fun with me despite the seriousness of the occasion. Not expecting to participate in the ceremony, I had no idea of what I was to do. But I soon learned that I was to help Mehera lay the blanket of flowers over the tomb. I was looking frantically for a safe place to put my heavy bag so it would be out of everyone's way when, suddenly, one of the women mandali grabbed it and flung it into the corner, traveler's checks, passport and all. I got through the laying of the blanket, feeling all thumbs. Then, Mehera motioned to me to lay a wreath over Baba's picture. It took me quite a while to interpret what she wanted, and I knew I was being clumsy and inept. But that was not all; I was to go over to Mehera's side of the tomb and spray perfume over the flowers. Never had I felt so incapable and stupid. Baba was really having His fun with me. Finally, Mani signalled me to stand in my original spot just inside the tomb. So, I collected my big bag from the corner, thinking my part in the ceremony was over and took my place. Then, each of the women mandali began to take turns in bowing down to Baba, touching her head to the floor and offering a flower. After all had finished, Mani indicated that it was my turn to bow down also. Once again, someone grabbed my bag and flung it into a corner. However, as I was about to advance and bow down there came a moment that is typical of Baba-timing. If the following event had not occurred at the exact time that it did, I would not have recognized

Baba's loving denouement to His mischievous playing with me. Quite unexpectedly, a little boy of about six or seven streaked into the tomb and bowed his head to the floor, offering a flower. When he retired, Mani again indicated that I should take my turn. But, immediately, another little boy ran in and repeated the first boy's performance. Finally, my turn really came and, just as my forehead touched the floor—at the precise moment—the first strains of "Begin the Beguine" sounded from the guitars (which up until then had been silent) outside the tomb.

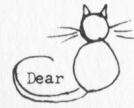
After I left the tomb, I was immediately handed a box of *prasad* and asked to hand it out. Whoever gave it to me disappeared on the spot, and I had no chance to protest. What could I do? Baba always admonished us not to make other people feel bad if we could help it, so I couldn't make a fuss by trying to get someone else to hand out the *prasad*. So, here I was in the unenviable position of handing out *prasad* (which I had sworn I would never do), but, what was worse, I was also to hand it out to the mandali which I felt was rather presumptuous on my part. But I had no choice, and there was my travelling companion, to whom I had complained so bitterly about the handing out of *prasad*, watching me. In the back of my mind I had hoped the mandali would not accept it and justify my feelings about giving out *prasad*, but they did. After the mandali, others took it, but one boy took it with a questioning look on his face. Finally, one woman took hers and said, "You're supposed to give two." I had been giving one. Well, I had always received one from Baba, and I didn't see the reason to give two. However, I started to give two and, no doubt, many feelings were assuaged. And, as a result, I was made a little more pliant and tolerant.

I do think there was a reason for things happening the way they did at the tomb. Since then, I have not felt so bereft. I still miss Baba very much, and I suppose it will never be different. True, it is attachment to His form, but what a Divine form! Of course, it is also true that if I hadn't responded to His love and become attached to Him as God, then the attachment to His form would not have been possible.

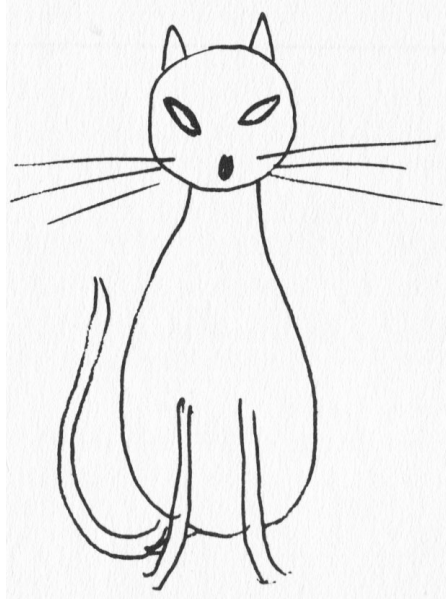
It is difficult to explain, but Baba now seems to be with me

wherever I am and to be more accessible. It is vastly different from the limbo I lived in between the time He dropped His body and the experience at the tomb.

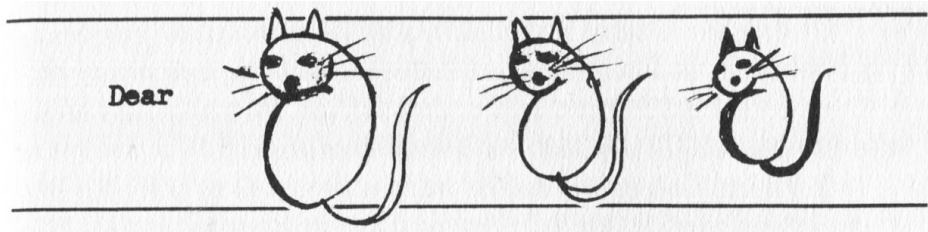
PART TWO



Operation Topsy



This drawing and the ones that follow, drawn by Mani S. Irani, were used by her in letters to Bili Eaton since Bili means "cat" in Hindi.



Operation Topsy was a series of letters sent by me to group heads around the United States containing information provided by Mani for dissemination. It received its name because, like Topsy in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, it "just grew." In a way, it was the forerunner of the Family Letters,¹⁵ but, in addition to carrying news from India to the United States, Operation Topsy carried news from the United States to India. Some of the letters originating in the U.S. contained questions such as "What does Baba's Circle consist of?" to which Baba provided the answer for *The Awakener* magazine.

The growth of Operation Topsy was unplanned and gradual and had its origins in 1952 when I wrote my first letter to India. Naturally, others were writing to India also and receiving replies and we would eagerly read these replies to each other, since we were all impatient to hear news about Baba. Then we began to ask each other for copies of our letters. Gradually, more and more people began to ask for copies of my letters until I was unable to keep up with the demand, and Baba agreed that I should send my letters only to group heads so they could relay the information to their own groups and to acquaintances interested in Baba. Those receiving this information would write to me and I, in turn, would pass their thoughts, as well as my own, on to Mani. It developed into a sort of international conversation.

Operation Topsy lasted in its full-blown state for about a year, ending in December of 1956. Following are many of the letters I received from India and which formed the basis for the Operation Topsy letters I sent to others.

My first letter to India was addressed to Adi K. Irani, dated October 28, 1952. In reply, Adi addressed me as "Dear Billie Eaton," and in future replies up until the end of 1954 as "My dear Eaton" or "Dear M. B. Eaton," thinking I was a man because of the name "Billie." I thought this form of address odd at the time, but attributed it to what I thought might be the Indian way of addressing someone in writing. Consequently, I did not disabuse Adi on this point. Mani's letter of April 18, 1955, illustrates some of the confusion my name caused. The letter also is a reply to my letter to Mani about Baba's Circle:

Dear Billie:

I have often thought about you since reading your name in the cable of love sent by the dear ones of Baba's group and, just at first (misled by the sound of your name), thought you were a boy! Anyway, Billie, I'm most happy to know you and to welcome you as one of Baba's close and dear ones. Apart from the bond of your deep love for Him that I can feel, there is another little one—typing¹⁶ (as I hear you, too, do a lot of it in His work). I was surprised to get your letter soon after I had started worrying over the very question you have raised, and this had, fortunately, brought to a head another controversial point discussed between Irene Conybeare and myself for some time, with, I'm afraid, little help from me, as I am incompetent to answer these technical points, and Baba for quite some time (since just before the New Life, except to dictate about *God Speaks*, which was only to Eruch) has been most reluctant to answer any questions on spiritual subjects. But, as I said, your letter has brought to a head the whole point about the Circle that I told Baba I knew little about, and Baba has agreed to clear it up and explain in a few days just before He will retire into strict seclusion in May. (I believe it will be a separate house and only Eruch will be allowed to be with Him.) So, I shall type down the notes and send it to Phyllis¹⁷ (Filis) as soon as I get them from Baba.

Now, to clear up about Irene's book. I wrote to Adele that the book has Baba's consent and approval—I meant the writing and publishing, etc.; it was with Baba's entire sanction. But that does not mean that Baba has checked the whole of the writing in it or anything like that. We received the first copy of the book, and one of the mandali (Ramjoo) was asked to go through it and make any corrections he thought were necessary for the second edition. Ramjoo made notes of certain points which he discussed with Eruch and the points they both agreed on were then discussed with me. Then, from that, what I thought must have Baba's O.K. before it was finally passed on to Irene, I asked Baba about mainly the point concerning "Do Sadgurus incarnate again?" (i.e. come down in another body) and Baba definitely said "No." Baba meant that in the general sense and (especially as now He does not use the board) did not elaborate on the point. Therefore, that is mainly the extent of Baba's "corrections" on the book—chiefly a "yes" or a "no" when I put some questions for Ramjoo. Actually, I hadn't read the book (still haven't, as a matter of fact, for the one copy was mostly with Ramjoo). I glanced at it and read there were only six women in the Circle, and it worried me faintly, and I specially made a point of asking Ramjoo if he was sure it was so. He said he was not and that he really didn't know. When I asked Baba, darling Baba as usual when asked such questions, gestured to say His head was aching from His morning's work and He wanted to relax, and, besides, how could He explain all these details without the board? Poor Baba, experiencing it all as illusion, it must be to Him like coming home from work and being pestered by the children to tell them a story. Yet, what can we do but go to the Source when we are in doubt?

Also, the question of the number of women in the Circle has brought up another point which the explanation will clear up: apart from the Sadgurus that never come back once they leave the body, does the same Circle come with the Avatar every time?

You see, in the old days, Baba used to explain spiritual points in detail to the men, and I was under the impression much of it has been printed before, but now, nobody seems to

know for certain. To us women, Baba's way has been: "These things are really of no importance... most important is to love Me and obey Me." Mostly, our "meditation" was remembering the numerous little "Baba's orders," the individual dos and don'ts that kept one's thoughts constantly engrossed in Baba and certainly kept us busy. (Life with Baba is, as a rule.)

Although, personally, I have found it enough to know and absorb the facts of God and Creation in the broad sense (as given by Baba in the comprehensive charts, "Divine Theme"), as an artist puts a tree on canvas, capturing the essence and beauty of it without figuring out each leaf, I quite agree that (as these things are bound to crop up) there must be the least possible division of opinion as regards these interesting details. So, I am very happy Baba has at least agreed to explain to us (as much as can be done without the use of the alphabet board) about the Circle, and very glad you brought it up from your end.

Mani wrote again on May 4, 1955:

Dear Billie:

Your letter came astonishingly quickly—in four days! Yet, sometimes, a letter from there takes as many as nine days to reach us. I'm glad it came in time though, for Baba hadn't gone into His seclusion, and I told Him about your check, and that brought round the talk to all you dear ones.

Baba explained about the Circle, and I will be sending it to Filis in a few days with my letter. He wishes it to be put in *The Awakener* (not in *God Speaks* or other books). It was such a slow and tedious job explaining without His board, but, when I reminded Him how happy it would make everyone, He gave His loving smile. He even had a diagram made of the Ten Circles to make the numbers in each one clearer. I've read it, and learnt much. Adi said Baba had explained all this in the very beginning of their stay with Baba in Manzil-e-Meem in 1922, but, since then, does not remember hearing about it from Baba.

I wrote about Baba's going into seclusion on the first, and other news in my letter of yesterday to Adele, so I won't repeat that again. You must have received by now the latest circular

from Baba regarding His seclusion. On the 24th, a small gathering of disciples met at Satara to receive instructions for the coming three months. (I forgot this is May. I mean, 'til the end of July.) After the gathering dispersed in the evening, there was (as we have noticed is usual after some special work of Baba's has been completed successfully) an unexpected but wonderful shower of rain. The effect next morning was most refreshing, with a lovely assortment of birds hopping and singing among the *golmohr* and *champa* which are out in their full glory. The *golmohr* is a big feathery leafed tree that blossoms out thickly in bright red flowers and, like the white *champa*, now has not a single leaf to detract from its rich beauty. I took a picture of Baba standing by the honeysuckle vine and some lovely indoor shots just before He went into seclusion. I do hope they'll come out clear.

A recent experience is still fresh in my mind which I think you will like to share. As you know, Baba did not see people all these days (since September and even before) except on specially fixed *darshan* days. A few days ago, two men came to the gate and wanted to see Baba. As Goher wasn't there, Baba sent me out to make inquiries. They had come from Dehra Dun for the sole purpose of seeing Baba; they had never seen Baba before. When I told them Baba would not see anybody but that they were to take His love with them and return happy, they were tongue-tied and on the point of tears. Then, one opened a zip bag and produced a bottle of Ganges water that they wished to pour on Baba's feet and some fruit as offering. Then, with trembling fingers, he produced from his pocket some rose petals that he wanted Baba to have. When I gave Baba the petals, He said He would stand on the verandah, and the two could see Him from a distance, from the gate. That message overwhelmed them, and they could not speak, but there was a wealth of emotion in their eyes. They came to the gate, and one of them kept pleading, "You must tell me where Baba is. My sight is not so good; I might miss Him." Then, suddenly, Baba appeared on the verandah with His smile and His hand raised in greeting and blessing. At first, they were looking at another part of the house until I pointed to where Baba was standing. Then they saw; their beings seemed to light up; a loud cry of

"Baba" escaped them and, oblivious of the people on the road or of any of us in the compound, they sobbed like children. When Baba came in, they were on their knees, still crying with love and joy.

