

# **Twenty Years with Meher Baba**

by

Dr. Abdul Ghani Munsif

An Avatar Meher Baba Trust eBook  
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**TWENTY YEARS WITH  
MEHER BABA**

**MEHER ERA PUBLICATIONS, POONA**

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Publisher

## DECLARATION

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Publisher

## FOREWORD

*TWENTY YEARS WITH MEHER BABA* by Dr. A.G. Munsif has first appeared in a series of articles in 'MEHER BABA JOURNAL' (1938-1942) in its issues commencing from 1940. Obviously the period covered was from 1920 to 1940. Truly a very important phase of Meher Baba's life and work in his Avataric mission. As the process of bringing down his consciousness divinised by a kiss from the lips of Hazrat Babajan (January 1914) to the gross level of integrated and creative activities for the redemption of mankind was nearing the point of completion (December 1921) at the hands of Upasani Maharaj, we find him drawn to places spiritually prepared for the inauguration of his work, and persons destined to render physical service to him.

How he entered the hearts of those early associates and admirers from whom the early **mandali** (group of disciples) were drawn and how they were inspired to follow him makes an interesting study in what one may call "applied psychology." The attitudes and aspirations of those early associates are well depicted by the author's remark in his introduction:

"...As a matter of fact his two **gurus** Hazrat Babajan and Shri Upasani Maharaj, held the pride of place in the thoughts and discussions of all concerned and Meher Baba was looked upon as an exceptionally lucky recipient of their spiritual grace, whose potential was yet to be **determined from the standpoint of individual gain and benefit**. Few seemed to have followed him 'leaving everything' in the sense Jesus Christ asked men of his time to follow him, or according to the ancient concept of surrender to a Perfect Master



*held in the East.*

*Meher Baba's lovers often meet persons who ask questions on the daily life of Meher Baba and those who lived with him—whether they sat in “Padmasana, Siddhasana or Sukhasana,” whether they meditated or concentrated, what mantras he gave, how he initiated his disciples, whether they did any “yogasanas” and so on. Reminiscences regarding the author by Pratap G. Ahir give an interesting reading for those who wish to have an idea of the atmosphere around the Avatar, who, it may be remembered, visits this earth once in 700 to 1400 years according to Meher Baba, which atmosphere has no comparison with similar atmospheres that prevail around saints and Sadgurus in their Ashrams familiar to most men in the East.*

*The true spiritual concepts Baba had imparted to those who were attracted towards him in the early days, through the medium of games and sports they indulged in, through discussions he encouraged amongst them, through bhajans, qawalis and gazals he inspired them with and through his advices and explanations, are easy to grasp and are of lasting value for those who are on the Path sincerely seeking enlightenment.*

*Through the training he had given to those who had chosen to follow him in the early days, he seems to have given them a vision of the true spiritual values of life implied in the everyday life of every man in every walk of life. Everyone is potentially divine. The everyday life of every man is advancement towards the goal of life. For this world, he said, has sprung up with the only purpose of unfolding man his identity.*

*In order to understand creation in terms of*

*thought, it has been imagined from ancient times that this world has come into being in answer to a question God asked: WHO AM I? The One and the only answer to that question is: I AM GOD. Thus, everything and everyone in existence is God-seeking conscious experience of His Godhood . . . one of the infinite false answers that sprung up between the original question and the only true answer. Each one of us is thus God-seeking for Himself hidden under the three- fold veil— gross, subtle and mental.*

*When the Avatar of God descends to earth as Man for his work of universal transformation of human consciousness he brings with him those who are in His circle. And they, under the veil of **Vidnyani Sanskaras**, which the Avatar puts on himself and his circle, work in various fields of human activities, as princes, philosophers, poets, social, cultural, educational, and religious reformers, political revolutionaries, etc. etc.*

*Rabindrinath Tagore in his “Gitanjali” sings:*

*He whom I enclose with my name is weeping in this dungeon.*

*I am very busy building this wall all around, and as this wall goes up into the sky day by day I lose sight of my true being in its dark shadow.*

*I take pride in this great wall, and I plaster it with dust and sand lest a least hole should be left in this name, and for all the care I take I lose sight of my true being.*

*Meher Baba, through his discourses, messages, sayings and statements, gives man*

*opportunity of opening the avenues of his understanding one's ego-self, its origin, structure, sustenance, growth and its spiritual purpose. And in his smile one finds a glimpse of the beauty and glory of one's true Self. His love stimulates the inner being of man to become what in reality he is.*

*Why most men are worried? In spite of great strides man seems to have made in fields of science and technology assuring his material prosperity and progress, most men are worried in one way or other, which all the excitements in which they involve in order to forget themselves fail to hide. I have witnessed streams of men and women passing in front of Meher Baba during his life time each bearing a cross each thought was heavier. I have also seen persons so well placed in life that they were objects of envy for many others around them, opening up their hearts to him. To each one he said: "DON'T WORRY, BE HAPPY." He used to advise them to love him and leave everything to him. "Remember me constantly and wholeheartedly," he used to tell them.*

*The seat of one's ego-self is one's mind, a ceaselessly flowing stream of apparently endless desires, which prompts one to think selfishly, to speak selfishly, and to act selfishly. When one endeavours to love Meher Baba constantly and wholeheartedly one becomes aware of the operation of one's mind releasing its contents, a choiceless awareness of which set in motion a process of demolishing detachment towards the great wall one has been habituated to build around one's real self-God, the indweller of every heart. At the demolishing of this great wall of one's ego-self, one finds happiness he seeks and which is his birthright.*

*But the process is painful and time long. The path of love is for the brave. Listen to Tagore again:*

*Obstinate are the trammels, but my heart aches when I try to break them.*

*Freedom is all I want, but to hope for it I feel ashamed.*

*I am certain that priceless wealth is in thee, and that thou art my best friend, but I have not the heart to sweep away the tinsel that fills my room.*

*My debts are large, my failures great, my shame secret and heavy, yet when I come to ask for my good, I quake in fear lest my prayer be granted.*

*With wishes of Blessings from the Beloved of all hearts, Avatar Meher Baba, we release this booklet on the auspicious occasion of the 25th anniversary of BABA'S SERMON on the Mount of Mahabaleshwar.*

*Jai Baba!!!*

**K.K. Ramakrishnan**

## **PREFACE TO THIS EDITION**

First published by the Avatar Meher Baba Poona Centre in 1975, this reprint has tried to remain faithful to the original with only a very few spelling and punctuation changes made. Permission for this reprinting was given by Pratap Ahir and the Avatar Meher Baba Poona Centre.

The Meher Era logo has been omitted as has the original frontispiece photograph which has been replaced with a photo taken by Padri in 1937 at Nasik. The cover photo was also taken by Padri, in 1936 at Rahuri. Both are copyright by Meher Nazar and used with their kind permission.

The actual book was printed on-line using Kindle Direct Publishing and, obviously, not using paper bought through the Maharashtra State Government.

I am indebted to Beloved Meher Baba for the opportunity to be able to bring this treasure back into print.

Eric Teperman

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TWENTY YEARS  
WITH  
MEHER BABA



by  
Dr. A. G. Munsif



## DR. ABDUL GHANI MUNSIF

Dr. Abdul Ghani Munsif can be truly said to be one of those disciples whom fate conspired to link up inextricably with the personality of Meher Baba, even from early childhood. The families of the two concerned lived almost next door to each other for about 15 years in a locality known as Butler Moholla, Camp Poona and this long, neighbourly association ceased with the transfer of Dr. Ghani's father, Munshi Shaikh Mohomed (Military Accounts Department), to Calcutta and thence to France on Field Service during the last Great War. About the same age today as that of Meher Baba, Dr. Ghani amongst the Muslim Disciples, has not only the unique honour of being intimately associated with Meher Baba's school and College career, but for the last 20 years or more he has been directly or indirectly connected with the Master's spiritual mission in life.

The spiritual entry of Meher Baba into his otherwise humdrum worldly life as a practising Homeopath in Bombay, dates back to the year 1920, just a few months after his marriage—an event which he regrets to this day. Not because Meher Baba is against married life but the situation developed divided loyalties for Dr. Ghani who was torn between his sense of duty towards his benefactors and dependents and his allegiance to the Master, who stood there confronting him with the message of a New Life for him—a message relatively too good to be true and invaluable too rare to be missed.

It was easy enough for Dr. Ghani to give up (1921) his medical career at the behest of the Master but

it needed a greater experiment for him to learn to appraise and assess the relative values of his responsibilities towards the world. Masters knowingly afford sufficient latitude for individual expression and the reformation, or rather the awakening that is sought to be achieved thereby, is allowed to develop and grow from *within* instead of being imposed from *without*. Taking into consideration his peculiar circumstances, the prescience of Meher Baba into the temperamental make-up of the subject he was dealing with, accorded Dr. Ghani tacit consent and even personal advice in the matter of enabling him to make good his sense of responsibility towards those immediately and acutely concerned.