And now that you have come into proper focus,¹⁸ (first stage: I thought you were a boy; second stage: I thought you were a child.) Now that I know better who I am sending it to, I send much love to you. Incidentally, in the Indian language (at least, in Hindustani) "Billie" means a cat, literally, not figuratively; only it is pronounced with an emphasis on the "l," *Bill-lee*. So, I also send a purring little caress.

On May 22, 1955, Mani wrote:

Dear Bili:

I loved reading your "mad" letter. It strikes a most familiar chord in me who would rather have that than any old depressing "sanity." I suppose that's where the expression "madly happy" or "madly in love" comes from. Baba must love the mad, too, or He wouldn't have picked some of us. Besides, of all the advanced "saints" and "*saliks*," He loves the *masts* most, the *mast* whose salient characteristic differs from the conscious seeker of the Path in that he experiences sheer, uttermost, overwhelming love for God. Long live such madness!

I'm ever so glad you send Baba news to the Shaws as well. We have very fond remembrances of Jeanne and her girls. Please send our love as well.

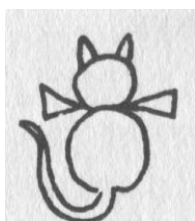
I wrote the latest Baba news in my letter of yesterday to Beryl. Whenever we went over to Baba, I could not help thinking of you all. This is not meant for a figure of speech but that's what happened. As I would lower myself gingerly into the rickety chair (the one extra chair) and gaze up at Him "talking" to Mehera, you would all file past in my thoughts, perhaps because I had just written you letters or just read your letters, or perhaps for just no reason at all—except your love.

I see that (besides you and Adele) Ann and Michael Kohanow are assistant editors ...¹⁹

I think you must have typed Kitty's diary that we are going through. I'm afraid we've been making quite a number of alterations in words, some corrections and deletions. But, as

I'll be typing all changes in blue, it will be easier for you to follow when (I assume) you will be typing the whole thing over again. As I told Filis, a thing like this is much nicer in installments, and with the Nasik portion that hasn't come yet the lot can be given in three issues... Hope Filis is sending the Nasik portion soon, so that should come first, and hope it is not too late in returning it for the summer number.

Mani



June 7, 1955

Dear

There's been a flash of sudden news, and I was wondering which of you to address it to when I got your loving letter and that's solved the problem. I think, Bili, I'm the papa bird that fetches the worm, but the mama bird that takes care that none of the family goes hungry is you. So, here's a nice juicy one for the precious brood:

Baba is going into strict seclusion at Jal Villa from tomorrow for 14 days—from the 8th to the 21st—*now* instead of in July as He had at first intended.

On the 1st and again on the 4th, Baba went for a trip by car with a few of the mandali, first to Hubli (down south, over 200 miles from here) and, the next time, to a place called Savantwadi. They were His usual nonstop (and all night) drives—stopping only for a few minutes to contact some *mast* or have some hurried refreshment. The poor mandali, and especially Eruch who was driving, had a hard time keeping awake! These marathon drives are getting to be quite the regular schedule on Baba's work trips. I remember one from Dehra Dun; it was just such a nonstop drive for nearly 40 hours. No wonder Baba and the men look fagged out when they return.

This time, while He is at Jal Villa, Mehera and I won't be allowed to see Him as before. The newspapers will pile up during His absence to be read on His return, for, during these complete seclusions, no papers are read out.

Although, while Baba was with us He did not go over to the mandali's, He would sometimes go in the mornings for a

walk with a couple of the men and, of course, Peter (our Cocker) who would come home looking a mess after wallowing in some muddy pool.

Ivy says, when she got the lines from you regarding the Circles, she was puzzled over the last line which said: "The Avataric cycle is one hundred years." I looked it up but cannot find such a line. Anyway, I have explained to her as follows:

It is quite incorrect to say an Avataric cycle is one hundred years. In Baba's explanation of the Circle, it says:

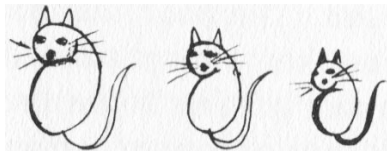
"All the fourteen members of the Avatar's Inner Circle realize God by the grace of the Avatar during the same Avataric *period*, which is of one hundred years' duration after the Manifestation of the Avatar on earth."

The Avataric *period* has nothing to do with the *cycle*. Please have that clear. The 100 years after the Manifestation of the Avatar is the period encompassing the direct living and personal radiation of the Avatar.

I loved reading how you first realized His love. It's wonderful how the Beloved draws His own unto Himself. As for the tears, how often have we witnessed the overflow of His love. As Ivy said to one of Margaret's girls²⁰ in Myrtle Beach, "He just turns the faucet on."

Yes, *dear* Filis, I often think of how she must work for *The Awakener*, and I'm afraid I've given her much more work by editing Kitty's diary too freely...

Mani



Dear

July 7, 1955

I noted your first question about the immediate reincarnation of the mandali members. Will keep that with any more that you send. Those I can answer (from memory of Baba's previous explanations we may have had on that) or glean from some of the other mandali, I will be most happy to. Where I'm not competent to help or hazard an opinion (which can have little value unless corroborated by Baba), I'll keep them aside, so that, some day, when the right opportunity arises, I will get the answer from the Source Himself. For, although Baba

repeatedly says these things cannot truly be grasped through the intellect, He brings the highest down to us in the simplest of language to at least satisfy our curiosity, like Avatar Ram's mother who brought the moon down to her child. Do you know the story? Once, when Ram was a child, he cried for the moon. Nothing else would satisfy him. He kept pointing at the moon and crying with all his heart. The mother (Queen Kaushaliya) at last found a wonderful way of satisfying her son. She placed on the ground a big silver dish full of water and in it was reflected the bright moon. Needless to say, the little fellow was delighted.

Since the 4th, Baba eats once a day and works with Kaikobad every morning from one to two hours. He goes for a walk every morning with a couple of the mandali (and umbrellas and raincoats), even when it is pouring! I've been working on an article, "The Die Is Cast," from notes and comments by two of the mandali about the gathering on 24th April, which Baba wishes sent to all. (I am today posting copy to Elizabeth (Patterson) as usual to print and distribute to all.) Baba's discourses in it are as beautiful as ever. I love the part where God, having asked "Who am I?" has to go through various experiments (or experiences) of "Who am I not?" He says, "It is through the vacillating experience of 'I am not stone,' 'I am not this,' 'I am not that' that the soul eventually arrives at the only correct answer, 'I am God.'"

I promised Filis to give the rest about the Veena story in my letter to you. So, here goes: Veena is the daughter of a retired Civil Engineer. She and her sister (who had a tragic experience in life) both love Baba, as does the father. They're a clever family. She met Baba in Andhra during His mass *darshan* tour. Soon after, when we were in Dehra Dun, we heard that one of the sisters (i.e. Veena) was behaving strangely and had changed completely from her normal active social self. She scarcely spoke or ate, kept to herself and would sit for hours with a rapt expression on her face. The only time she "came to life" was when they recited the *arti* before Baba's picture. Then she would participate and stand before Baba's picture with joined hands. Some days after we heard this, Baba had the father bring her to Dehra Dun. She has a dark

complexion, is petite, gentle and graceful, has a sweet, piquant face. She would look at Baba with such a happy lighted smile, speak little and only when pressed for an answer, and would be reluctant to eat anything until Baba fed her a little and then told her to eat some more. At times, her face would suddenly light up; sometimes she would point vaguely at "nothing" or make a gesture before her face as if she were removing a cobweb. Next day, Baba sent her home with the father with special instructions about her. We heard nothing further until about a month ago. Now she has changed still more. She goes from house to house—anybody's house she feels like, making no distinction whatever about whose house it is. Some understand, others don't. Friends fearing someone may take advantage of the girl's state, tell the father to have her put away in a mental home. He wrote to Eruch that he just could not do that, for he knew Veena's state of mind was not from material causes and had been convinced beyond doubt since his experience one night. He sleeps in the same room as his daughter. Even in daytime he lovingly guards her as much as he can and knows Baba is with her always. He woke from deep sleep to find the room unnaturally bright. Looking toward Veena's bed, he found it empty. Then he saw, in a corner of the room, Baba standing before the kneeling figure of Veena. When he recovered from his dazed stupor, the father, too, went forward to have Baba's *darshan* and stood waiting his turn. Veena must have felt someone was behind her, for she raised her head from His feet and turned to look around. At that the vision disappeared.

Mani's letter of August 17, 1955, had a lot of "meat" in it for hungry Baba lovers:

Dear (drawing of three cats)

Although I did the bili²¹ on the spur of the moment, if I were a psychologist, I would have interpreted this sketch as expressing my hidden thought, hoping and wishing you are settled snugly in your new apartment. Have you? I love reading at mealtimes a short detective story, jokes, *Reader's Digest*, or a Ripley, or my mail, and your letter was relished

with a nice hot cup of tea, a plain omelette and my favorite chutney. And I was very happy to read your letter which convinced me you are happy, and corroborated by some lines in Beryl's letter to me.

Yes, we have so much to be happy about, for we love Him and He loves us! Isn't that what Baba means when He says, "Just stick to Me. It doesn't matter what you are." Because you can't stick to Baba unless you love Him. That is the only connection you can have with Him—the only connection He wants. You say, "But how may one stick to Him if one is a sinner?" Goodness for its own sake is a dry thing and stands on the strength of its own isolated merit. But goodness which is automatically the outcome of love, has the strength that withstands all, that sacrifices all and considers the world well lost for His love. There can be goodness without love, but there is no true love without goodness, for God is Love. So you see now what stern stuff you are made of?

Only a couple of days ago, I came across an introduction in a Gujarati book on Upasni Maharaj by a childhood friend and disciple of Meher Baba, and I want to tell you about an incident in it which also applies to your crisis;²² for, although Baba does not outwardly reveal His All-knowing Self to us, He sometimes has to do so. The incident was written in 1924 by this boyhood friend of Baba who confesses himself to have been a contemptible sinner of the worst type. During his service in the first World War, he had to undergo the penalty of a year-and-a-half in jail. After that, he was openly abandoned by his family and friends and avoided like the plague by anyone who wanted to keep his own name clean. Desperate in his misery, he contemplated suicide and made all preparations. Only a few hours before the fixed time, a messenger came from Baba to say X was wanted at the toddy shop where Baba was. That brought a wave of love in his miserable heart, and he lied, "I will come later." The messenger would not go, said he had been given strict instructions to "bring you along with me." So X, thinking there was enough time and how nice it would be to see his Friend before the end, went along. As he neared the shop, Baba came out and, running toward him with open arms, embraced and kissed him, regardless of the people on the road

and in the shop. X says, "Did I, who could not evoke love in my own mother, deserve such Jove? This love that filled the void of my heart which was only used to having lust, misery and deceit as its tenants. He only let me go with my promise to return on the morrow. I went home with tears of love and joy, all thoughts of suicide forgotten. I am now His devoted disciple, and He has shown me that true happiness is in giving, in control, and sacrifice of desires. With the alchemy of His love, He has transformed me."

Now the latest news: (Please, Bili dear, send a copy of it to Elinorkit.²³ I wrote them just on Monday, and this will save another letter so I can get on with Kitty's diary.) Baba went to Bombay on the 13th and, although He goes there not infrequently, this was a red letter day for, at long last, Baba lovers were allowed to come and see Him. Baba seemed to have stepped from one interminable seclusion into another, and Bombay had so many new ones eagerly awaiting the opportunity with the rest of the groups. "We're so happy we don't know what to do," said one in her letter. Baba returned from this *darshan* visit on the 15th. I had written to Elinorkit and others that more than 300 were expected to come. Well, over 700 did—a distinct city crowd of Baba lovers—Hindus, Mohammedans, with Zoroastrians predominating. Although the house of the disciple²⁴ where the *darshan* took place was small, it was a most loving and touching meeting between Master and lovers amidst the usual tears, smiles and kisses. Although the latter was not on the agenda, an Irani woman started it (as Baba amusedly told us afterwards). The motherly soul planted loud kisses on Baba's cheeks, forehead and face. It was the needed signal for the others who hadn't yet dared (because of the recent seclusion and the restrictions) and immediately the crowd broke forward, and, soon, poor Baba was smothered in kisses from each—men, women and children. The flower garlands (that Eruch usually removes from Baba's neck to make room for more) piled fast toward the ceiling. Baba told us of one man, a Hindu, a big man, dressed Western style. He tossed his felt hat away, kissed Baba soul-satisfyingly, stood back, raised his hand to command silence and made a heartfelt little spontaneous speech of some few sentences, saying that

there before them all was the ONE and ONLY—the Avatar· actually in their midst where they could touch Him, etc. At the end of his speech, overcome with emotion, he prostrated fully before Baba. There were many other little incidents no doubt. If I had been present, I could have written much more, but, later, Baba seemed tired from the long nonstop *darshan* hours and the tiring two-way journey. How Baba changes at such gatherings, how beautiful, how tireless, radiating His Divine Self, and Love! Even Baba remarks on that. He told us yesterday, "They kept repeating over and over again how beautiful I looked." Yes, at times like these, He lifts from Himself the tiniest bit of the veil that hides Him from us so that we lose ourselves completely in the beauty and love of Him, worshipping Him with the utmost gratitude and depth of our hearts.