Thus equipped and blessed (1924) Dr. Ghani lost no time in asserting himself in the matter of serving and being useful to the world of his gratitude and sympathy. He not only consolidated his economic position to a comfortable extent, but was even unwittingly drawn into the snare of a public life and its responsibilities. In Poona district and Lonavala he was soon involved in social and political activities and in course of time he came to be associated with a good many institutions and societies of a religious and secular nature as also the local Municipal Councils. In recognition of his merit, the Government of the Province appointed him in the year 1926 an Honorary Munsiff with a civil jurisdiction over 12 villages including the hill stations of Lonavala and Khandala (Poona District).

All through this worldly game of imagined or real responsibilities by Dr. Ghani, the vigilant eye of the Master kept observing him from a distance, with subtle hints and warnings conveyed to him from time to time,

to pull up in time. Dr. Ghani himself could not ignore the feeling that the tacit understanding with the Master, in the matter of being available to him any time called upon to do so, was being violated, but he could not tear himself away from the vortex of circumstances and activities in which he was seemingly floundering in spite of himself. This anomalous position of Dr. Ghani, which was something more than he bargained for, provided great speculation to some of his brothers-in-faith (*mandali*) who being aware of the Master's spiritual interest in him, kept wondering as to when and where it would end.

The lone expected intervention by Meher Baba in the affairs of Dr. Ghani did materialise. The Master at this stage went in person to see him at Lonavala and bade him sever all connections with worldly activities. The experiment, for whatever it was worth, was enough for the disciple himself who emerged therefrom very chastened and sober in his outlook on life and the Master too thought it was high time to reclaim him once again for inscrutable reasons of his own. Thus the year 1936 sees Dr. Ghani once again beating an honourable retreat from worldly life and its commitments and since then he is serving the cause of the Master inspired by his personal example in the matter.

Dr. Ghani has travelled extensively with Meher Baba in India and participated in his journeys on foot, notably those from Poona to Bombay and Bombay to Sakori (Ahmednagar District). He was one of the party to accompany Meher Baba in his much advertised second visit to England, Europe and America in the year 1932 and was to all intents and purposes during this trip, the spokesman of the party towards Westerners who

could not have long enough contacts with the Master, due to pressure of engagements as well as His Silence.

Dr. Ghani's intellectual parts, his ready witticism, his uncanny memory for extensive Persian and Urdu poetry and his knowledge of Sufi literature are very much appreciated by the Master, who very often takes delight in introducing the friend of his childhood to newcomers by recalling these outstanding traits in him.

The spiritual contact with the Master aroused in Dr. Ghani the consciousness of poetical possibilities latent in him. Under the pen-name "Munsiff" he has to his credit a good many poems in the Urdu language, the high tone and standard of philosophical thought running through them, have been greatly appreciated at the poetical conferences which he has had the honour to preside in Poona District and Ahmednagar.

Dr. Ghani has been a consistent contributor to the pages of the spiritual monthly *Meher Baba Journal* and his speciality lies in the presentation of Meher Baba's philosophy and teachings in the light of Sufistic Gnosis with which he is no doubt authoritatively conversant.

He has been associated with the conduct of the *Meher Baba Journal* since its inception two years ago at Meherabad (Ahmednagar) and today he is at Bangalore in charge of the publication as Managing Editor.\*

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\*Reproduced from *Meher Baba Journal 1938-1942*

## REMINISCENCES REGARDING THE AUTHOR

“I have come to awaken people to the One God, One humanity, One brotherhood.”

—Meher Baba

The Vedantic conception of oneness of God, oneness of religion and oneness of humanity unfolded by Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and broadcast to the world by his worthy disciple Swami Vivekananda awakened the enlightened section of human society to a new awareness of values, clearer vision of true human relations based on the conception of oneness of all religions sustained by the One God Who is Indivisible Existence, Infinite and Eternal. This new awareness widened the horizons of international understanding. But in India, Vedanta (which, in fact, was an epoch indicating the end of Vedic conception of religious life, when a new cycle of true values of life began basing on the essence of Vedic outlook on life—the Upanishads) remained Hindu. The Vedantic conception of life was caged in the Hindu cell for all practical purposes. Similarly, the Sufi conception of spiritual values of life (the essence of Semitic religious conception of life) was caged in the Islam cell for all practical purposes.

In the West, small groups of spiritually inclined persons appeared to have been receptive to both the conceptions and endeavoured to experiment on these new visions of life. Thus the way can be said to have been laid in the West for Meher Baba's advent for his Avataric work of awakening the world to the new dispensation of the most ancient Truth. People in the

West are blessed in the sense that they are not burdened with age old religious traditions, faiths and beliefs, which are but husks of true spiritual values of life imparted by Perfect Masters and the Avatar from time immemorial.

In the East, particularly in India (which, incidentally, has become a home for all religious communities of the world), Muslims and Christians are most sectarian in their religious outlook. Meher Baba thus has the largest following amongst the Hindus. Though reverence has been evinced by large number of people from both the Muslim and Christian communities I know only of few families who have been deeply and consistently devoted to Baba. Ramjoo's and Ghani's are the earliest Muslim families wholly devoted to Meher Baba in Poona. Liberal education and experience from personal contact have drawn them to Baba.

There was a band of young men and women in Poona well informed about the Avatar, his advent, life and activities. To be amongst them was to meditate on Meher Baba. Incidences from the life of Baba and his disciples were favourite subjects of discussion when they came together. Dr. Ghani was a loving and inspiring guide to these young and enthusiastic group of lovers who formed the nucleus for the activities for the Cause of Meher Baba in Poona and the suburbs. They are the unconscious originators of *Avatar Meher Baba Poona Centre*, an unmatchably well-equipped Institution today to impart information about the Avatar and the significance of Avataric Advent and function. Pratap G. Ahir, a member of this group, recounts his reminiscences regarding Dr. Ghani:

## HIS MASTER'S VOICE

Dr. Ghani was sometimes called “His Master’s Voice,” because of his capacity to communicate true spiritual concepts and explain in depth Meher Baba’s messages, discourses, sayings and statements with illustrations drawn from everyday life. It is said he acquired this capacity by his effort to measure the depth of Meher Baba’s knowledge in the early years of his association with him before he could accept a position of a disciple to one who was his childhood friend. He was a voracious reader and read deeply on Sufi, Vedantic and Christian mystic schools of thought. It was his practice in those early days to read such intricate subjects on religion and spirituality and then to put difficult questions to Meher Baba knowing well Merwan, his friend, had never read such books. But to his surprise he found Meher Baba answered all his questions with ease. Later on, Dr. Ghani realised that it was the Master who was training him as a fit instrument for his work. We are thus able to read many articles written by Dr. Ghani in *Meher Gazette* and *Meher Baba Journal*, existed in the name and for the Cause of Meher Baba in the past.

## EXPERIENCE

Every lover of God invariably has an experience in which he finds the hand of his beloved God and the memory of which sustains his love for and enhances his faith in God. Dr. Ghani too had one such experience. During the years Dr. Ghani was separated from Merwan

(Meher Baba) as school mate he had not only completed his education, established a medical practice in Bombay and entered into matrimony, but also was slowly entering into the public life of the time, which earned him a rank and position as a honorary magistrate. While Merwan was spiritually elevated to the state of the Highest of the High, his childhood friend Ghani was steadily plunging into the public life of the time. But their meeting again at Poona (which is narrated elsewhere in this booklet) made a tremendous impact in the deeper recess of Ghani's heart and he was drawn towards Meher Baba in spite of his intellectual reservation and love for freedom.

Dr. Ghani's visit to Baba began during the Poona phase of Meher Baba's life and work (1916-1922) and continued to Bombay phase at Manzil-e-Meem (1922-1923). But at the beginning of the Meherabad phase (1923-1924) Dr. Ghani, it seems, was one of those who had decided to leave Baba for the time being to live according to his instructions (see page 42 *God-Man*).

World, Meher Baba explained, was the shadow of God. When man is engulfed in the shadow he loses sight of the glory and beauty of God. World and its affairs claim him. Thus, Dr. Ghani found himself plunging into various business enterprises, besides being involved in social activities. Master's watchful eye was on him. Words of advice to turn back from illusion touched him very often. But the impact of the accumulated impressions impelling the individual to move according to the design of fate was so powerful that even God had to wait. Yet, while waiting thus for the right time to save the soul, Master once remarked, 'I will bring you back to me at pistol point.'



At last, Master's will prevailed, for it was the will of God. Dr. Ghani's efforts to establish himself in a comfortably flourishing material life failed. Not only that, his property at Lonavala was on the point of being attached by a Marwadi to whom he owed large amount of money but also circumstances soon led him to a stage when he had decided to end his life. As an aid to execute his decision, he got drunk to his heart's content one evening and went by the side of the lake at Lonavala. There he began to remember God in all His names known to mankind including the new one, "Meher Baba," in a most abusive language. Either as a response to the remembrance of the living God or by the calming effect of the cool breeze by the lake, one cannot say, Ghani was lulled to a sound sleep. Response from the Compassionate Father of all in Creation was there! Meher Baba and his mandali drove in and tactfully got Ghani in his car and carried him to Ahmednagar, where he was left to recover himself.

The Marwadi who was to bring attachment on the property of Dr. Ghani was murdered on the same night. Naturally, the first suspicion fell on Dr. Ghani, and it was on Baba's statement given in the Ashram that Ghani was with him during the night of the murder, that Ghani was saved from prosecution. Thus the Master's remarks that Dr. Ghani will be brought back at the point of pistol came to be literally fulfilled. And this experience can therefore, be considered as a final turning point in Ghani's life from illusion to God and he appeared to have held Baba's daaman till the end.

## LITERAL OBEDIENCE

Dr. Ghani enjoyed certain amount of latitude in the Ashram while living in the company of Baba. He leaves behind many sweet memories of his stay with Baba as one of the resident mandali (disciple).

He was a chain smoker and his daily diet included meat—both of which were not allowed in the Ashram in the early days of training. But denial of smoke dulled his spirits more than meat diet. Considering his long standing habit, Baba allowed him five cigarettes a day. But this was not sufficient for him. From his fertile brain he designed a plan. He began to join together four to five cigarettes and make one. Such five cigarettes of his own make he began smoking each day. When Baba came to know of this he was displeased and had taken Ghani to task for disobedience. But Ghani argued out his case convincingly stating that he was smoking only five cigarettes a day in obedience to Baba's order, the length of the cigarette not being decided. Baba enjoyed the joke and allowed him to smoke as he used to, an exception to the rule of the Ashram.\*

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\*Saints and Sadgurus do not allow such latitude to any amongst their disciples. Implicit obedience to the master is the law that binds an aspirant after Truth, unconditionally, uncompromisingly. Disobedience invites dangerous consequences. But the Avatar's attitude is different. Compassionate Father of all in Creation condones all wrongs born out of weakness natural to all in Creation. He cares only for love and spontaneity.

## **BATHING THE WALLS**

It was compulsory for everyone at Manzil-e-Meem to take a cold bath early in the morning. Dr. Ghani, it appears, was not in the habit of a daily bath, never a cold bath in the morning. But one has to abide by the discipline and rules governing the daily life as laid down by the Master while living in an Ashram. Dr. Ghani, however, avoided this particular rule. He used to go to the bath-room like others, but instead of taking bath, he used to take mug full of water and throw it on the walls making noises a man is likely to make when compelled to an unwilling cold bath. Somehow, this practice of bathing the wall was discovered by others and promptly reported to Baba. One day when Dr. Ghani entered the bath-room and began this pretention of taking his bath, Baba suddenly entered the bath-room. Thus caught in the act of breaking the discipline of the Ashram, Baba gave him a cold bath with his own hand. Blessed indeed he was to have been bathed by God, the Compassionate Father of all in Creation.

## **WHERE BABA IS NOT?**

Dr. Ghani was humorous by nature; his ready wit and jokes gave relaxation to Baba, burdened as he was with his universal work, nature of which is beyond the ken of ordinary men, and relief to the inmates from the monotonous atmosphere of the disciplined and tense life around Baba in the Ashram.

Once Baba became very angry with Dr. Ghani and, in the heat of the moment, asked him to go away.

Ghani, like an obedient child, got up, packed his things in preparation to leave and then asked Baba where he should go. Baba told him that he could go anywhere he liked and he should not show his face again. Dr. Ghani quietly said that he did not know any place where Baba was not (Baba, as the Avatar of God, being all-pervading) and hence could not decide where to go. Baba's anger turned into laughter and in his unbounded compassion forgave Ghani.

## UNRUFFLED

It was in the year 1937. The early group of Western disciples was then living with Baba along with the Easterners at Meherabad. Baba desired that everyone should write an article on "Avatar" and announced the best article would be awarded a prize. The articles were to be read out before Baba one by one when he came to the hall at 8 a.m. Everyone accordingly had written the article and on the scheduled date each one read out his or her article before Baba.

When Dr. Ghani's turn came, he was not present. Seeing Baba coming ten or fifteen minutes past eight every morning, Ghani spent sometime giving a final touch to the rest of the article and came leisurely to the hall. To his surprise, however, he found Baba already seated on his chair red with anger. As he entered the hall, Baba asked Ghani as to why he was late. Ghani replied that thinking Baba would be coming late as usual, he took liberty to go through the text of the article once more and was thus delayed.

Baba then asked those who were present to say as

to what time he (Baba) came to the hall. Everyone told Ghani that since it was his turn Baba came to the hall ten minutes before time. Baba then called Ghani near and slapped him hard on the cheek, scolding him again. Ghani this time thought that Baba would embrace him as he sometimes did after such flare up. But unexpectedly Baba gave him another hard slap on the other cheek and at once asked him to read out the article. A real disciple of a real master Ghani was! He began reading the article at once in his natural and normal style as if nothing had happened. The article proved to be the best one and Baba was very happy. But surprise was written on the face of everyone there as to how Dr. Ghani would forget the whole incident in a moment and could read the article in his usual mood, unaffected by the incident.

Baba then, probably reading the minds of all present, asked Ghani as to how he did not get angry. Ghani's answer brought forth mirth enough for all to forget the episode. Ghani said, "Angry I was, of course! But you being my childhood friend I excused you." Baba burst out in laughter in which all joined. Baba then said, "You are really *Naffat* (shameless)." Remember, it was possible only for one like Ghani who could keep his balance of mind in such situation before the Master. Ghani was awarded a beautiful suit as a prize for the article.

## SONG OF GRIEVANCES TO GOD

During the Bangalore phase of Meher Baba's activities, Dr. Ghani was in charge of the general

management of the Establishment. Each resident *mandali* (disciple) was allotted duties according to each one's ability and experience. Aga Baidul was in charge of the mess. Baba said that anyone who is economical in managing the affairs of the Ashram would please him. Aga Baidul took up the suggestion and, with an intense longing to please Baba, purchased large quantity of pumpkin (Kaddu or Bhopala), cheapest vegetable in the market then. He fed the mandali every day with this vegetable. For morning break-fast, afternoon lunch and evening dinner, he served pumpkin as vegetable. This had an adverse effect on the health of many members. Some had stomachache, some developed aversion to eat. But no one dared to draw the attention of Baba. None wished to interfere with the duties of Baidul, as it would be against the discipline of the Ashram. Since all knew Ghani had a fertile head, they all sought his help to get out of the situation. Even Ghani could not have reported the matter to Baba. So he composed a song which began, "Mere Baidul ne Kola Pakaya hai Aj," meaning "Today my Baidul cooked Kola (Pumpkin)." Baburao Kamble, one of the inmates was asked to sing this song before Baba, when Baba was in a mood and called for music. Soon the opportunity came when one day Baba wished to hear some gazals. Kamble sang the song composed by Dr. Ghani. Baba enjoyed the song and, in his own characteristic way, brought out the whole episode. Baba chided Aga Baidul for adopting such a means of economy and got all the stock of pumpkin buried.

## AUCTION AT AVATAR'S ABODE

Ghani, as the general manger of the Establishment at Bangalore, found his cash balance not agreeing with his accounts. In order to make up the deficiency he decided to raise the money by auction of the suit he had won for his article on Avatar. Dr. Nilu (Nilkanth Godse) strongly opposed this as, according to him, it was against the discipline of the Ashram. In spite of this objection, Ghani went on with his plan and the suit was given to the highest bidder, Shri Vishnu Master, who paid the amount required to make up the deficit. But when the auction proceedings were over, Dr. Nilu quietly purchased the suit from Vishnu Master. Dr. Ghani somehow came to know about this back-door transaction and waited for an opportunity to expose the hollowness of Dr. Nilu's discipline.

When Baba came to know about the auction of Dr. Ghani's suit, he took him to task for braking the discipline of the Ashram. While humbly submitting to Baba's chastisement, Dr. Ghani sarcastically remarked, "It was only Dr. Nilu who adhered to the Ashram discipline." He added, "While Dr. Nilu evaded participation in the auction and opposed it on the grounds of discipline, he purchased the same suit quietly from Vishnu Master through a back-door transaction." Baba enjoyed the childish pranks of his disciples.

It was wrong to name the Abode of the Avatar as an Ashram in the popular term. The atmosphere around the Avatar was utterly unlike that prevailing around saints and sadgurus. It was rather a family atmosphere where the Father of all in Creation lived with His children, representing various aspects of human nature

having full and free play, through which the Avatar concentrated His attention on that very nature transforming the universal consciousness of humanity. Only those who had a close observation of life around Baba knew that the atmosphere around Baba represented a miniature world, which he had come to redeem. The only thing common to all around Baba was that, in spite of their diverse nature, they all loved Baba and their daily routine was so designed that they all remembered him constantly. There was no sitting in stiff necked vertical pose for meditation or concentration as might have been imagined by the outside world.