Hope to be writing to F'ilis-Beryl tomorrow. Always have so much to discuss with Filis, but that's what comes of her being the editor. Hope you find the right apartment.²⁵ You're probably so busy with that and here I'm piling work on you, but I needed such a blessing as a co-secretary. It eases my correspondence list and my conscience, as the others share His news.

Satara, September 2, 1955

Dear Bili:

To love Baba is no joke. Biographies and autobiographies of the mystics of the past speak volumes on this Love, Love that brings no peace until, consumed in its own Divine fire, it realizes eternal bliss. Contradictions are bound to appear when the Reality of the Beloved is spoken in terms of duality. Imagination breeds contradictions. Cessation of imagination brings an end to contradictions, brings the realization of the experience of the Infinity of God; duality is transcended and Oneness is established in union with the Beloved. God is realized consciously the instant imagination stops completely. Until then, the lover can never be in peace; he experiences separation from his Beloved; imagination plays havoc with the self of the lover; he is sick, yet never dies; he "burns," yet feels ever fresh, feels extremely unworthy, yet realizes the infinite

worth in his Beloved. He strives to become the dust of the Beloved's feet, yet is dazzled by his own love; he sips, yet cannot gulp. These contradictions are constant experiences of the true lovers of God. These experiences wear out as imagination wears out and then stability, equilibrium is maintained...

On the spiritual path, it is always said that, in the course of his progress, the sincere aspirant does not stop to think twice. He has to jump, blindfolded, unmindful of consequences.

Shallowness? Depth? Baba can never want us to resist Him. He wants us to lose ourselves in the Beloved, through the spiritual plunge. We cannot lose ourselves; it is the only way to find our Self.

I...received your air letter, Bili dear (and the little picture) and loved reading your significant dreams! You lucky cat, after that, you couldn't doubt a moment that Baba loves you and that you are one of His very own. Isn't it amazing how certain dreams (when I feel they are more than dreams and come closer to "experiences") stand out so vividly, like oases on the blank deserts of ordinary dreams? I must tell you of one I had when I was barely seven. Although I loved Baba (and went to the ashram for most of my holidays), I did not really understand about Avatar in the full sense we do now. In my dream, I saw GOD. He was on a huge white cloud in the sky. I was sitting down on its edge, looking up at God who was an enormous man, quite naked. I felt so tiny (like Alice in Wonderland after she had nibbled the cake) and had on a starched white lacy dress and a pink bow in my hair. He looked quite friendly, and I asked Him why he didn't have any clothes on (arranging a fold of my own smart dress). He smiled and pointed at the clothesline nearby, below the cloud. I hadn't noticed it before and, tilting my head, could see an ordinary string pegged into space with a baby's clothes hung up to dry. There was the tiniest vest and a baby's diaper! Up leapt the thought in my mind. "Good gracious, how on earth can He ever get into those clothes!" And, although God did not speak to answer, He answered in my mind as clearly as one could have spoken: "I wear these when I come down to earth for you all. I come down in the guise of the smallest of the small." I looked down at the tiny clothes again and thought "How very tight

and uncomfortable it must be!!" Then I looked up at Him and He gave a slight nod in answer. And then there seemed to rise in me a wave of happy understanding, and I sighed the deepest of sighs. That is when I woke up and, actually, heard myself at the tail end of the sigh which was literal.

Yes, the interpretation of your dream is right. We must love Him whatever aspect He outwardly assumes, but to do it couldn't always be so easy! Your speaking of the great jewel makes me want to repeat the words of Mira's song when she says of the Beloved:

"I have purchased the priceless jewel. Some declare it is fair, some say it is dark; but I have chosen it with my eyes fully open. Some say it is stolen, some say it is hidden; Mira says it is the fulfillment of an old, old promise."

So, you will be there to open house for the Beloved's gathering. Baba's love to you all.

Mani

Satara, September 27, 1955

Dear Bili:

The name of each person was called out the other day when Baba touched the photos before I posted them and, when I said "Bili," Baba made the sign He uses for our Margaret, "dancer."²⁶ Baba's signs for referring to people are so eloquent and expressive. There is a Christian woman called Sobin, which means (in Irani) "soap," so, for her, Baba makes the sign of soaping His arm. The first time it puzzled us for a minute or two before we caught on and burst into delighted laughter. There is another, a Dr. Kataria (and "katar" in Gujarati means scissors). So, when Baba wishes to refer to him, He makes a sign with His fingers, opening and closing them as a pair of scissors when cutting cloth. For Masi, one of us who has a springy walk, the sign is of a kangaroo hopping; for Naja, it is of a frog jumping. Then, too, He loves giving apt nicknames (particularly in the old days when He talked): Padri, Pendu, Nervous, Barsoap, and many others. There is a disciple in Nasik (to this day, I don't know what his mother named him) whom Baba named "Kalinger" (watermelon), and he isn't called anything else!

Goodness, if I go on at this rate, there won't be enough room to tell you about the November plan, which now is fixed definitely. Baba will be spending November in Meherabad. Eight hundred of His lovers in the East (men from all over India and from Pakistan, particularly those working actively in the spreading of His message of Love) have been invited to Meherabad and will have the bliss of His *sahavas* (close company) for a week. In order to give the fuller benefit of His *sahavas* to each, to facilitate better accommodation for all, and to save time spent in endless translations (in the different vernaculars employed in different parts of India) of anything Baba wishes to express through gestures (for He won't use the alphabet board that He has given up since last October), the lucky 800 will be divided into four groups of 200 spending a week with Baba. Hence, it will mean our shifting to Meherazad (Pimpalgaon) before the end of October (it's about 15 miles from Meherabad, home to us where we seldom stay for long, and a lovely place), to which we're looking forward with much joy! It will also mean my letters slowing down considerably, but not stopping (even if it's just a line to send our love). Two Westerners will be participating in the *sahavas* (Baba emphasizes it will not be a meeting), and these are Don Stevens from the U.S.A. and Francis Brabazon from Australia. Don will be here for the first week, beginning, I believe, from November 3rd.

Remember, Bili, that letter in which you wrote about the bunch of *sanskaras* masquerading as a person? Well, actually, you've hit the nail on the head. Some time ago, when Eruch was driving me to Poona (a rare occasion my going to Poona alone, but allowed in emergency which, in this case, was my wisdom tooth) and while driving he was talking about Baba, *God Speaks*, etc. In short, it got to just the point mentioned above, which I gathered Baba explains in *God Speaks*. In my words and interpretation, it comes to this: While we are in one body, we gather the *sanskaras* for the next one, preparing the skeleton, as it were, choosing, selecting and fixing the material. The body is an illusion, because it is nothing but a pack of *sanskaras*. It is absolutely nothing but *sanskaras* piled up on top of each other. When the *sanskaras* are used up, the body

naturally drops. There is nothing else to be done, as body and *sanskaras* are one and the same thing—no *sanskaras*, no physical body. And one might be free but, oh, no, we have already piled up the *sanskaras* for the next body, and so on... So, you see, we've got to come out of the vicious circle some time. Hence, the Perfect Ones say, "Do it now."

Anyway, it is lovely to be a pack of *sanskaras* in His love and care. Nothing we can give up is big enough, nothing we may miss is near enough to what we have—Baba.

Tons of love from one pack of *sanskaras* to another.

Mani



October 23, 1955

Dear

The Beloved asked me to read out all comments about *God Speaks* that I received, and bits were read out to Him from letters ...including the hugs and embraces that were sent with them. And, of course, Filis's superb review. But I'm writing to her separately. (Letter enclosed. These double action letters save postage and I can get in yards more.) Your Walt Disney idea,²⁷ Baba and we all like it very much! Once Walt Disney is truly interested, he will realize that there is such a fascinating rhythm and pattern to it all. Our wildest surmise couldn't grasp all the meticulous details involved. As Hafiz says about the spiritual laws, "They are finer than the finest hair." Portrayed in color and music (like "Fantasia") through the popular medium of his art, it would penetrate to and through all. So, any efforts along that line can go ahead, Bili, by any and all of you. Only once he is really interested, the final business should go through Ivy and Don. O.K?

I don't blame your affinity for Margaret (Craske) and Ruano (Bogislav). They're wonderful people and *truly* companionable with no superficial barriers. One can enjoy talking or listening to them for hours. Besides their vast love for Baba, they have something in their spiritual make-up that makes all who come in their contact love them. Still another thing, they have a deep sense of humor. Margaret has given us many a laugh in our ashram days together. And her love for Baba is so unquestioning. She never questions in her mind the why and

wherefore of anything Baba does or says, however contradictory or whimsical. She just accepts it as the only thing. And then, of course, there's Kitty. She... has a true sense of humor in that she can always laugh with others against herself. Her selfless nature, her helpful and keen interest in anybody's interest (no matter if it's not her own, she will develop it to help the other person), her constantly putting Baba before herself and everything and other endearing qualities make us miss her often.

I feel you are right about the "rope," Bili, but I always feel it is somehow we who weave it—with our minds. That is why Baba always says, for the treading of the Divine Road, love is the highest. The intellect, undoubtedly, can be a help, but there's no knowing when it can be a hindrance. Then, sometimes, when there are knots in the rope, it is always the heart that can undo them. The mind, however brilliant, is limited and, with each reasoning, puts a brick up. Soon, there is a wall to frame a certain pattern, and anything that is too big for it cannot enter. The heart, on the other hand, is so vast it can accommodate everything. The mind without enough heart is a lonely, haunted tower. My favorite lines of Kabir are (rough translation from Hindi):

That body which has life but no Love
I take as a corpse.
Like the smithy's bellows it breathes
But does not live.

And, now, I want to tell you of a recent incident that was a test for some Baba lovers who came out with flying colors. Our hearts were so touched by their love that we cannot think of it with dry eyes. Here is the prayer that God listens to, the meditation He accepts.

Before I get too incoherent, let me get down to the story. You must know of the Dadachanji family... they are the most truly devoted family you can imagine. From tots to grandparents, aunts, brothers and sisters, and all love Baba so that He is not just a part of their lives—their lives are a part of Baba.

Arnavaz's youngest brother Nozer, scarcely 22 (a hand-

some boy, as are all the family) went into the air force. Baba had given full sanctions, told him to go ahead and, whenever he got into a plane, to do so with Baba's name and not to worry. Being a bright lad, he got through easily and, some time before the tragedy occurred, was promoted to an officer's rank, holding the responsible job of instructor. He was stationed in Hyderabad and, about a month ago, came to see Baba at Satara. On the 13th (the day Baba left for Poona for a couple of days' rest) Nozer's father (who is over 70) got a telegram from Hyderabad to say the plane Nozer and another instructor had started off in many hours before was missing. They wired Baba (according to His orders when anything very serious occurred) and told Him what they had heard. More telegrams followed as more news came through. In short, Nozer's plane had an accident, and he and the sole other occupant were feared dead in a big lake. Nozer's body could not be located for some days, and the tension of uncertainty for the family was terrible. What shone through the darkness of all this suffering was their unflinching devotion to Baba, their "deep love and gratitude for the strength and peace of mind you have given us through it all, dearest Baba" (quoting telegram).

They asked Baba regarding the religious ceremony for Nozer. Baba had Eruch give His message by phone that, in the first place, they should not have asked. But, as they had, then, if the body was in a position to be removed, it should be brought to Meherabad. If not, it should be disposed of according to the Zoroastrian rites and prayers, to be observed only for four days.

Then came telegrams to say how deeply they regretted their having asked, that they did not in the least care for any religious ceremony themselves, but the officers in charge were asking to know. They would do exactly what Baba wished, and they were deeply sorry about having disturbed Baba in any way by asking the question, ending again with, "We send our unbounded gratitude and love and ask you to forgive us our lapses." When Baba sent a message that Nozer was happy and they should not worry, they replied, "We will do what you wish. We believe and accept all you say."

Then, when Baba got to Meherabad for a day, He called

Nariman and Arnavaz, along with the father and another member of the family on condition that they did not cry or mourn.

They came and went. Eruch said afterward it was like their usual meeting with Baba, and we couldn't help mentally taking off our hats to such love and courage. They also made an offering of a sum of money which Baba will give to a certain number of poor persons after washing their feet, as usual.

Here are some bits that Baba said to them there:

"I am never sorry for anyone who dies. He who dies with My name on his lips, with Me in his heart, never dies. I never worry about them, for theirs is no loss. If I am ever worried, it is for those that suffer through the death which they might allow to alienate them from Me. That would be their loss indeed. Why suffer unnecessarily? My 'dead' live in Me. That should make you happy. So, why not rejoice in his happiness? Loving Me as you do, knowing Me for the One I am, you should be only happy to know Nozer is happy in Me. Knowing this, any mourning you may do therefore must be for yourselves only—from selfish motives. You don't know how fortunate they are who die with My name on their lips and in their hearts."