## **CRAVING FOR POWERS**

During the Rahuri phase of Baba's life and work, Dr. Ghani once complained to Baba (of course in a humorous vein) that, even after living with Baba for so many years, he was not given any siddhis (occult powers) and was thus unable to perform even a simple miracle. He, therefore, requested Baba to give him some such powers, which would enable him to earn his living and also command reverence from the people.

Baba said, "I can give few such powers. But you have to do as I say." Baba then gave him three options:

- (a) To become naked, smear the body with ashes and sit in a cemetery.
- (b) To remain on water for six months.
- (c) To remain on milk for three months.

Baba assured him if he followed the first course he would be attaining such powers that even if he were



to give a pinch of dust to anyone, the desires of that person would be fulfilled. Ghani rejected the first offer outright, saying that he should have divinity in suit and boots. He used to say, "I would not like to go to Himalayas for getting God-realization. I wish to have that divinity which enables one to run a race horse, and my Ashram would be like the durbar of ancient kings. On one side delicious food and wine and on the other side music and dance to entertain."

Though begun in a humorous vein, it ended in a serious challenge which Dr. Ghani had accepted. He had decided to live on milk for three months. Baba agreed. Though Ghani had a natural aversion to drinking milk, he began drinking mugs full of it whenever he felt hungry. The result was that he began getting nausea for milk and suffered from diarrhoea; his body began smelling milk. Above all was Baba's remarks expressing concern for Ghani's health. He would often tease him, saying, "Ghani has gone weak, looks pale. I am worried about his life." Though Ghani was annoyed about this teasing interference, he was determined to complete the period of the fast.

When the period of fast was nearing its end, Baba one day called all members of the mandali and told them that Ghani would definitely die soon and that they should make arrangements for the funeral. A coffin was brought and grave was dug within the Ashram's premises. The coffin was covered with garlands and incenses were burned and all the inmates assembled around with all seriousness and grief. To the surprise of all, Baba entered the coffin, reclined therein for a while and came out. The mandali members were then asked to complete the process of burial by first

taking the coffin round in a procession and then place it in the grave that was dug. Everything was done according to Baba's wish and Baba then made Ghani to break his fast.

Dr. Ghani later on told us that Baba had effected a transformation in his life. Ways of the Masters are beyond the reach of human mind.

## **MEDITATION NOT FOR MANDALI**

Dr. Ghani used to accompany Baba on his early tours to the West. Mr. Meredith Starr, who established a Spiritual Retreat at East Challacombe, Combe Martin, North Devon, England, in the early thirties, was an instrument in the hand of God in introducing the Avatar of the Age to the Western World. Baba and his mandali stayed at the Retreat on his first visit to England in 1931 and again in 1932. During their stay there, Dr. Ghani gave such an inspiring talk on meditation that Meredith Starr requested Baba to allow members of the mandali to join the Western lovers in group meditation. This was something unusual for the mandali because Baba never used to give any such spiritual exercises as has been enforced by spiritual masters in their Ashrams. Life with Baba was a constant communion with God. For the disciples absorption in each one's allotted duty left no room for any other thoughts.

However, to satisfy the enthusiasm of the Western group, Baba asked the mandali members to join the meditation group. To sit straight in a stiff pose in the biting cold of the West was a severe test through which the mandali members managed to pass the first

day, but the next day Ghani requested Baba to get them out of this awkward situation. So the next morning, when Meredith Starr came, Baba told him that the members of the mandali would meditate in their rooms as they were not used to the severe cold of the Western country. Thus Baba saved them all from the predicament created by Dr. Ghani's lecture.

## **NEW LIFE PHASE**

When the conditions of the New Life were announced and the lovers were called upon to declare their willingness or otherwise to follow Baba in that life, Ghani hesitated to give his reply. Baba then told him that "New Life" without Ghani would lose all charm and that he should give his "Yes." Therefore, Ghani told Baba that the hardships he visualised from the conditions stipulated to govern the various phases of the New Life—Langoti life (life of loinclothed mendicants), Labour life and Life of Hopelessness and Helplessness, etc. made it impossible for him to decide unless Baba himself would hold his hand and lead him through the New Life. Ghani told us that it was on such an assurance from Baba, Ghani joined the New Life. The New Life song Dr. Ghani composed describing that life shows the depth of his intellectual insight and poetical perception.

After returning from the New Life under PLAN I-C (INDIVIDUAL) given in Life Circular No. 3 issued on 10 February 1950, Ghani came back to Poona. Here he used to spend long hours with the Poona group of young lovers, enthusiastic, intelligent and inspired.

Some office goers, some just children who just joined the elders amazingly absorbing everything they heard and saw. During the evenings and holidays they assembled at the residence of Shri L. B. Thade, who was then the Superintendent of the Backward Class Hostel, situated just opposite to G.P.O. in the Cantonment area. Dr. Ghani visited this place often and they crowded around him, sang bhajans and gazals, listened to his talks narrating various events of his life with Baba and explaining the significance of Meher Baba as the Avatar of the age.

## KANTALA YOGA

Some of the orders Meher Baba gave to his disciples appeared to have no meaning. For example, during the Manzil-e-Meem phase, three disciples were told that whenever they were free from work they were to sit close by him, one on Baba's right hand, other on his left, and the third opposite him. Whatever the place or circumstances, even if travelling by train, they were required to carry out this order.

During the New Life, on their way to Allahabad, in a lonely place where Baba and companions were halting in the bitter cold of U.P., the companions were asked by Baba in the early morning at 4 o'clock to sit on their beddings without doing anything and again sleep at 5 o'clock. The order apparently was meaningless and bereft of any purpose except what one may imagine Baba had. It is this kind of discipline that Ghani used to humorously call "Kantala Yoga." "Kantala" in colloquial language means "boring."

On 22nd November 1949, while Baba and his companions were staying at Benares, one night before retiring Dr. Ghani said jocularly, “The New Life meant only this much. To do routine things at odd times to create a difficulty where none exists, to pull up with a jerk on otherwise smooth-going situation—all such things have gone to make what we call New Life.” Baba overheard this remark and asked Dr. Ghani to explain.

With great fervour and eloquence Ghani explained:

“Look at the unearthly time for our morning tea—5 a.m. We have no religious duty to perform in the morning like *Arati*, *Sandhya*, *Puja*, *Kusti-Sadra*, *Namaz* and yet in this cold biting weather, we are required to crawl out of bed, groaning, hissing shivering, coughing, at 4:30 in the morning, just for the cold pleasure of a cup of tea and chapatti (if available) at 5 a.m.”

These remarks of Dr. Ghani evoked a hearty laughter from all those around; Baba evidently seemed to enjoy the situation. While bidding good-night, he ordered Baidul quite unexpectedly that tea, the next morning, should be taken by all at 4:45 i.e., fifteen minutes earlier.

On 23rd morning, Baba took all by surprise by taking up the subject of Dr. Ghani’s remarks last night concerning the awkward time for morning tea. He said, “I did not have sleep the whole night. The spontaneous laughter of all concerned over Ghani’s remarks had set me thinking. I was thinking that if the remarks of Ghani regarding morning tea, made by him last night and the support thereto by the delightful laughter of the companions were all to be taken as joke or they were

serious about it. If it was all in a joke, then I was wrong in not appreciating the joke. If it was serious and if you think that the order for the morning tea was unnecessary and meaningless, then it is not only criticism, but the most flagrant violation of the conditions of the New Life.”

The companions were all taken aback by this interpretation which evidently gave Baba sleepless night. Baba therefore gave all the companions a chance to clear up their intentions over the last night’s incident. When assured by all that though all orders of Baba are not easily understandable, none of them considered such orders as meaningless and unnecessary. This assurance relaxed the tension instantaneously. Baba dismissed last night’s episode as a joke. For such humour and joke Ghani has special latitude. Baba made some of the companions to pinch his ears for doubting and suspecting their bonafides. He said that the one sleepless night for him was worth the satisfaction that he now feels over the clarification of the companions’ mind and feeling.

Whether one is able to see any meaningful purpose in such orders of Baba, apart from the obedience value, which itself is very significant from the spiritual point of view, it is true that those who were recipients of the strange orders from a Perfect Master were initiated into the highest form of spiritual discipline—constant remembrance of God or constant communion with God—*Sahaj Dhyān*, which ultimately leads to *Sahaj Samādhi*, the Goal of life.

## KNACK OF MANAGING ANIMALS

At a certain point of the New Life, Baba and his companions had to journey on foot. The foot-journey from Sarnath to Jaunpur, a distance of 38 miles, began on 12th December in the morning. A caravan of representative animals joined the party. The full caravan consisted of the camel-cart, the bullock-cart, the bullock-drawn ladies' coach (brought from Ahmednagar by Padri) two cows, two donkeys and a white horse. The whole cavalcade was given a spiritual or religious colour in the eyes of the people by the attire of the companions, which consisted of the white kafni, green turban and white shoes. The animals gave a good deal of trouble, in particular the two cows and the two donkeys. The first day, the cows and the donkeys refused to walk and they were required to be dragged continuously the whole distance. Dr. Ghani was completely knocked out in the handling of the donkeys along with Gustadji. Probably the donkeys did not like to have an intellectual person to lead their way. Ghani had an ordeal of his life. Seeing the plight of Ghani after the first day's halt at Shivpur, Ghani was ordered not to walk, but to ride the ladies' coach on the driver's seat. To offset the special consideration on grounds of health and age, Ghani, together with another companion was ordered to go for begging at every place of halt in the nearby town or village. The experience of begging gathered on the way gave a deep insight into human nature. In spite of the difficult times the villagers, in particular, could not refuse a handful of rice or flour if they could somehow manage to spare it.