I can say little after this, except that may we be as worthy of His Love when our test comes.

Will keep in mind your idea of the plaster cast of Beloved's feet. And, sometime after Christmas, when my mind is less cluttered with odds and ends, will discuss it with you.

Mani

P.S. Please, Bili, send a copy of the relevant bits to Elinorkit and to Ruth White. Thanks. Also from Filis's letter.

I shan't be giving you so much work of such long letters for some time, I hope! But, of course, we won't starve the chicks, as the enclosed little picture will tell you.

P.P.S. Aha! Am I not patting myself on the back for not gumming the flap of this letter 'til last minute! We've just had the lion story in pictures from you and just love it—all of us.

Mani

The following was attached to the above letter:

(Jean spoke of "fundamental technique of meditation" which the initiation she has received from a saint provides.)

Well, there are various retreats in India where meditation classes are held and different but set techniques of meditation are observed which, if followed faithfully and for a long time, result in slight occult experience, such as seeing flashes of light, colors, even visions, etc. These occult experiences by themselves are nothing, are in the domain of illusion and not only have no direct bearing on the incomparable reality of God Realization, but can actually become a hindrance and obstruction to the aspirant's path to God.

The direct Path to God is the Path of Love. Love is not derived from meditation. It has nothing to do with it. Love is a grace of God; one in many have it, and it is all-sufficient. Love does not depend on anything but itself. Love without meditation is enough. Meditation without love is not. That is why Sadgurus, i.e. Perfect Masters, do not set meditation for their disciples as a necessary routine; they stress the aspect of love and selfless service. The Masters of the Path, on the other hand, not having reached the Goal themselves, advocate meditation to the aspirants following them. In the Prem Ashram (Baba's unique school for boys), the boys were touched with the spark of His love and there was such a tumult of divine emotion and tears of love! Then, when a phase of intensive meditation followed (with the resultant flashes of occult experience), the love aspect began gradually to decline. Thus, the boys realized the difference. One boy, Chota Baba, did not meditate, did not cry for God Realization. He just loved Baba and automatically thought of Him every moment. When Love comes, the lover does not even think, "I am loving, I am thinking of Him," he just loves. This boy found Baba within himself, in everyone. He is a *wali* on the fifth plane and is in Iran where Baba sent him later.

There are many *walis* and *sants* (saints) in India. Gadge Maharaj is one of them. He (and others) love Baba and have a following of their own. Baba says *Sant* Kirpal Singh is a very nice man. He loves God, is on the Path, and saw Baba twice in

Delhi. He is a follower of Guru Nanek and has a following of his own. He is a true saint and loves God. Baba does not in the least mind Jean Adriel leaving Baba, whom she followed all these years, and following this saint instead. Baba is the Avatar and, as God, knows all as parts of Himself. Baba loves Jean as He loves all aspects of His own Self, as He loves all.

God is within us all. He is also unfathomably beyond all. Those who love Baba are fortunate. They derive much by merely loving Baba. It does not affect Baba's Godhood whether we love Him or oppose Him. The sun always shines whether we bask in its rays or shun it. In the "Die is Cast," Baba says that we must not ask, for He knows without our asking Him. But He also says, "I will give to each when I deem fit." Let us prove worthy of the Gift. The "Die is Cast" is, in a supreme way, a test for us all. Those who are strong in their love will cling to Baba against all hardships and oppositions; those that hold His *daaman* lightly will be shaken off.

I also gathered that Baba will give a beautiful elucidation of some spiritual truths during the gathering in November when 800 Baba lovers, men from India and Pakistan, particularly those working actively in the spreading of His message of Love, will enjoy the bliss of Baba's *sahavas* for a week in Meherabad.

Meherazad,
(Pimpalgaon)
December 1, 1955

Dear Bili:

Here, at last, is the letter. I meant to send yours and Beryl's together, but thought it better to send yours later with any last minute news there might be as this, I think, will be my last from Meherazad to any of the groups. Bili mine, your lovely letter was enjoyed as ever always, and you must have received my message re the joke.

Today is again the day of Beloved Baba washing the feet of 250 poor. And now we can picture it better than ever since seeing the sacred spot where it is done. They have made a little wooden stand (with two steps) on which the person stands so Baba can wash the feet and take *darshan* (touching His

forehead to their feet) while sitting down on a low chair. Even then, the bending to take *darshan* each time is pretty strenuous! On the 2nd, it will be the group's turn to come to Meherazad and it's lovely to watch from the kitchen verandah the long procession climbing Seclusion Hill with Baba. We can always spot the Beloved in the crowd even from that distance—often it is His pink coat and *sadra* and Shatrugen holding the umbrella over Him.

When the last group left Meherazad, I was on the verandah typing and, as half a dozen buses packed with men wheeled by past our gate, their united shouts of "Avatar Meher Baba, Ki Jai" sent thrills right through me. This is not meant gushingly, but, literally, I was tingling in waves from head to toe. I hurried in to Rano²⁸ (whose little room is right next to where I sit) and found she'd felt the same. It was such a happy feeling, we were laughing and wiping our tears at the same time.

A message for the Filly. Please tell her we've found an alphabet board for her, but it's not the black and white wooden one (those two were in Satara, and the Beloved had them locked up on 6th October) but it is one of the cardboard ones much used by Baba. Probably Filis will frame it in order to preserve it. Will happily send it sometime when I can pack it well. (Here, I haven't the right materials, but there's plenty in Satara.)

Look, Bili, I'm enclosing a copy of my letter to Agnes and another, so it can fill in whatever bits of *sahavas* news I might have left out in any of yours. My mind is sometimes such a jumble these days, I don't remember what I've written to who (or is it whom?) and, consequently, either leave something out or repeat myself. I feel like the old woman in the shoe who had so many children she didn't know what to do!

Even without the board, Baba has been giving many beautiful discourses to His gathering. I hear from the person taking notes that there are 700 pages in handwriting so far—and Eruch says that there are many entirely new points that Baba has never explained before. If it was not our Beloved doing it, it would be amazing how such a thing could be done without speaking, writing, or using the alphabet board!

I think I told you some bits about the third group. Did I tell you they also performed a sort of drama in Telegu depicting Baba's life? In the south, this party goes from place to place giving Baba's message, singing His life in ballads and *bhajans* and depicting it in drama. It's a wonderful medium for the people in the villages, particularly those who cannot read. Baba and the mandali like it very much (even though the language is foreign to us).

The saint, Gadge Maharaj (who has a large following and ashrams) sent word to say how happy Baba would make him if He visited his place in Nasik and sanctified it with His holy feet. I believe Baba has agreed, but what I loved is Gadge Maharaj's words to Adi when he gave the message. He said: "I am like a little lamp and Baba is like a magnificent sun."

You've had the Nozer story, and I'd like to end with quoting from Arnavaz's letter to her brother Homa (who's in England):

"From now on, remember, dear Homa, death should not be a shock to us but just a working in Baba's divine plan. Baba says all is a dream. We do not know it now, but will experience it one day. There is only one thing for us to concern ourselves with and that is to love Baba more and more and to increase our faith in Him. If you do that, the battle of life is won and you will be happy and at peace."

I think I'll end with a little amusing incident Baba told us during the first group *sahavas*. First, I must introduce you to Aloba, one of the mandali (a Persian). He was the *majnun* of the Prem Ashram boys, and one of the New Life companions. Aloba is the nickname Baba gave him during the New Life. His name is Ali Akbar. Well, during *qavvali* singing, he gets intoxicated with spiritually emotional fervor. As he sits looking at Baba, listening to the music, he's quite liable to get beyond himself and, in the ecstasy, injure himself (banging his head, for instance). Often, when there is such singing, Baba either asks Aloba not to look at Him or to sit outside on the verandah. To get back to the story, there was *qavvali* singing that first week when Baba appointed two other Zoroastrians (of strong physique) to sit one on either side of Aloba and, if he

showed any sign of going into ecstasy, to hold him or shake him, or take him out, etc. The singing began and, after a few songs, the chap on the right of Aloba was seen to be sitting in a dazed posture and the other somewhat in tears. Soon, Aloba was ministering to one of them who had slid to the ground, and saying something soothing to the other who was obviously not himself either. Baba was so amused at this turning of the tables, and the assembly catching on was in fits of laughter. Is there a moral to the story? I can only find one, if you can call it that, it is not untypical of how Baba works when making us overcome a certain characteristic or weakness.

There is a whisper that, in January, Baba will visit all the places (Andhra, Hamirpur, Dehra Dun, Nagpur, Bombay, etc.) so the women can have His *darshan*, too. One wonders where He will be for His birthday next year.

Mani

Mani sent the following two enclosures with the above letter:

November 14, 1955

On the 7th, Baba washed the feet of 250 persons and took their *darshan* (touching His forehead to their feet) and giving Rs. 4 to each. Baba will do this every week of the *sahavas*. In fact, today is the day and, while I sit here typing, Baba is in Meherabad washing the dust-stained feet of impoverished humanity. During this service from our Highest of the High, all those present are asked to keep repeating God's name continuously. The *dhuni* (the sacred fire beside which stands the little table-cabin where Baba was in seclusion and fasting for many months writing the incomparable book that no one has yet seen) is lit on the 12th of every month, and the second group was lucky to have it on their first day. Don Stevens was present also, and Baba gave a lengthy and beautiful discourse on its symbolic meaning and various other points, without using the alphabet board, of course. The days are lovely and bright and the sun shines on, happy to see the Lord feasting with those of His own in the Kingdom of Love. We women actually know little of the *sahavas*, except the little glimpses Baba gives us when He returns, happy but tired at the end of a

long, busy day. He tells us of their true devotion, of the different activities of the day, of His spiritual discourses that their love inspires, perhaps of some humorous incident, and of the touching scene at their moment of parting at the end of the week. If it were all put down, it would make a book which, in fact, is just what one of Baba's men is going to do, I believe.

Baba appoints five of each group to carry out (after their return home from the *sahavas*) one week's stiff program of complete fasting (except drinking water), continuous repetition of God's name, not sleeping, and not stepping out of the room.

On the 6th, the bit of film for the TV review of *God Speaks* which Don will see to soon after his return was taken; it was necessary that Baba point on the board, and Baba solved the problem of not using the alphabet board any more with His usual beautiful simplicity of solving all problems. He pointed on the board to say: "I have given up the use of the alphabet board for the past twelve months and I will not use the board again." Isn't that wonderful?

November 18, 1955

Today is the lull between the weeks, the day when Meherabad is empty of the large congregation of people and everything is spring-cleaned for the next lot. Tomorrow, the third group will be coming—300 from the north (Delhi, Hamirpur, etc. the Hindi Group). The first group was mostly of Zoroastrians. The second group that left yesterday was from the south, some traveling 800 miles. They came in special trains (I mean chartered) with Baba flags flying atop and the men singing Baba songs all the way. They also brought their own singers to entertain Baba and the assembly with *qavvali* songs (and special songs of the Avatar, Meher Baba). Among this group was Dr. Thirumal Rau of the United Nations, who is going to translate *God Speaks* into Telegu, a prominent language of the south. There is another from Andhra (I am not too sure of his name),²⁹ whose life and heart have undergone a complete change since meeting Baba. He it was who financed the feeding of thousands of poor at the end of the *jap* (repetition of God's name) program of a short time ago. He is going to put

up a big statue of Baba in his home town in the south. Yes, many hearts and lives need changing. Our poor old world needs more Jove, needs Baba, if only it realized that.

Satara, December 31, 1955

Dear Bili:

I really meant to write right after Christmas, but you cannot have missed my reply in the atom-bomb news of the Beloved's coming to the West that Elizabeth has relayed to you! Oooooosh, anything little Mani can say after that will be lost in the light of the mighty sentence "BABA IS COMING!" We, too, are terribly happy about it, for each of you, for all who will be seeing Him again, and for those who have not yet met Him in the flesh—and I loved the way He timed the news for Christmas.

I wrote further to Elizabeth yesterday (to inform all) with the message from Baba, to say that it will be a special but short visit. He will bring with Him three³⁰ men, and no women will be coming this time. On the way over, He will stop for two days in England (not stopping in Europe). Then, in the States, He intends to spend four days in Myrtle Beach, four days in New York, and seven days in California (roughly three days in Northern California and three in Southern). This is the general gist of the plan for your present information and for arrangements accordingly. The details will be coming later on.

Don Stevens' letter just arrived, and one of the points he mentioned was whether Baba wished to be secluded over there, or whether he, Don, could bring along his friends and acquaintances to see Baba, as many of them are interested. I replied (and this is something you all might like to know, too) that Baba does not mind who or how many come to see Him. So, I hope all the fortunate ones will be able to take this opportunity and blessing. But, mainly, He comes to give His *sahavas* to the near and dear ones whose love draws Him once more to the West.