The donkeys were then given in charge of the

ladies. They placed loads of luggage on the back of the donkeys and set them free. The donkeys behaved well thereafter and quietly followed the caravan.

## **ORDEAL OF OBEDIENCE**

To obey is to do what one is asked to do. In the army, one is expected to obey first and then complain. But in one's relation to Perfect Master, there is no room for complain at all. Implicit obedience is expected at all times. One has to become headless and footless in one's love for and service to a Perfect Master. Meher Baba used to say, "Do as I tell you." It is as easy as that, but found to be very difficult in practice, particularly in the spiritual relation between a Master and a disciple.

Spiritual disciplines are aimed at annihilation of the ego-self of the aspirant after Truth. Obedience is the technic with which the Master performs this difficult operation; when the operation is over the disciple (the aspirant after Truth) becomes the Master.

One of the conditions binding all by oath in the New Life was not to get angry. One day Baba himself lost his temper and for this breach of the oath undertaken, Baba asked each of the companions to come forward and kick him. The most important of all conditions was to obey Baba without question, implicitly and instantly. Baba was no longer to be looked upon as the Avatar nor even a spiritual Master, but a companion. Even the companions had to refer to Baba when talking to outsiders as their elder brother. Though a companion in all respects, performing all duties like others, companions were to obey him in all



matters without the slightest hesitation, defence or justification.

Thus, when Baba asked the companions to kick him, each one obeyed him. When Dr. Ghani's turn came, he approached Baba seriously with a gesture as if to give him a hard kick, but ended with a light touch, just in obedience. When Baba asked him in surprise why, Ghani said that he thought of giving a hard kick and thereby satisfy the anger that was created in him due to the hardships of New Life, but could not forget Baba was his childhood friend. This made all laugh.

### **WHEN YOU ARE IN ROME DO AS THE ROMANS DO**

While Baba warned his lovers against the fad of running after saints and sages, he advised them to observe the disciplines and practices prevailing in the atmosphere of a Master when visiting one. Dr. Ghani respected the faiths and beliefs of others. Once when a programme was arranged in a Hindu temple in the Kasba Peth area of Poona, where Ghani was to speak on Baba, he first ascertained from the management of the temple if they had any objection in his participation as he was a Muslim by birth, and he knew non-Hindus were not permitted to enter Hindu temples. Though he was a chain smoker, he did not smoke during the entire period of the programme even though he was allowed to smoke out of respect for his age and habit.

He gave an inspiring talk that evening elucidating the periodic advent of God as the Avatar on the earth and his function when he is here physically.

## BABA'S GANAPATI

Ganapati is the elephant headed deity of Hindu mythology, symbol of an enlightened intellect or wisdom. Baba often referred to Ghani as Ganapati, gesturing with his hand the big head Ghani had. Ghani was truly intelligent. When giving talks on Baba and his expositions of the Truth, Ghani never had to refer to any books or notes. Once, when we asked him to read Baba's books and explain, he told us whatever he spoke was Baba's expositions from his books. And in later years when we began reading Baba's books, we found his statement to be true.

Once Ghani gave an article on the Avatar to the *Illustrated Weekly of India*, which was published and for which he was awarded a cash prize. When Baba heard about this, he remarked that Ghani had made him (Baba) very cheap.

## KRISHNA'S PENDYA

During the Avataric period of Lord Krishna, there was one amongst the cowherds by name, Pendya, an ease-loving, but intelligent cowherd, whom Krishna loved and others were jealous and often complained about his behaviour. Amongst Meher Baba's close lovers, Dr. Ghani's position can be considered similar.

Dr. Ghani used to refer to Baba's Avataric work (divine leela) as "Boxing behind the curtain." He used to caricature Baba's name from "Irani" to "Hairani" meaning one who harasses. Another name he used to refer Baba with was "Sabrangsha"—one having all

colours or all in all.

On 16th October 1950, Meher Baba gave his “Sermon” on the Mount of Mahabaleshwar, Maharashtra State, India. Baba stepped out of what was then called “the New Life” and entered what was called his “Old Life” for a few hours. It was on this occasion that we saw Ghani with Baba for the first time. He was, on this occasion, seated on the right side of Baba. Even in the seriousness and serenity of that momentous meeting, Baba was found cracking jokes with Ghani. According to the Indian tradition, some of the lovers who were permitted to attend that meeting offered coconuts to Baba. Baba began throwing them one by one at Ghani. Ghani was able to catch some, some fell out of his hands.

In those days, the Poona group of young lovers was referred to as Dr. Ghani’s group. He was all praise for the group and was proud of it. Once, addressing a gathering in the Theosophical Lodge, Poona, he told the assembled members (most of whom were aged as well as learned men and women): “Where your knowledge ends, these young boys begin.” This he said with reference to their love for and faith in Meher Baba. Not only did he admire them amongst his associates and elites of the Poona society, but he used to praise them in the presence of Baba, thus drawing attention to them, which enabled them to get closer and closer to Baba and experience his love more and more.

## **LAST DAYS OF DR. GHANI**

On 25 December 1950 a gathering of the Poona

group was arranged in the presence of Baba at Mahabaleshwar during the period of Baba's New Life. No communication was then allowed. Ghani composed a poem to be sung by the group in the presence of Baba. It was a novel method of communication born out of Ghani's fertile brain in order to express the agony of his separation from Baba.

ABHI ABHI DIN THA, ABHI ABHI RAT HAI  
KISMATKE CHAKKAR ME KHUDA KA  
HATH HAI

meaning "Now it was day, now it is night,

God's hand is on the wheel of fate."

When the first two above lines were sung, Baba gave us the most delightful surprise in recognising the author of the poem, which he conveyed through his unique gestures saying, "It was the work of 'Mota Doka' (Big Head)."

Ghani sometimes wrote to Baba in poetry and received replies in poetry from Baba. Ghani's place amongst Meher Baba's *mandali* was indeed unique.

Ghani was not what one may call a handsome person. He was short, bending a bit on the back. Had a big and bald head. Yet his personality was very impressive. When seated he would look young but when standing he would appear aged. He had a lustrous face. A man of wisdom he was. He was always immaculately dressed in Western style. He used to walk leisurely with a walking stick in his hand and when entering a meeting place, he would always say, "Never too late, never too early, just in time."

One evening, for attending a function at the Anglo Urdu School, Poona, Ghani had to ride on a bicycle for a considerable distance. When the function

was going on, he got a severe heart attack and on August 20, 1951, this old man, who was so dear to us as our guide on our Godward journey, passed away. I remember that evening when we were going to pay our last respects to the departed soul, there appeared a bright and big flash in the sky. The atmosphere became all the more gloomy adding to our grief. Later on, it was found that there was an air-crash in Poona that evening. “The Voice of His Master,” dropped its vehicle and drowned itself in the infinite silence of His Master. Ghani’s body was removed to Lonavala and was buried there. The funeral procession was so largely attended that it was an unforgettable event in the history of that town. Many people joined the procession in spite of the heavy rain that day.

By studying books of Baba, and listening to talks on the spiritual subjects, one may gain an intellectual conviction on the states and status of the Avatar. But listening to the function of God as Man on the earth (popularly termed *Divya Leela* or Divine Game) which is but Self-giving love and self-withering sacrifice for the redemption of mankind, develops love for Him. Ghani had created this love in our hearts. Referring to Baba, he used to tell us, “This is the costliest Diamond I am giving in your hands. Hold it firmly at the cost of your lives.”

### **BABA’S TRIBUTE TO DR. GHANI**

In the Circular NL 30 dated 1 September 1951 issued from Hyderabad (Deccan) on 24 August 1951 Meher Baba said:

Of the many things I have had to renounce and to suffer in this New Life, the passing of Ghani is among the greatest.

I have felt a sense of loss at the passing of all those men and women of India and the West who were my disciples in the Old Life, and my lovers of all time. But this sudden wrenching away of Ghani is a disaster for me the more cruel because it came at a time when the New Life's consummation is so near at hand.

To me, more than to any of you, Ghani was unique, and of all of the work that still remains to be done for me by others, there is much that could have been done for me by Ghani and none else. The big head of his was truly a treasure-house in which wisdom and wit were blended to perfection. We were intimate friends since our earliest years, and no one knows better than I how courageous, and how loyal and loving, was his heart. To me, therefore, Ghani was irreplaceable, both as a friend and as a tool for my work.

Those of you who were at the meeting at Hyderabad on June 28, will remember that Ghani read out the explanation to my Declaration and also the Declaration itself. As one of the witnesses to that Declaration he was to fast on October 16, 1951 and say a prayer on my behalf.

Until February 16, 1952, I want to feel that Ghani is still in the physical body and I have therefore asked Ghani's son-in-law Baggu (who was not present at the meeting of June 28) to act as Ghani's proxy on October 16, by fasting and saying a prayer for me. Ramju has been instructed to give Baggu so

full and vivid picture of the meeting that he will feel himself to have been actually present at it. In this way Ghani's duty as one of the witnesses to my Declaration will be fulfilled . . . .”

—Meher Baba

Pratap G. Ahir

## TWENTY YEARS WITH MEHER BABA

### Introduction:

In attempting to write a resume of facts and events covering a long period of time connected with the rise of a spiritual personality like Meher Baba, who is an ever-expanding figure in the affairs of the World to-day, one is apt to draw a very rosy picture of things as if it was all plain sailing for everybody concerned. Particularly to one like me, whose life story is dominated by and crowded out of everything else by the ever-enlarging influence and stature of Meher Baba for over twenty years. the attempt to cover the ground retrospectively involves features peculiar to the situation.

In the first place it is impossible for me to avoid giving a personal touch to the narrative as a result of my early and intimate association with Meher Baba, and secondly, the possibility of my attaching too much significance to or reading too much meaning into words and events than is apparent to the eye—the natural outcome of my long novitiate with him. But the justification for my view-point in the matter is the resultant of two concomitant and fortunate factors—(1) the unremitting and personal interest of Meher Baba in me in spite of my hesitant and faltering steps and (2) my constant and persevering effort to study Meher Baba's spirituality through Muslim glasses, religious and spiritual.

This latter position can well be appreciated if it is remembered what the attitude of an average Muslim is towards saintliness outside the pale of Islam. The



Muslim Church doesn't think much of spirituality which bears not the Muslim stamp and Perfection to them from anywhere outside its fold is simply unthinkable. Bred and brought up in such environments, the claim to Spiritual Perfection by Meher Baba goaded me to take rather an academic interest as well in the question of spirituality and saintliness indigenous and foreign and my conscientious efforts in that direction have amply been rewarded.

The unique opportunity of Meher Baba's company afforded full scope for the interplay and adjustment of my knowledge from books (*Ilme-Safina*) with the gnosis (*Ilme-Sina*) of Meher Baba. And the upshot of it all has been a revelation to me far beyond my expectations, which enabled me to assess charitably the relative value and need of apparently conflicting features of faith and dogma at various stages in the mental and spiritual evolution of mankind.

Hence the side-lights afforded in the following pages on the spiritual influence and working of Meher Baba, individually and collectively, are not the outcome of an emotional mind fired with hero worship but they are the logical fruit par excellence of deep and personal contact extending over a number of years. I shall deem my efforts amply requited, if the review of facts and events attempted herein concerning Meher Baba, succeeds in rousing even a few sincere souls to a healthy and unbiased research in the domain of spirituality. And who knows the truth underlying the old adage, "the wish is father to the thought" may once again stand verified.

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It was in the year 1920, that I met Meher Baba once again at Poona after a lapse of almost six years, during which period we had practically forgotten each other. I was a practising Homeopath in Bombay at that time and used to make infrequent trips to Poona to see friends and relations. In one such visit to Poona by me, once I called upon my friend Munshi Abdur Rahim\* (Store-keeper, P.W.D., Poona), whose residence was always associated in the minds of those who knew him with festive little parties where I was always certain of contacting most of my local Muslim friends and acquaintances who invariably gathered there in the evenings to indulge in a feast of reason and the flow of soul.

The usual coterie of familiar faces was there right enough, but amongst them I was pleasantly surprised to find Meher Baba (who was Merwan to me at that time) whom I could not resist the temptation of greeting in the most informal manner the way I was used to in school and college days. Ignoring the presence of all others for the moment, I attacked Merwan straight off with a volley of questions too personal and unconventional as to his life and career to which he seemed to react very good humouredly to the surprise of those around.

Although everyone present there knew me too well and long enough, my fresh introduction to them by Merwan as his college and also childhood's friend, made me somehow feel on the occasion, that there was something criminal in my behavior that evening. My outburst of flippant familiarity with Merwan was

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\*An early Muslim devotee of Meher Baba who died at Nasik on 19th December 1935.

evidently not relished by Munshiji (as Munshi Abdur Rahim was styled by his friends) in particular, who gave vent to his pent up resentment by recalling an Indian proverb that “a friend of the past is always an awkward customer, alas.”

This remark set me thinking furiously and it didn't take me long to discover that the attitude of all those present towards Merwan was of great reverence and respect, the why and wherefore of it I could not then fathom. In between me and Merwan we recounted that evening many of our boyhood pranks and adventures and the punitive expeditions against each other in the absence of our elders from our neighbouring homes, much to the entertainment of the listeners. The party broke up that evening with a mute encouragement from Merwan for me to see more of him and I left with an indelible impression within me that because of my early association with Merwan, I would be welcome to the circle of friends there always more than ever.

Hereafter it was not very difficult for me to elicit all possible information from my Muslim friends of Poona about Merwan and his life in which naturally my interest was keenly aroused. They told me, how Merwan, while studying in the Deccan College happened to meet Hazarat Babajan (the lady Saint of Poona) in the year 1913 and how this contact culminated in his achieving God-realization. After this spiritual experience, they told me, Merwan was in a dazed condition of mind for about ten months without food and sleep and his subsequent contact with Shri Upasni Maharaj of Sakori which lasted for something like seven years brought him down to normal state of consciousness. My friends impressed upon me very

knowingly that Merwan was undoubtedly something of a spiritual personality and one not to be trifled with. To emphasize the point many an account of individual experiences of Merwan's occult and spiritual powers was given to me and it explained the situation as to why the other evening my informal behavior towards my school friend was given such a cold reception by those around. To me at that time he was only Merwan and to others he was Meher Baba which mode of address clearly implied their reverence for his spiritual state.

Matters did not end there. Merwan, whom I would style as Meher Baba hereafter, continued his infrequent contacts with me. Oftentimes we would repair to an Irani restaurant opposite Hazarat Babajan's seat (Charbavdi) and over a cup of tea Meher Baba would subtly initiate a discussion on varied topics particularly politics by putting me a suggestive question such as "Do you like the idea of Indian leaders dragging in religion to serve political ends?" The *Khilafat* Movement had made common cause with the non-cooperation of the Indian Congress at the time and Meher Baba would listen to my arguments for or again the question with an unassuming eagerness, as if politics was the only subject uppermost in his mind. From what I know of him to-day, I realize vividly that I must have bored him to death with my philosophy of politics, but he played his part to perfection as he never allowed me to have an inkling of it for the time being. On the contrary, he made me believe that he immensely enjoyed my talks by encouraging and inviting me to meet him as often as possible.

Reviewing the situation from such a long distance of time, I can confidently assert that Meher

Baba was then trying to sound the recesses of my mind and heart, ascertain my likes and dislikes and discover my fads and hobbies, if any, in life. This line of action he invariably adopts towards people in whom he is spiritually interested, with a view to adopting the least line of resistance from them for their ultimate good. While others smile condescendingly, Meher Baba accommodates and humours people, knowingly thereby affording glimpses of his deep understanding of the psychological make-up of man. Such timely gestures and concessions succeed, as nothing else can, in drawing the recipients thereof more close to Meher Baba than ever and an alert mind here is afforded ample time to bale itself out of a particular weakness which the Master was humouring all along. This opinion of mine, I am sure, will be sufficiently corroborated by similar experiences of others, who have stuck to him for any length of time.

To pick up the thread of my narrative, soon afterwards Munshiji was transferred to Bombay as a Store-keeper to the Back-Bay Reclamation Scheme and when Baba heard of it he non-chalantly said, "It is all prearranged; the venue of my working will shortly be shifted to Bombay."

At this stage I was afforded two centres of attraction where I could hear and talk about Baba—one at Munshiji's quarters in Charni Road Gardens, Bombay and another at Kasba Peth, Poona City, whenever I could go to that Place. Since Munshiji's transfer to Bombay, it was Kasba Peth, Poona City, that became the meeting point for Baba and his Hindu and Muslim admirers and friends. When the gatherings became almost a daily fixture and the attendance began to

increase, a suitable place was hired for the purpose in the vicinity of the Mausoleum of Khawajah Salahuddin.

Let it be mentioned *en passant* that at this stage no thought of Mastership or discipleship ever crossed the minds of those meeting Meher Baba with the exception of just a few who were aware of his spiritual connection with Hazrat Babajan and Shri Upasni Maharaj and those who were eye-witnesses to the severest of physical austerities suffered by Meher Baba in a small rented house in Kasba Peth (Poona) unknown to the outside world. Neither Meher Baba himself used to pose as a Master towards possible aspirants, as evidenced by the fact that he encouraged *arati* (hymnal service accompanied by the burning of camphor or lamps before a deity) ceremony of his *guru* (Master) Shri Upasni Maharaj amongst the Hindu votaries of the place. As a matter of fact, his two *gurus*, Hazrat Babajan and Upasni Maharaj, held the pride of place in the thoughts and discussions of all concerned and Meher Baba was looked upon as an exceptionally lucky recipient of their spiritual grace, whose potential worth was yet to be determined from the standpoint of individual gain and benefit.