I received both your letters, Bili, and read out the Jean bits. Shall I tell you the best I liked from all those received? The simplest one (and wisest, of course, as it comes from a

Perfect Master), a quotation from Ramakrishna sent by Hedi Mertens of Switzerland. Talking about following the Perfect One, He said to Vivekananda, "The aim is not Realization, the aim is to serve (Him)."

I was glad to read about Marguerite Poley. You know, we have a painting of hers in Meherazad that Jean had brought over. It is of a flying horse (he has wings) and the picture, coloring and light effect is simply lovely!...

Adele said you were having a Baba-bazaar in Filis' apartment. If you like, we can contribute by sending the few remaining copies of *Sobs and Throbs* that some more would like to possess.

Mani

The next letter was, in part, a reply to my suggesting that I send copies of Operation Topsy letters only to group heads rather than to each individual, as the work was becoming too voluminous for me to handle by typing the letters with carbon copies:

January 19, 1956

Dear Bili:

I received both your letters. No, my dear, of course I know you're not complaining, but I quite agree that the snowball is rolling to a very big size and, as it is, I really can't see how you people manage all this with your own full time jobs as well! I think your suggestion about sending Baba news to group heads is right. They then should, in turn, keep informed the individuals concerned. Divided, it will be managed much more comfortably for all. Of course, I write letters to many of them, but this way I don't have to repeat the news each time to each person. Also, it is different news each time, and just imagine, if every time I wrote to you or Adele or Filis or Beryl, I had to write to each of the others also. The mail budget alone would give me heart failure!

No, but seriously, we must think it out. I take care of Ivy (who makes a tape recording of the news and sends to the Sufi Group in California). If something is missed sometimes, I can always refer her to Energy³¹ who, I'm sure, corresponds with

her. But, please send to Ruth White and Elinorkit and the Shaws. Now, Kitty, I'm sure, can take care of Agnes Baron and the Duchess³² (and perhaps Mahda Love, if possible). Jeanne Shaw corresponds with the DeLongs (who were formerly of the Schenectady group) and I'm sure she can take care of that group. (In fact, I understand she *is* taking care of it.) No, I'm afraid I don't correspond with F. Hendrick or Filip Dupuis (the latter only once re *God Speaks*).

Anyway, you should not have to send to more than 10 (the capacity of your typed copies) and, therefore, you should arrange for other groups to pass on to still others who are interested. It should be like the chain letters we used to have in the old days—one makes a copy and passes it on to someone else. So, do fix things up in this way, and, if you like to suggest any of the above to anyone, you can quote me any time. Also, I don't see why the DeLongs could not pass it to Mahda Love who is also in Florida. I'm sure they would be most happy to do so.

Now, just for the news in this letter (of today), I want you to know I sent it to Elinorkit, Ruth White and have asked Kitty to send it to Agnes. Yes, of course, Beryl³³ should not have to do it, particularly as I'm going to load her soon with the new lot of samples (of Baba's photos). (O, Bili, just wait till you see them!) The Beloved personally has kept encouraging me and wants them spread (to His lovers) as much as possible. Have also sent some to Australia and a few to England and Switzerland. Soon will be posting a batch of very recent ones.

I just loved your description of the Exodus. No, honey, I will not tell Him, not yet. Don's technique of showing Baba's film is unique and sounds the right answer. He, too, is what Baba's work has needed all along, and I just can't imagine how we didn't miss him before we knew him! In fact, one feels like that about all the later disciples—they are so much a part and parcel of Baba's love that one wonders how we could ever not have known them! Well, it's enough that we *are*, and His. As the line in a *qavvali* song says (when translated roughly):

"Long live thee, O Tavern Keeper!

Thee and thy drunkards..." (or does one say "thou"?) talking of the Divine Wine of Love, of course.

I'm steeped in *God Speaks* at the moment,³⁴ and soaking

deeper in its profound depths with each fresh reading, puts all the world's best sellers and ingenious storytellers in the shade, doesn't it, compared to this true fascinating romance of Creation and the game of "finding the creator."

Before His retirement from 15th February, Baba will give another *darshan* (keeping the promises) at Navsari and then Bajwa in Baroda. This will take place on the 29th and 30th.

Soon we will be planning and making preparations for the Birthday, celebrated both on the Gujarati and English dates. The first is on the 11th this year. So, pussy sweet, my letters will be shorter (a la Filis) and the intervals between them longer. Please let the others know, and I'm sure your loving hearts will understand.

Any day now, I am posting you 23 very old copies of *Sobs and Throbs*. They really look quite worn, so just charge what you think best.

Sending one copy for you and one for Beryl with love, so that leaves 21 for your sale.

Now, here's the news column regarding the 14th. It was an exciting day in Poona—the great event of Baba's *darshan*. It was also the Hindu festival *Sankrant* in honor of married women, something resembling your Mother's Day, I guess, and it also has a spiritual significance when they give each other tiny sugar balls called *tilgul* spiked like stars and varicolored and, during the sweet exchange say, "Eat sweet, talk sweet."

Baba gave *darshan* on this special day, and over 30,000 people took the precious opportunity. And, once again, it was like the old days, for each took Baba's *darshan* (laying his or her head on Baba's feet). The Meher Bhajan mandali arranged it all beautifully, and continual waves of men on one side and women on the other kept pouring toward Baba, while Baba gave *prasad* with both hands at the same time. Except once, for a few minutes' interval, Baba did this continually for 10 hours! The program lasted from eight in the morning to six-thirty in the evening. Except for a little soft drink once, Baba partook of nothing during the time. Yet, as the mandali and those present kept remarking, Baba looked His most beautiful and radiant Self all the time! Some would not let go of Baba's

feet, or hands, and had to be coaxed aside. Government officials and heads of police and the mayor of Poona were among those who came, and the women were beautifully garbed in festival saris as it was a double event for them. The city crowd is usually so different from the village ones. Baba did look very tired when He returned, but the next morning worked on as usual.

The Beloved intends coming in July.

Mani

Sunday, January 22, 1956

Gosh, Bili, your letter's stuck, as there's political fireworks in Bombay, and the rioting is worsening daily. No foreign mail's been coming in for some days and none going out. Everything gets stuck in Poona (I mean the outgoing mail) 'til the trains resume, and now even correspondence to Poona is not possible. It has to do with the divisions of the linguistic states that's caused the upheaval. We get no English newspapers (which come from Bombay) and, unless the line's clear, no good my posting this, as they burn vehicles and derail trains.

Baba intends giving *darshans* in Sangamner and Sakori also before going to Navsari on the 29th, and also one more *darshan* in Bombay on the 6th of February before the retirement.

Enclosed is another copy of the news column (from my letter to somebody else), and you might prefer this. Anyway, I am enclosing it, and you can make use of it, perhaps combine it.

By now, the two packages of *Sobs and Throbs* are ready, also photos for Beryl. Hope I'll be able to post them soon and, of course, this letter!

Billy Graham's arrival coincided with the riots and with the strict curfew (in some places for 24 hours). I don't see how anyone could have attended.

Well, one can see it's all in the Beloved's beautiful hands but, being a woman, I'd like sometimes to see what He has up His sleeve!

Looks like I'm writing another letter all over again,

doesn't it? But it's a lovely basking afternoon, and I've got a few lazy minutes before my bath. Baba has gone over to the mandali and, from my office, I can view Him in the distance whenever He returns.

Mani



Dear

Satara, February 24, 1956

Received your letter of the 30th. I'm terribly sorry I am unable to write to you all more regularly or often, but it isn't from lack of remembrance or love. As a matter of fact, when I don't write promptly, you are more than ever in my thoughts, the extra reminder being that awfully naggy dame, my companion called conscience. But I don't let her get away with it every time and, when she gives me a talking to (and how she *can* talk!), I, too, have a thing or two to tell her.

Anyway, we won't let the chicks starve, Bili, and the last bulletin (sent to Fredella) was not so long ago. The Beloved's fast is over, though, of course, His seclusion continues. The fourth day (on water only) must have been the worst, especially as the water here, which is quite good, when boiled smells awfully of chlorine. We'd be looking like limp rags at the end of such a strict fast, but He was looking as beautiful as ever. We argued with Him the other day, saying, if there were any more fasts to be done, let the disciples do them. "You've done enough and such long fasts for us all these years! Now let's do them for you when you must." I was quite aware it sounded weak and, of course, He smiled, for what little value our months of fast would have compared to even a day's fast observed by the Perfect One for His imperfect selves!

He will be a few days in Jal Villa and one or two at Grafton but, in spite of His short intermittent coming to Grafton, in essence His seclusion continues for the whole year with a temporary break at the end of June for His visit to the West in July. Even while here, He does not go outside the house, will see no one, will hear no correspondence except of urgent importance (particularly to do with His Western visit), and

none who chance to see Him while walking over from Jal Villa to Grafton are allowed to bow down to or salute Him because of the seclusion.

From 1st March, Baba will be shifting to another house called Judge's bungalow, which, though also old, is less dilapidated than Jal Villa and in a much quieter locality.

Here's a bit I'm reproducing from my letter to Harold Rudd, as I think you all would like the story also:

I'm basking in the profound depths of our Beloved's book, (*God Speaks*) the explanations He gives to make us see a glimmer (if only intellectually) of the immeasurable vast pattern of creation which is but a shadow of His Glory. But, most of all, it increases our eternal gratitude to Him for awakening our hearts with the divine breath of His love.

How foolish then must man seem who asks Him merely for material benefit, when He can give us such untold treasure. It makes me think of the story of the king who, in a sudden spontaneous impulse, announced to his subjects present in the palace to grab just one thing (*anything* within the palace) for himself or herself and they could retain possession of it. As you can imagine, there was a wild rush. Some made for the best of jewels, others ran for the costliest thing they could see or had set their hearts on, while the king looked amusedly on. Amidst this mad rush of people who were trying to make the most of their sudden but short good fortune, a slave girl walked quietly to the king and held his hand. Later, the king said, "She's the only one who had sense enough to choose the right object for, owning me who is owner of all this, she possesses all that is mine. She went to the source."

On the 11th morning, Mehera put among other things on the decorated table a birthday card from all those physically absent with the words:

"From all those in the East
From all those in the West
From the hearts of all your lovers
Who love You the best."

The above had a heart drawn around it.

Mani.

The following excerpts are from Mani's letter to Fredella regarding a cable Baba received notifying Him of Ruano Bogislav's passing:

Satara, February 18, 1956

...Rano and all of us loved having your letter about Ruano,³⁵ which I read to Baba, and also your cable before that to which Beloved replied as follows:

"MY EAGLE HAS NOT DIED BUT FLIES EVER IN MY KINGDOM."

We can well understand Ruano not wishing to have people come to see her at the last. With the love she gave to and received from all, she would wish to live on in their memory as she always was—vibrant with life and humor.

To her went the true homage of the heart from the so many who loved her, instead of to the remains that covered her beautiful soul. Her devotion to Baba was unique, for loving Him who is the SUN she recognized and loved Him in His countless rays that manifest not only in man but in the lesser creatures as well. In a book belonging to her which I treasure, she writes on the back page:

"Dear Father, hear and bless Thy beasts
and singing birds,
And guard with tenderness small things
that have no words."

She was Nonny³⁶ and Rano's closest friend, and, according to Baba's wishes, Rano has written to Ruano's daughter, Bijie, to send, if possible, some of her ashes to India, or, if not then some intimate belonging that she wore constantly, to be buried in loving memory on Meherabad Hill, beside dear Nonny.

In continuation of my last letter to Filis, the news of our Beloved is:

Today is the fourth day of Baba's seclusion and strict fast, during which He has partaken only of two cups of beverage each day with just a soupcon of milk, for He does not like milk when fasting. Yesterday, He was on sweetened water and, today, it will be pure water only. Then beverage—I mean tea or coffee, or things in that category—again tomorrow, which will be the fifth day. He will break the fast on the 6th day, i.e., on the

20th. Twenty men in India share this strict fast with Him (five from each of the four *sahavas* groups that He selected in November), who are also in seclusion (not leaving their rooms, constantly repeating His name and not lying down to rest during the five days and nights. If very sleepy, they can nod sitting! Hats off to all lovers who reflect the Eternal Beloved...



March 23, 1956

Dear

...Operation Topsy is wonderful. May I make a few suggestions? (suggestions only). As Mr. and Mrs. Reed are in Ojai, I wonder if Agnes Baron can ease Kitty's hands a bit, unless, of course, Kitty can manage easily. About Hendrick, I was going to suggest something myself, for, in his lovely letter received some days ago, he said how kindly he was being kept in touch with the Beloved's news by Adele or you from New York, that Mrs. White also sent him a copy, and Lud Dimpfl. So, I'm glad this question came up in Operation Topsy and has been adjusted through one person only. Ruth is a very active person and is such a dear. I do hope she is able to cope with all her list. Yes, I, too, feel the DeLongs should definitely be in Jeanne's care, as they were originally of Schenectady.

I love the spirit of cooperation and oneness in it all. That is as it should be, the groups merging together as a whole in the Ocean that is Baba. In love and service for our One and Only, there should be no group distinctions in the wrong sense. We are each Baba's, and our efforts and hearts must beat in unison.

Enclosed are the two newspaper clippings for you. They were the last ones left, and I have been hesitating for days as to who to send it to (north, south, east, west), when your letter came with the right answer. I write occasionally to P., but leave him in your capable hands for the regular news.

You must have received by now copies of the Beloved's page in the *Illustrated Weekly*. These are for the groups and

sent with love. As per Kitty's suggestion, we ordered a number of entire magazines which have been sent out by sea. So far, I've sent six copies to Elinorkit, six to Ivy and two dozen to you. I will be sending in a few days more copies by sea, 12 more to Elinorkit, 12 to Ruth White, 12 to Ivy, 10 to Jeanne Shaw and 20 to you.

With the two dozen already sent to you, it will make 44 copies with you. Please see to the Florida group (through Jeanne, if you like), and others in New York and anywhere else as and how you think best. I would suggest one copy to John Bass, Fredella, our Margaret, Filis, Adele, Energy, Beryl, you, Ann Kohanow, Martha, Bernice, Pia-Timur, Drs. Getti and Kenmore, Mary Adriani, the Rudds... Goodness, at this rate, the names will far exceed the copies. We leave it to you; please adjust as and how you think best. Adele might want to send one to Christ Andrews, and Margaret might like a couple extra for her boys and girls.

I am sending a few single copies: one to Anita Vieillard, one to P., one to Martha Barnickle, a dear old lady in Germany, contact with whom started out of the blue, a copy to the Burlesons with whom Ivy corresponds and one to Dr. Birdi.

I first meant to send the whole lot to you but felt this way it would save you extra inland postage to some extent. You should, however, include the local postage in your bill when you send out copies out of New York...

You must have received from Kitty the news bulletin sent in my letter of the 11th. Here's to continue:

Baba has been working intensely for a week before the 20th, for nearly seven hours daily with the two *masts* in turn and with Kaikobad and has seemed quite exhausted at times when Mehera and I would go over for the short afternoon visit. The other day when we were there, Bapji, or Ali Shah, the *mast* brought over from Meherabad, came to the window asking where the "Big Boss" was. He could not tolerate being parted from Baba for even a while and also at nights would walk out of bed asking for his Beloved "Boss." Well, when Baba went over to the window, the little *mast* looked fit to burst with happiness and chattered away in two languages. Obviously it was a joke between Baba and himself—we could get nothing

beyond the words that never somehow made a sentence—for Baba nodded, smiling most happily, and the *mast* gave one of the heartiest chuckles we've ever heard. He has the most soulful loving eyes, and we shall always carry a lovely picture in our minds of this sweet old *mast*.

Baba loves us who give Him our imperfect love and loves all saints, but, most of all, He loves the *masts* whose salient characteristic differs from that of saints in the sheer overwhelming love for God that they experience. Hence, the name *mast* which literally means intoxicated. Baba never tires of telling us about them whenever we go over, and the other day gave a delightful imitation of the Rishikesh *mast's* sudden transitions from vigorous action to supreme inaction. In the latter phase, he lies or sits in complete immobility, often with eyes closed. When Baba would suggest something (a bath, for instance), the *mast* would leap out of bed and stride to the bathroom for the bath Baba would give him. When it was over, back to his place and instant immobility. Suggestion for food and he'd rush to the kitchen. He cooks his own food, except for days together when he will not partake of anything. Certainly what he cooks is tasty, though invariably half-cooked. He has no teeth and gobbles enormous morsels with no digestive disorders of any kind as a result. Food over, and back to his seat in a posture as serene as a statue.

Both the *masts* were sent back to their respective places on the 20th, and Baba came for a short stay at Grafton. On the 21st was our Irani New Year. On this day, apart from loading the table with all kinds of fruit imaginable and available, one makes the special cold drink of Iran known as *faluda*, which is made with rich colored blobs of wheat milk, rosewater sherbet and cream. It's delicious.

Baba will leave on 1st April for a car trip of about a week with just a few of the men to Aurangabad, Khuldabad and Hyderabad in the south. These places are most awfully hot in April, but, as Baba plans all His movements for His work, He never takes these points into consideration.

Mani

April 24, 1956

Dear Bili:

Here I am again. I didn't mean to rush you into writing with the post card.

Here's about the BOSS. In the international language of nature, it should be a beautiful morning as the first rays of the sun touch the bright red *golmohr* blossoms into a mass of flaming glory, and the birds have a mighty lot to say and say it all at once with the result that their fantastic chorus of melody drowns any conversation we humans might think of having. But, for all that, it seems a very dull and flat morning, for the Beloved is on a complete fast today, not even taking water. After 24 hours of this, He will take only sweetened water for the next 24 hours and then, again, the next 24 on liquids (tea, etc.). After that, for a couple of weeks, He will eat once a day. For four days before this (from the 20th to the 23rd), He has had only a simple breakfast of liquids and a little fruit (a banana or a mango) and nothing else for the rest of the 24 hours, except plain or sweetened water.

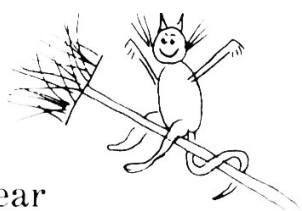
Baidul (of the mandali, the expert *mast* hunter) got a *mast* from Hyderabad, as Baba wanted to work with one during the first part of His stay there. But, although he was a good one and quite advanced, he was partly *salik* (seeker), and so he was returned after two days. Baidul might bring another one any time now. A *mast* utterly loses his self and his normal consciousness into the Ocean of Divine Love. He is, literally, madly in love with God, the True Beloved.

Regarding that poser, Bili sweet, I shouldn't say there was a must about it. It depends entirely on the individual inclination. When your life centers around Baba, your heart would want to tell Him of this step you're taking in partnership. There is no question of asking permission in the rigid sense of the word. If you truly want to marry, Baba never says "no." What would not be correct is to ask Baba if you should marry and then, if Baba says "Yes" (as He invariably does), to expect everything to go fine and dandy because He has given His sanction or blessings. One must take the full responsibility of one's own actions and karma and not expect the Beloved to interfere in one's favor. As far as the marriage itself is

concerned, the ideal would be, of course, when both parties love Baba. It always thrills me when a couple love Baba wholeheartedly and, as the family grows, the little Baba lovers join in. We know of some unhappy marriages where one of them loves Baba and the partner fails to understand and accept this love of the other one for the Universal Beloved. On the other hand, we know several who have become staunch Baba lovers after marrying one. I can give you an instance of Roda, Arnavaz's sister. She married a very nice boy who did not know Baba. Now, Jimmy Mistry is crazy about Baba and tells Roda, "The greatest benefit I have gained in marrying you is Baba!"

Their three adorable boys are Baba lovers, too. Four-year-old Feramroz left for school one morning and returned from half-way, panting after having run back and looking unhappy because "I forgot to kiss Baba's picture before I left for school this morning." Having given the kiss, the happy tot dashed back to school. He used to join the elders in their meditation and *jap*, piping in his sweet little voice and is happiest when singing *arti* with the others, although all he can confidently sing out loud is usually the last word of each line. The older brother, Merwan, six, adores Baba, too.

Mani



8 a.m., Tuesday, May 22, 1956

Dear

Salaams to the Sec.—writing to your new address. Just two blocks away from the Delmonico,³⁷ are you? You clever cat!

Before rambling on to anything else, here's news for Operation Topsy.

The seclusion had a significant break from routine on the 18th. First, was *Sant* Kirpal Singh's coming to see Baba. He has the true humility of the great and expressed the unclouded happiness of a child in being with Baba and could not embrace Him enough. Eruch told Goher that, every time Baba stood up for something, Kirpal Singh would stand up, too, till Baba, with a loving pat, would ask him to sit down. A woman

devotee, who accompanied the *sant*, had a movie camera and took several shots of Baba, and of Baba and Kirpal Singh together. On getting into the car after a very happy half-hour, the *sant* realized they had forgotten to give Baba the basket of mangoes brought as offering, and returned saying it was a good excuse to see Baba again. When the mangoes were given, he turned to the woman disciple, saying, "See how coming into this new world we forget everything else!" They had another happy excuse yet to return on discovering a box of sweets was not yet presented.

When sitting before Baba, the *sant* said, "It is my great good fortune that I sit today at your feet." And I loved his parting words to someone, "Baba will always be with me."

This was deeply significant, for we've noticed at times, when someone leaves Baba, He says "Take Me with you." Yet, another deep understanding of the *sant* we noted is the fact that he would not stop anywhere for rest or refreshment (though one of the men suggested it twice) and insisted on driving straight back on leaving Baba. As we have time and again observed, when someone leaves after visiting Baba, He wants them not to stop on the way but to go directly to their destination, unless, of course, Baba personally gives instructions otherwise. When Ivy and Charmian (Duce) were in Pimpalgaon (now Meherazad) that time, before seeing them Baba sent word that, if they wanted to see Baba, they should forego their sightseeing anywhere else in India and go straight back home. I remember Ivy said something like, "I'd give up a thousand Taj Mahals to see Baba."

But, to go back to Kirpal Singh. When a devotee of Baba went to see him in Delhi to present a copy of *God Speaks*, Kirpal Singh was most happy to see him and received him first out of a dozen others waiting for a meeting, although this was the devotee's first visit to him. The *sant* talked about Baba, told of his previous meeting when Baba gave mass *darshan* in Delhi (he had offered his grounds and place for the *darshan* gathering, but Baba chose another place) and how, when he tried to get in to see Baba, some people impeded his entrance at that moment. Then Baba sighted him from a distance, sent a message to have him come in and went a little way to hold him

by the hand and bring him to His *gadi* (seat). Kirpal Singh sat beside Baba on the ground by the *gadi* and was extremely happy. He told the people Baba is the *Maha Purusha* (the Great One).

The *sant* told the devotee he had read *God Speaks* that one of Baba's numerous followers in America had given him and declined a second copy, saying it was a very precious book and would be useful for another to read it also. He professed a desire to see Baba again as he was coming to Poona for a visit. The devotee told him that Baba was in seclusion. The *sant* smiled and said, "He is always in seclusion, but nothing will come in the way when He wants to see someone. See how He brought me in that day at Delhi!" He was right, for Baba sent word with Eruch that He would see him on the 18th.

Not long after he left, Eruch came over to say a young man from Manchester had come to see Baba, used all his savings to come from Manchester to Meherabad on reading *God to Man and Man to God*. It seems, for quite a while, he had been searching for something he couldn't find in all the books he read on philosophy, until a friend advised him to read the *Discourses*, which deeply stirred him and wherein he said he "found the answer." This 24-year-old English boy didn't know any of Baba's people there or anywhere and found his way by asking stewards and porters and odd strangers the whereabouts of Baba. This landed him in Poona, thence to Meherabad where he saw Padri who directed him to Adi senior who told him Baba was in Satara in seclusion.

He was fortunate, for Baba saw him and embraced him and, among other instructions, he was told to return to England, contact the others and await His coming in July. His first lesson in obedience has begun (he has already left for England), for his heart was set on staying with Baba. After seeing Baba, he told Eruch, "I have reached my goal."

Mani

The Five (Adele, Beryl, Filis, Sylvia and I) received the following letter from Mani after Baba's return to India from His visit to the West during July:

(Posted August 29, 1956)

A special message from the Beloved. He wants me to say that He sent you Five a cable of LOVE from Australia. We are now informed it did not reach you. Baba says don't worry about it. He is sure you received it, for His love is always with you.

Now, Bili, I am sending, in separate cover, the cyclostyled copy of the general account and impression of the tour as written by Eruch. (The cyclostyle has not much style, for Adi tells us the machine behaved like a cyclone, and the result is neither too clear nor straight, but the account certainly is.) Baba wants you (in collaboration with Energy, Ella, John) to have copies made of it and sent to all group-heads in the U.S.A. for the information and interest of all.

The above instructions were carried out as follows:

New York, New York
September 5, 1956

From: Bili Eaton

Baba has asked me (in collaboration with Fredella, Energy and John) to have copies made of the attached and sent to all group heads in the U.S.A. for the information and interest of all. It was written by Eruch Jessawala. I'm sure you will enjoy having it as much as we here in New York have.

Our love to you.

"ROUND THE GLOBE WITH BABA IN THIRTY DAYS

"Those who have had the opportunity of a closer contact with Baba experience the truth underlying the words He so often expresses: 'I am the Lord of the Universe and I am the slave of my lovers.'

"The great love of some of His followers in Europe, the U.S.A. and Australia compelled Baba, the Lord of Love, to pay heed to their silent and profound yearning to have Him physically in their midst, even though it be for a very short while.

"Accordingly, in the midst of His seclusion, Baba left Satara (India) on the 16th of July, 1956, to give His *sahavas* to His dear ones in Europe, the U.S.A. and Australia.

"After satisfying the yearning of the hearts of His lovers in

distant lands, Baba returned to Satara on the 17th of August, 1956, exactly after a month of a very strenuous round-the-world tour, to resume His seclusion, which will continue till the 15th of February, 1957.