Thus from amongst those who came into personal contact with him, many took him for an ideal friend, those less seriously inclined towards spirituality developed respect for him and not a few convincingly associated something divine and spiritual about him. From such an heterogeneous human element that was attracted to him at Kasba Peth, Poona, the nucleus of Meher Baba's *mandali* (group of disciples) was formed and which since then has grown out of all recognition although most of the original members are still

functioning and active.

## THE POONA PHASE

As stated before, it is to Kasba Peth, the *bhoi* (fishermen) locality of Poona, on the banks of the Moola river, that the honour of first recognizing Meher Baba's spiritual worth is rightly due, and it is somewhat reminiscent of the early association of Jesus Christ with the fishermen of Galilee. The wisdom in the choice of this locality by Meher Baba, in the matter of his first spiritual contact with the outside world would be well appreciated, if the following concomitant factors are taken into account.

The Hindu local populace consisting mostly of fishermen, though religiously orthodox to an extent, evinced a sort of a camaraderie with the Muslim element there, over their common allegiance to the spiritual genius of the place—the shrine of the famous Muslim Saint Khwaja Salauddin. Hence the social contact of Hindus and Muslims at Kasba Peth, with Meher Baba as the centre of attraction, never smacked of that undefinable feeling of restraint and reservation which one unmistakably sniffs in the atmosphere on ultra orthodoxy as that of Southern India.

In spite of the merry atmosphere of those social evenings, with Meher Baba as the cynosure of all eyes, one could feel him asserting himself or rather expanding towards those around him in very many subtle ways. He began taking personal interest in the affairs of individuals—Hindus and Muslims alike—and the advice he gave was greatly appreciated and implicitly followed.

At this stage he came to be regarded as a very sincere and disinterested friend and many would feel relieved and comforted after unburdening to him, the best or worst of their secrets and troubles.

Meher Baba, in dealing with people opening up their hearts to him, demonstrated a very happy knack of inspiring confidence and hope in him, by a timely gesture of appreciation and a kindly word spoken at an opportune moment, which would very often go a long way in retrieving many a desolate soul from the depths of despondency and in goading many a desperate people to exert an extra spurt in the matter of facing the odds in life. Illustrative of the above trait in him, I can recall the reassuring reply he gave to one of my consultative letters in the words of the poet Hafiz saying:

“I am an humble servant of the old tavern-keeper (God) whose love is unchangeable and eternal; unlike the religious and the pious whose kindliness and concern is very fickle, and uncertain.” What hope and solace these words inspire on being assured of a stable background against the unsteady and fleeting panorama of life and circumstances!

The early *mandali* at Kasba Peth were gradually trained to rise above their mundane pastimes and were encouraged to think and talk more of spiritual matters. When in a lighter vein or mood, Meher Baba would be the first to crack or enjoy a joke, but he would simply refuse to countenance any vulgarity and frivolous behaviour from anyone around him.

Individual likes and dislikes were scrupulously taken note of by him. The Hindus were allowed to perform *arati*, *bhajan* and *kirtan* and other rites after their own way and whenever the Muslims were in



attendance in sufficient numbers, *qawali*\* mostly amateurish, was indulged in, wherein Khak Saheb and myself would sometimes participate. Meher Baba too oftentimes would entertain the assemblage by singing a few *gazals* (odes) from his favourite poet, Hafiz, in his sweet, warbling voice, and would sometimes accompany the *bhajan* and *qawali* music by playing dexterously the Indian drums cylindrical in shape, commonly known as *mrudung* or *dhol*.

In order to encourage spiritual mindedness, he would invariably initiate spiritual discussions and his explanations and information on the subject would hold the listeners spell-bound for hours. Baba would feel evidently pleased by intelligent interpolations by the listeners, and these not only elicited more clarification and information of the theme under discussion, but it enabled him to see as to how far the discourse has been lucidly followed and assimilated. Happily I enjoyed more latitude of approach to spiritual discussions with Meher Baba and my presence there, whenever I could come down from Bombay, was always interpreted by those present as a sure sign of a spiritual treat to be looked forward to that day.

Although the daily round of serious *cum* light items of entertainment continued unabated at Kasba Peth, the atmosphere at this stage for the mandali surreptitiously grew to be mystifying if not mysterious. What with the disciplinarian in Meher Baba peeping out now and then and the news of psychic experiences by an

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\*Qawali means singing of Urdu or Persian songs to the accompaniment of musical instruments and the *tabla* (drums), a speciality with Muslims.

early member of the mandali, confined to an attic in a nearby tenement, the speculative tendencies of everyone concerned with regard to the spiritual potentiality of their object of interest and devotion were whetted to the extreme. Everyone was on the *qua-vive* of expectation and all but too eager to be allowed a peep into the future.

As if giving additional colour to these expectations, Meher Baba decided to remove himself with a few of the *mandali* to the outskirts of Poona, away from the hustle and bustle of city life. The ascetic part of him being roused, he planned to stay in a thatched hut in an unfrequented part of a jungle towards Chattar Singh, off Fergusson College Road. This removal outside of town goaded the people to take still greater interest in him, and Thursday, among other days of the week, became a day of pilgrimage to Baba's *jhopari* (hut).

Here Meher Baba passed most of his time alone with only a few attendants and not infrequently indulged in the evening in the games of *atya-patya*\* with the mandali and even visitors. How unknowingly to everyone around him he would lend spiritual enchantment to the atmosphere by surprisingly reading the mind of anyone among those present or sometimes foretelling the advent of an unexpected visitor or friend. Such occult demonstrations of frequent occurrence would keep everyone present enthusiastically alert to take eagerly and seriously everything and anything he spoke or did at random.

A few examples of how Meher Baba would give a spiritual twist and touch to ordinary topics or games which, to a chance visitor, would mean nothing beyond

a healthy pastime, would be interesting and worth recording here.

(a) One day Baba while playing cards with the *mandali*, suddenly accosted if they knew the spiritual significance and meaning of this play, besides its value as a pastime. Receiving no reply he read the following spiritual meaning into this simple game:

“The playing cards Nos. 2 to 10 represent the lower evolutionary stages through which the soul has to pass gathering experience and strength on the way. The card ‘Jack’ stood for the human form with the fully developed consciousness and representing at this point the stage of *bhakti* (exoteric religion or *Shariat*).

‘Queen’ symbolized the stages of *karma* and *raja-yoga*, i.e., *Tariqat*—the spiritual journey of the soul on the inner Path, and the ‘King’ connotes *dnyan* (*Gnosis-marifat*). Surpassing all these lower stages is the Ace signifying the ONE without a second, i.e., the Ultimate Reality, God, the *Paramatman* or *Haqiqat*.

(b) Speaking of *Iti-dandu*, an Indian game with a wooden stick about two feet long and a smaller piece of wood pointed at both ends, Meher Baba delivered himself as follows:

“This game consists in striking the smaller piece of wood lying on the ground on the pointed end by the longer piece held in the hand, thereby making it rise and rotate in the air. Before allowing the small piece of wood to fall on the ground, it should be struck again with the rod in hand driving it as far as possible.” Meher Baba further explained, “When a Perfect Master selects a disciple as worthy of God-realization, he

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\*For explanations see (b) and (c) on pages 43-44.

invariably strikes at the lower part of his nature, his self-egoism. This corresponds to the striking of the smaller piece of wood by the rod in hand to enable the former to lift itself in the air. The egoism or the lower self of the disciple once shattered, the second step consists in driving him onwards towards the Goal of Self-realization. This second ordeal is explanatory of the second stroke which sends the piece hanging in the air to a distance proportionate to the force of the impact conveyed.”

(c) On one occasion, the game of *Atya-patya* was in full swing. All of a sudden, Meher Baba cried halt to the game and invited everyone to sit around him. Then he came forth with a beautiful and significant spiritual interpretation of the game in the following strain:

It is necessary to explain the game first in order to convey convincingly the beauty of the interpretation. The game consists of a chalked out rectangle with many breadthwise intersections and one lengthwise bisection. This results in many quadrangles in the rectangular space in proportion to the number of intersections drawn. All the breadthwise lines and the bisecting middle line are to be manned with players who are expected to prevent the entry of the equally opposing team into those rectangles. The opposing party is expected to use all its wiles and tricks in evading the human obstacles before reaching the goal on the other end of the rectangle. If anyone of the invading party falls foul of the defensive party, the game is declared to be lost by the invaders and the defenders come out and take the offensive. Even if one from amongst the

invading party succeeds in reaching the goal, the game is not said to be finished. The successful one is expected to return the way he went and the freedom with which he is now qualified is used by him for leading and helping others to the same goal.