"During the past 25 years, Baba has paid several visits to various countries outside India. Baba's name is not unfamiliar in distant countries to those who are sincere in their search for Truth. To them, Baba is the source of Light and is the Goal on the Path to God-realization.

"But this recent whirlwind flight of Baba, going round the globe in 30 days, made those who were with Baba feel that He was something more than merely the guiding star of the aspirants on the Path. Baba was also the Divine Beloved of the lovers of God.

"Hundreds of hearts that glowed with the warmth of love for God burst into so many flames as they contacted Baba. Many others who approached Baba indifferently felt some spark of love descending into their benumbed hearts enlivening them as they contacted Baba.

"Into whatever country He stepped to give His *sahavas*, there was a spontaneous outburst of love near and around Baba.

"Variegated were the expressions of love for the Beloved when the lovers met Baba at the airports and in His apartments after the long spell of unbearable separation.

"Some of the lovers would touch and caress the physical form of their Divine Beloved to ascertain, as it were, that what they beheld was not a dream but fulfillment of their deep love for Him that had drawn Him near to them over thousands of miles. Some wept with overwhelming joy and happiness; some knelt before Baba and simply gazed at Him in silent adoration; some felt dumbfounded and stood near Him with tears of joy flowing profusely; some felt very gay and cheerful as children feel when their needs are satisfied; some continued to repeat, 'Baba, is it all true or a dream?' And there were others who could not contain their joy and who would want to embrace Baba every now and then. And the Divine Beloved? He continued to remain silent amidst all the joy, the sobs and the throbs of the lovers. In silence, Baba, adorable as He always is,

happy as He is usually found to be, received the love of His lovers and radiated more forcefully His love for them. Every now and then, He would express through gestures how very happy He was amidst them. Baba would invariably give a loving pat of His hand on the head or shoulder of His lover if at all He missed giving an embrace.

"Day after day, for one full month, the same scene repeated itself. Of course, with every flight that carried Baba over different continents and oceans, every time it was a different day from the other under the new settings of different lovers of different nationalities and of different countries. Baba, the Ancient One, remained the same one eternal Divine Beloved, to be loved and served by thousands. Baba carried with Him an atmosphere so surcharged with love that just a loving glance toward His lover would suffice to fill the heart of His loved one with all that he could long for.

"A complete itinerary of Baba's 30-day flight is attached for the reader's interest. Coincidentally, the reader would also feel interested to know that some 20 years ago Baba had made a passing remark in connection with His Western trips. Baba had said then that there would come a time when He would have to travel far to distant lands in a limited time to meet His lovers in different parts of the globe. Baba had also added that, during these travels, He would rest for the night on one continent, the next day on another and that He would take His breakfast in one country, eat His luncheon in another, have His afternoon tea in the third and so on. The four of the mandali who accompanied Baba this time found and experienced how true were the words of His casual remark passed some two decades ago.

"Besides seeing and meeting His followers in different parts of the globe and giving His *sahavas* to the groups in England, New York, Myrtle Beach Center, Washington, Los Angeles, Meher Mount in Ojai, San Francisco, Sydney and Melbourne, Baba was also kept busy with representatives of the press, television and radio broadcasting corporations. Baba seemed to be in a mood to satisfy the need of each and every one who approached Him.

"Whether one approached Baba with love or with curios-

ity, for genuine search after Truth or for news, each one felt satisfied and delighted to have come in contact with Baba.

"The lover of God felt the tremendous impact of Baba's love; the philosopher accepted Baba's wisdom and was filled with admiration; the scientist, the psychologist, the doctor or the professor could not help loving Baba once he found himself in His august presence. All realized their limitations when faced by the Unlimited One and all felt the force of love that radiated from the Infinite Ocean of Love.

"Many messages were given out during these thirty days of the tour, and it is expected that they will all appear in book form in due course.

"During the course of the whole tour, there were many interesting and intelligent questions put to Baba. A few of the most interesting answered by Baba are enumerated here:

"Q. Is it possible for man to get at the Truth?

"A. Yes. And as to how it is possible would be answered in a sentence, or even volumes would not suffice. I shall give the answer in one sentence: Discard falsehood to get at the Truth. But what is falsehood? You are right when you say that that which does not endure is falsehood. Therefore, discard all that does not endure and you will realize the Truth.

"Q. But is there any part of the self that endures?

"A. Yes, (Baba pointed at the person and said) *You* alone endure and the rest of your self is to be discarded to realize the real Self that is *you*.

"Q. Baba, what is the number of followers you have all over the world?

"A. Would you want to count the number of hairs on your head?

"Q. Baba, you are God and you know everything and yet why should you ask so often whether I love you? Of course, I love you very much.

"A. It is my delight to hear from my lovers that they love me. There is no doubt that I know everything, yet I ask. I feel delighted when my lover says, 'Baba, I love you very much.' As, for example, in everyday life, one comes across a very loving couple. Each loves the other very much and each knows it, and

yet the husband or the wife would very often ask, 'Dearest, do you love me?' Invariably the obvious answer would be, 'I love you very much.' It is my pleasure to ask and my delight to hear from my lovers their oft-repeated answer, 'Baba, I love you very much.'

"Q. Why should misery perpetually exist on earth in spite of God's Infinite Love and Mercy?

"A. The source of Eternal Bliss is the Self in all, and the cause of perpetual misery is the selfishness of all. As long as satisfaction is derived through selfish pursuits, misery will always exist. Only because of the infinite love and mercy of God can man learn to realize, through the lessons of misery on earth, that inherent in him is the source of infinite bliss and that all suffering is his labor of love to unveil his own infinite self.

"Then there were the messages from Baba given for the general public through the press. A couple of the most striking messages that Baba gave out spontaneously during the press conference are given hereunder as much as they could be recollected:

1. "Philosophers, atheists and others may affirm or refute the existence of God, but, as long as they do not deny their very existence, they continue to testify their belief in God, for I tell you with divine authority that God is Existence, Eternal and Infinite. He is everything. For man, there is only one aim in life and that is to realize his unity with God."

2. "I have only one message to give and I repeat it age after age. My message to one and all is: 'Love God.'

"One must love God with all sincerity to such an extent that one loses one's self completely in love.

"And how does one love God?

"One can love God as He ought to be loved by trying one's utmost to make others feel happy even at the cost of one's own happiness."

"During this tour, Baba often asserted His Divinity before

the public, the press and His followers who would gather in a hall to hear His messages. Baba would say through His gestures:

"I am the Lord of the universe."

"I am the One whom mankind eagerly awaits."

"I am the One that has been expected to come."

"I am the Ocean of Love. Fear Me not but love Me more and more. Love knows not fear. The more you will love Me, the closer you will come to Me."

"I am the Lord of the universe and I am the slave of My lovers."

"I and God are One."

"All that you see is My creation."

"The whole creation has sprung out of Me."

"In New York and in San Francisco, formal dinners were arranged to greet Baba. It would be very interesting for the reader to know what Baba had to say to His dear ones in response to the most touching welcome greetings for Baba from His lovers in America. Baba's response is reproduced verbatim hereunder:

"I feel very happy to be with you all today."

"It is your devotion that has made Me come to the West during the period of My seclusion"

"If anything ever touches My universal heart it is love."

"I have crossed the limited earthly oceans to bring to you all the limitless and shoreless Divine Ocean of Love."

"Those who do not dare to love Me seek safety on the shores. You who have been loving Me are swimming in this Divine Ocean. Love Me more and more till you get drowned in Me. Dive deep and you will gain the priceless pearl of Infinite Oneness."

"During this global tour, several spiritual teachers and leaders with some of their followers came to pay their respects

to Baba, as also some religious heads who have their own large followings. There came, too, the followers of *Sant* Kirpal Singh and Swami Shivananda. Baba met them all with love and blessed them with His love. There were also a couple of men amidst the multitude of admirers who had come to oppose Baba, and it was not surprising that they left the premises with a profound understanding and admiration for Baba after having come in contact with Him.

"The four mandali who had accompanied Baba on this cyclonic trip had some distinct glimpses of Baba as the Divine Fisherman who had, this time, spread His net right across the oceans and had vigorously and dexterously drawn His catch nearer to His Divine Heart. Every kind of fish that found its place in the net was willing and had no reason to struggle, for, unlike the rest of its kind, it had found its home and peace.

"Any record of this tour, however profound, would be a blind man's impression if there were no mention made of the labor and sweat of the lovers that were involved in elaborate preparations which were to do full justice to the reception of the Avatar of the Age.

"Every minute detail for the comfort of the Beloved and the four men who accompanied Him was scrupulously attended to and checked and rechecked to ensure maximum comfort. No detail was unimportant where the Beloved's requirements and conveniences were in question. Every item from the position of Baba's bed, the additional requirements in His toilet room and what He would relish most for His breakfast and luncheon, to how happy and delighted He would feel with special floral decorations in His suite was attended to with such care and love as could be bestowed only by the real lovers on the person of God in human form.

"Apart from the utmost care and anxiety for the Beloved's personal comforts, there were scores of other things that were important and needed prompt attention and completion. The conference halls were to be decorated, the appointments and interviews were to be timed to avoid confusion, road transport and air tickets for no less than fifty, who were following Baba right across the continent from New York to San Francisco, were to be constantly reserved and fixed, the fare money from

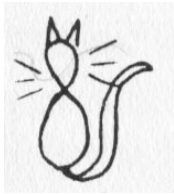
every individual lover joining the party was to be collected and their accommodations at every place of Baba's stay were to be seen to.

"The way in which these details, and many more, were worked out smoothly without causing the least inconvenience to anyone concerned is best left to the judgment of the reader to gauge. Every member of the various reception committees at all the places must have played his or her part well in order to make the 30-days-round-the-world trip of Baba as comfortable and as successful as it turned out to be.

"Blessed are the lovers of Baba who have His Love in abundance, for they take delight in their labor of love without thought of gain or reward.

"By Eruch Jessawala"

Adi K. Irani
Meher Publications
King's Road
Ahmednagar (India)
25th August, 1956



Dear

Satara
September 25, 1956

...A few days ago I was positively bulging with all the things I wanted to say, and now my mind seems a blank. It is as though you all are here with us, and words seem unnecessary with the deeper communion of our thoughts and hearts in Baba. Someone said to me the other day, "You don't chatter quite as much since becoming 'secretary.'" I laughed and said, "But I do, I chat all the time with those of the family that are physically across the oceans," and I am glad and happy Baba allows me to, though it just isn't possible for me, with the time at my disposal, to always write separately to each. Of course, when I write to any one of you, it is writing to you all, as I know the Beloved's news is shared. I mention this, for lately, correspondence has grown and, when I am not always able to answer directly, separately, or promptly as I would like to do, it is only because I am unable to do so for lack of time which may be taken up by other duties Baba has at times for me. But

I realize it isn't necessary for me to say this, for I know all you loved ones understand.

Baba has gone over to Jal Villa for His work with Kaikobad, and Mehera is putting fresh flowers in the vases (or, rather, jam bottles and drinking glasses that are just as pretty and take away less from the beauty of the blossoms). Did I ever tell you about Kaikobad of the mandali? Baba tells us how fortunate he is, for "He sees Me as I truly am."

K. is a Zoroastrian, a retired bank official, who has been with Baba these many years and whose family (wife and three daughters) stay in quarters on Meherabad Hill and are "of the ashram." K. was told by Baba to take His name some hundred thousands of times daily, which he did for years, and still does, as a matter of fact. We were in Dehra Dun when K. began to have experiences, seeing light so inexpressibly bright he cannot compare it with anything we know, with Baba in the midst, and worlds emerging from the light. Baba said at the time, "If it wasn't for My physical presence near him, he could not have retained his body." K. said, "Baba, I now know what you are, and there is no greater happiness to wish for!"

K. is very shortsighted and virtually "blind" in the dark. Yet, when he sees this light in the middle of the night, as sometimes happens, it is for him so literal that it makes the objects around him quite clear to his vision, so that he can even read by it should he want to do so. But that, of course, is as far as we understand, which is only an outward glimpse, and content with that and with whatever Baba gives with His precious love to us each, for Baba uses different and individual channels for His work in the universe.

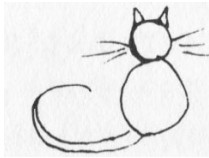
The Saint Gadge Maharaj once said, "Baba is like the Sun, and I am like a little lamp." And K. says, "Baba is the Sun; and Maya is the Moon. She tries to obstruct and eclipse the earth from the Sun's brightness. But the glory of the Sun is always shining, and His love and compassion can never be hidden from us for long even by our ignorance and attachment to Maya." I like his simile, for doesn't Baba say, "I haven't come to give anything that isn't already there. I have come to remove that which hides Me from you." And what is to be removed? Something impossibly difficult, as Hafiz says:

"Hafiz, remove thyself, for thou art the veil."

Oh, dear, it's good Baba isn't a "perfectionist" in the sense I mean—just Perfection. Or where would we imperfect ones be? We whom He refers to at times as "pearls" and at times as "broken-down furniture." But, then, He seems to like it this way! Thank heavens!

P.S.—Your kisses were as a shower of rose petals on those beloved feet, and He accepted them with His loving smile. Mehera says they are by proxy, till you can imprint them personally when you come.

Mani



Dear

Satara

October 12, 1956

You will be surprised to get this prompt letter which is hitchhiking along with Adele's, but I have some free minutes before coffee hour, and Baba has gone to Kolhapur to contact some *masts*. It is mainly to give you the latest Baba-news.

It was intoxicating to share your rhapsody on the Beloved's beauty and, as you say, it can never be enough. Makes me think of Kabir's lines: "If the earth were my paper, the forest trees my quill and the seven seas the ink, it would still not suffice to write in praise of Him." (Rough translation.) This morning, as I watch the flowers nod and the birds sing, they seem to be swaying and singing for Him, consciously or unconsciously, willy-nilly. And how good to know we are the "willies" and not the "nillies."

I thought I was high-pitch busy (as He seems to keep all close ones more than ever these days), but seeing what you all do makes me feel far less occupied because, at least, I don't stay up nights. That would be dreadful, for I'm a heavy sleeper. But I'm chatting too much, so here's the news:

Baba is on a 24-hour fast today (as usual, without water) and has just gone to Kolhapur to contact some *masts* there. On the 10th, He observed a similar fast. These particular fasts are for His work in this seclusion. Baba stayed in Bombay for only two-and-a-half days contacting *masts* there. But the one He wanted from Hardwar could not come. Or, to be more exact,

would not come in spite of all the coaxing from Baidul and Shatrugn. These *masts* called to Baba sometimes do that, as explained in *The Wayfarers*.³⁸ So, Baba left for Meherazad. There, it rained night and day, and the *mast* still did not come, so Baba returned to Satara on 8th evening. He fasts again on Monday and tells us it is the last for now.

We have been having constant elephant showers as they are known. Or, perhaps they should be called super-elephants, so terrific they were. Our room had pails all over the floor to catch the leaks. But they stop as abruptly and then the sun shines, and we run out with beddings and clothes that need to be sunned.

Someone wrote the other day, couldn't we think of another name for Operation Topsy, but I just can't think of any suggestions, and I am quite sure you dear ones will be able to decide which is best.

Love to the Five.

Mani

P.S.—By the way, Bili dear, please add in the news column that I shall not be sending any Christmas cards this year (I mean, like they were sent last year), according to Baba's wishes.

The following note, dated October 13, 1956, was attached to Mani's letter of October 12th:

Believe it or not but had a talk with you in my dream last night and had a name to suggest! I asked you how you liked "Operation Bee," and, when you asked what made me think of it, I replied, "Because, like the bee, it buzzes the news from flower to flower, and because it has the sound of the alphabet 'B,' for Baba, beautiful, beloved, big Boss, etc."—all this in the dream. Yet, I honestly couldn't think of a name in the daytime! So, Bili, it is just whichever you like.

I don't suppose this will be mailed until Monday, as I just can't find the copy of a letter I promised Adele and which I must enclose. I am beginning to get like that absent-minded professor who put up a sign on his door "Not at home" and, when he returned home and saw the sign said, "Oh, well, I can come back later."

Whisper something in your ear? I couldn't help reading some lines from your letter to Baba, including that last one, and I bet you felt that loving smile He gave.

Mani

Although over the years, there was a great deal of correspondence with Mehera and Mani, after the next letter sent through Kitty, it was the last letter from Mani for Operation Topsy, and the Family Letters began shortly thereafter.

Tuesday, December, 1956

Dear Bili:

To save time, I will write in longhand, as Norina is resting, and I don't want to disturb her. Quoting from Mani's letter received today:

Here is the Baba-news which please send to Bili for usual circulation in Operation Topsy. Baba was going to take it easy, but there was a loved quarry in sight, and He made a record-breaking 128 miles in two hours (and you know what that is on the usual Indian roads, through towns and villages, with cattle, dogs and bullock carts on the road). Baba wanted to contact this very high Hindu *mast*, whom He hadn't contacted before, and who was reported to be leaving his usual habitat at 3 o'clock on that afternoon. So, the mandali reached the spot at exactly 3, just as the *mast* was leaving the place, and Baba was most happy to contact this *mast*. The mandali were at a near collapse (some of them not being well to begin with), and Baba cancelled the further tour and returned to Meherazad where He intended to rest for a few days. There, once again, it poured incessantly. The rains have gone completely mad this year, for it's most unusual to have such torrents in November. Baba returned to Satara on the 23rd.

I'll end with a little family gossip. Bhooti is going to have puppies, and Mehera is specially happy. The father is an Alsatian, as we have wanted a near Bhooti-like one, and she won't be having pups much longer. Kaka cares for her like a daughter and, although she's so regal and does not care to show her love, she demonstrates such exuberance when she sees

Baba. When Baba was in Meherazad now, He said Kaka let her off the leash and she ran straight for Baba and got into His lap and played with Him! Well, even she knows where love belongs.

In haste,

Love,
Kitty

Annotations

1. Highest of the High, Meher Baba's first public declaration of His Avatarhood, given September 7, 1953 in Dehra Dun.
2. Ivy Duce: Murshida of Sufism Re-Oriented until her death in 1981.
3. Meher Baba began a life-long silence on July 10, 1925. He used an alphabet board to communicate until 1954, when He began communicating with a unique system of hand gestures.
4. Kaikobad, one of Meher Baba's early disciples.
5. "The Die is Cast": A pamphlet including a digest of Meher Baba's remarks on April 24, 1955 at Satara, India.
6. The mandali had ordered coffee and Danish as a coffee break, following the American custom. This displeased Baba because money had been contributed to bring Baba and the mandali to the United States.
7. *Prasad*: a gift from the hand of God.
8. *Daaman*: hem of a garment. Holding onto Meher Baba's *daaman* is symbolic of holding on to Him.
9. *Sahavas*: the company of the Perfect Master.
10. I had referred to Baba as my Valentine and had explained the celebration of the day to Mani.
11. *Babajan*: one of Meher Baba's five Perfect Masters.
12. Baba was referring to the East-West Gathering at Poona in 1962.
13. Silence. Meher Baba usually ordered silence, and sometimes fasting, for His followers on July 10, the anniversary of the day He began His silence in 1925.
14. Last *Darshan*
15. *82 Family Letters* by Mani S. Irani, published in book form in 1969 and 1976.
16. Mani refers to my typing copies of the original five-volume *Discourses* to share with other members of the New York Group.
17. To be put in *The Awakener* magazine, Vol. III, No. 1, Summer 1955.
18. Adi's confusion about my name had spread to Mani.
19. Assistant editors of *The Awakener*.
20. Margaret Craske's dancers.

21. Referring to the cat or cats Mani usually drew on her letters to me.
22. Mani refers to my crisis with Frank, which she had discussed in a letter to me.
23. Elinorkit: A joint name for Elizabeth Patterson, Norina Matchabelli and Kitty Davy, it also served as a cable address for many years.
24. Nariman Dadachanji.
25. Mani refers to my getting a new apartment in the beginning of her letter and looking for another one at the end, as I was moving all the time, having moved six times between 1952 and 1956.
26. I had not at this time gone back to dancing. I went back to it in 1958.
27. Walt Disney idea: The idea occurred to me at the time of release of Walt Disney's "Fantasia" that such a film treatment would suit *God Speaks*.
28. Rano Gayley: one of Meher Baba's earliest Western disciples and the only one still living at Meherazad, Meher Baba's home in India.
29. Koduri Krishnarao.
30. Baba brought four men: Adi K. Irani, Eruch Jessawala, Meherjee Karkaria and Dr. Nilu Godse.
31. Energy: Meher Baba's nickname for Marion Florsheim.
32. The Duchess: the women mandali's nickname for Margaret Craske.
33. Beryl Williams was handling distribution of photographs of Baba in the United States.
34. Baba told us to read it.
35. Ruano Bogislav, an early Western disciple whom Baba referred to as His "eagle."
36. Nonny Gayley, Rano's mother.
37. Delmonico Hotel, where Baba and His mandali stayed on their visit to New York.
38. *The Wayfarers*, Dr. William Donkin's extraordinary account of Meher Baba's *mast* trips.

Bibliography

Readers who wish to know more about Meher Baba are referred to the following:

God Speaks by Meher Baba. The Theme of Creation and Its Purpose. First published in 1955. Dodd, Mead & Co., New York. 1973. Cloth.

Discourses by Meher Baba, edited by Ivy O. Duce and Don E. Stevens. These Discourses first appeared in the Meher Baba Journals, 1938-1942, and were later printed in India in a five-volume edition. A three-volume paperback edition was published in 1967 by Sufism Reoriented, Inc., San Francisco.

God to Man and Man to God, a one-volume edition of Meher Baba's Discourses, edited and condensed by C.B. Purdom. First published in England in 1955 by Victor Gollancz; reissued in 1975 by Sheriar Press. Paperback and cloth.

The Everything and The Nothing by Meher Baba. Discourses given in the late 1950s and early 1960s, compiled by Francis Brabazon. Available from Sheriar Press. Paperback and cloth.

82 Family Letters to the Western Family of Lovers and Followers of Meher Baba by Mani (Manija Sheriar Irani). An intimate picture through Mani's letters of Meher Baba's activities from 1956 to 1969. Published in 1976 by Sheriar Press. Paperback.

The God-Man by C.B. Purdom. A full and rich biography of Meher Baba up to 1962. Published in England in 1964 and reprinted in 1971 by Sheriar Press. Cloth.

The Beloved: The Life and Work of Meher Baba by Naosherwan Anzar. A pictorial biography interweaving 165 photographs with a colorful text. Published in 1974 by Sheriar Press. Cloth and paperback.

Much Silence by Tom and Dorothy Hopkinson. A finely written introductory biography of Meher Baba, with selections from his most important messages. Third edition published by Meher Baba Foundation of Australia in 1982. Paperback.

Treasures from the Meher Baba Journals, compiled and edited by Jane Barry Haynes. An excellent selection from the 1938-1942 Journals including beautiful photographs of life with Meher Baba during that period. Published in 1980 by Sheriar Press. Paperback.

Because of Love: My Life and Art With Meher Baba by Rano Gayley. A wide range of memories, accompanied by extensive art works, from a disciple of 50 years. Published in 1983 by Sheriar Press. Cloth.

The Dance of Love: My Life with Meher Baba by Margaret Craske. One hundred eighty pages of Margaret Craske's firsthand stories from her fifty years with Meher Baba, told with wit, warmth, and love. Published in 1980 by Sheriar Press. Paperback.

Love Alone Prevails: A Story of Life with Meher Baba by Kitty Davy. An extraordinary, detailed 700-page account of Miss Davy's 50 years with Meher Baba. Published in 1981 by Sheriar Press. Cloth.

Letters from the Mandali of Avatar Meher Baba, Vol. I, edited by Jim Mistry. A collection of letters from seven of the mandali and containing varying degrees of Meher Baba's participation. A number of the letters show how Meher Baba maintained outer communication with his lovers while nurturing them to depend upon that which lies within. Others address a wide variety of spiritual issues. Published in 1981 by Sheriar Press. Paperback.

Letters from the Mandali of Avatar Meher Baba, Vol. II, edited by Jim Mistry. A second collection of letters on a wide variety of spiritual topics by Meher Baba and his mandali. Published in 1983 by Sheriar Press. Paperback.

Glimpses of the God-Man, Volume III and IV by Bal Natu. Continuing series on Meher Baba's life. Published by Sheriar

Press in 1982 and 1984. Paperback.

Sparks of the Truth from the Dissertations of Meher Baba, a version by C. D. Deshmukh. Twenty powerful dissertations on the spiritual path, the nature of the soul and the meaning of life, all given by Meher Baba prior to 1949. Published in 1971 by Sheriar Press.

Three Incredible Weeks With Meher Baba, September 11-September 30, 1954, by Malcolm Schloss and Charles Purdom. A day-by-day diary account of a unique three-week darshan when 20 western men were invited by Meher Baba to take part in his daily life for that period. Published by Sheriar Press in 1979. Paperback.

Merwan, Stories of Meher Baba for Children by Anne E. Giles; illustrated by Dot Lesnik. Beautifully and simply written for children 10 and under, these stories of Meher Baba's life are illustrated with 50 high-quality pen and ink drawings. Published by Sheriar Press in 1980. Paperback.

There are many books by and about Meher Baba. For a free booklist or further information contact: Sheriar Press, 3005 Highway 17 N. By Pass, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina 29577.

A Love So Amazing

Memories of Meher Baba

The unplanned journey to God is the focal point of this memoir of meetings with Meher Baba and the impact they had on one worldly life. Bili Eaton's "A Love So Amazing" is a joy to read, combining as it does the seriousness and the humor, the simplicity and the complexities—and the love—that characterize the spiritual search and make it life's most adventuresome pursuit.

Register of Editorial Alterations

Page 35, para 2, line 13, accidentally changed to accidentally

Page 55, para 4, line 2, pronunciation changed to pronunciation

Page 70, para 1, line 2, litle changed to little

Page 95, para 5, line 2, folowing changed to following

Page 112, para 3, line 3, *goldmohr* changed to *golmohr*