Meher Baba said, “The intersecting lines are the barriers representing pride, ego, greed, anger, jealousy, hatred, etc., which the traveller on the spiritual path has to overcome before attaining the spiritual goal of God-realization. The bisecting line denotes *lust* which persists to the end, even long after the above-mentioned undesirable qualities are subdued and overcome. Once the Goal is attained, these very faults are elevated to the level of divine attributes, and nothing but good accrues to others when expressed. Those on the Path can and do help others, but only upto a point where they themselves are, but those who have realized and reached the Goal of Self-realization, can help others stranded at any stage of the journey.”

Numerous such instances of trivial factors and incidents interpreted and construed very provokingly to yield great spiritual lessons, could be cited from the experience of individual members of the time, which could not but result in drawing people daily closer and closer to Meher Baba and making them spiritually minded in spite of the material fun and fare provided. Some of the mandali have even witnessed the supernatural phenomena of spirits appearing round the *jhopri* (hut) which frightened them out of their wits, but Baba appeased them by saying that they would do no harm.

Upto this point the *modus operandi* of Meher Baba in attracting spiritual aspirants to him, consisted in

his sympathetic friendliness, loving manners, magnetic personality and divine discourses. But very subtle and gradually he keyed up the interest and aspirations of those concerned by making sensational and bewildering disclosures concerning a few of his past incarnations on earth. He declared that he was Shivaji (1630-1680), the Maratha warrior and king, in his last birth and drew pointed attention to the significant fact of the sudden interest evinced by the British Government in getting Shivaji's statue unveiled in Poona (opposite Shanwarwada) at the hands of the Prince of Wales—the present Duke of Windsor—on the occasion of his visit to the city in the year 1921, an event which synchronised with Baba's physical and spiritual presence in Poona. He also remarked that he underwent great penances and ordeals in the past, and that in one of his previous births, he was a Burmese monk when he lived on water for ten years in a jungle of that country.

However impossible and unbelievable these utterances of Baba may appear to an outsider, there was something fascinating and sublime in these revelations to the group of his admirers and friends around him at the time, that they never tired of discussing among themselves for days on end, the spiritual vista of hope and possibilities for them, underlying these disclosures.

The climax of the situation was reached when in the presence of a select few, Meher Baba disclosed the secret of his esoteric circle, its constitution and even mentioned the names of a few who had the good fortune to be included therein on account of their past preparedness. As it was too early to reveal the exact lie of the situation, he gave vague hints as to the spiritual role that he was destined to enact in the affairs of the

world in years to come.

The more pressing inquisitiveness on the part of those present was answered by the explanation that a *Sadguru*, *Qutub* or a Perfect Master has always an esoteric circle of 12 members, whom it is the divinely incumbent duty of the Master to train and make them as spiritually perfect as himself. Though one with the Master in point of Realization, the members of the circle differ in the matter of duty and authority they wield spiritually towards the world, the self-evident and well-known examples thereof are the *Gopis* of Shri Krishna, the Apostles of Jesus Christ, the Companions of the Arabian Prophet and the 12 *Imams* associated with Martyrdom in Islam. A Perfect Master's spiritual heirs are only twelve, but the beneficiaries are many. There are always five Perfect Masters at any given time on earth and one of these five (at an *Avataric* period—*Daore-Nabuwwal* which is usually the end or the beginning of a cycle) is an *Avatar* or *Rasul*.\*

During the period of Meher Baba's stay at the *Jhopri*, the coterie of his friends and admirers from Bombay (mostly Muslims) were enjoined to pay a weekly visit, on the express understanding that they should first pay their respects and homage to Hazrat Babajan before coming to him or attending to some other engagements after alighting in Poona. This

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\*In the later discourses, messages, statements and sayings and even according to *God Speaks*, a book of major importance by Meher Baba published by Sufism Reoriented, Inc., 2190 Sutter Street, San Francisco, Calif. 94200 U.S.A., Meher Baba maintained that the Perfect Masters who exist at all times on the earth precipitate the advent of the AVATAR in an Avataric

period.

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injunction was faithfully carried out in spirit and letter by most of those concerned. In one such visit to Poona, I delayed my visit of homage to Hazrat Babajan till late at night and the lady Saint of Charbawdi gave me a very rude shaking physically in the presence of the crowd around her saying, “You were due in the morning and come at night.” This incident, although awkwardly disconcerting at the moment, afforded me a very pleasurable insight into the perfect spiritual understanding that existed between Meher Baba and his Master, and this feeling was further accentuated when the following morning I was given for the first time an unusually cold reception altogether unlike what I was used to, by Meher Baba who ordered the basket of fruits for him that I was carrying on my shoulders to be unceremoniously thrown into a well nearby with a message to boot that he would not see me that day. This avowedly was meant as a sort of a warning for me in not orders literally, with an implied lesson for others also in like circumstances.

Similar demonstrations of his occult obeying his knowledge and power, already described elsewhere, which I witnessed while travelling with him to Bombay in one of his visits to Munshiji, coupled with the living memory of the tributes paid to his spiritual greatness by his Masters Hazrat Babajan and Shri Upasni Maharaj, could not but impress me very deeply. Thereafter my attitude towards Meher Baba completely changed from levity to seriousness and I decided to follow his advice and instructions implicitly, when one day giving me a look-up in my dispensary (Sandhurst Road, Bombay) he



advised me to dust and sweep the establishment with my own hands for a period of six months instead of the servant doing it. The reason adduced by him for the queer order was that he visualized therein a great and happy future for me both materially and spiritually. The result has been that I did literally carry out his instructions in the matter for the given period, whereby, most of my friends and *mandali* members know, I did subsequently succeed in sweeping my medical establishing clean out of existence.

After a few months spent in the *Jhopdi* on the outskirts of Poona, as stated above, Meher Baba decided to celebrate the birthday of his Master Shri Upasni Maharaj and with that end in view left by train to Sakori (Ahmednagar District) on the 9th of May 1922 with a party comprising of Muslims, Hindus, and Zoroastrians as also the *Bhajan-mandali* of Kasba Peth. It was the first function of its kind celebrated by Meher Baba on a very lavish scale and since then it has become an yearly festival at Sakori.

This celebration of the birthday of Shri Upasni Maharaj, was a sort of a valedictory tribute of love and homage to the Master paid by Meher Baba, whose physical contact with him thereafter practically came to an end. The occasion further afforded to most of the group accompanying him the first opportunity of Shri Maharaj's *darshan* and the words of the latter delivered oracularly to those present, had a far-reaching effect in crystallising and determining their situation finally in relation to Meher Baba.

Those who have heard and remember the words of Hazrat Babajan, "I have made you that Perfect, that very soon you will have half the world at your feet," can

read in this but a personal tribute to the spiritual greatness and future of Meher Baba. But the words of Shri Upasni Maharaj on the occasion of his birthday were all-embracing in import and effect. They not only described the potentiality of his disciple as the Perfect Master of the age but they contained for the listeners a message of hope and spiritual possibility for them in the person of Meher Baba. Addressing those present, Shri Maharaj said, "I have given my charge to Merwan (Meher Baba); he is the holder and possessor of my spiritual treasure to-day. The world will be greatly benefited at his hands. Stick to him at any cost; you will realize God very soon."

Those prophetic words of Shri Upasni Maharaj had a magical effect on the listeners by immediately and effectively dispelling for ever, the cobwebs of doubt, hesitancy and uncertainty that may have been lurking in their minds and their interest and attention that was upto now focused on Hazrat Babajan and Upasni Maharaj, was definitely diverted to and claimed by Meher Baba, as irrevocably as destiny itself.

Soon after the party's return to Poona from Sakori, Meher Baba abruptly brought an end to his stay at the *Jhopdi* by proposing a journey on foot to Bombay, a distance of 120 miles. The majority of the mandali, with Shri Maharaj's significant words still ringing in their ears, readily and willingly fell in with the idea. In spite of the attempt by Meher Baba to sift and eliminate the possible waverers and hesitants, as also to test the seriousness of those willing, by recounting at length the dangers involved in such an undertaking in his amusingly innocent and child-like concern over being criminally involved in case of a mishap to anyone, one

and all unhesitatingly gave a written undertaking absolving him of all responsibilities in the matter. This as the first written agreement of its kind got signed by the mandali for which method of adjustment and renewal of mutual responsibilities and promises, Meher Baba, as will be noticed later, has a special predilection and many of those aware of this bias in him, very good humouredly remember him as the “Agreementwala Baba.”

The planned trip to Bombay on foot came to be undertaken on the 23rd of May 1922. A party of about 40 members of all nationalities, after taking Hazrat Babajan’s *darshan* as per orders, left Kasba Peth at 4 in the morning, thus closing the first stage of Meher Baba’s spiritual activities, known to those concerned as the *Poona phase*.

## **THE BOMBAY PHASE : MANZIL-E-MEEM**

The journey on foot from Poona to Bombay, the first of its kind undertaken by Meher Baba and *mandali*, came to an end on 27th May, 1922. It provided a great experience to the participants in the matter of roughing life with Baba—a foretaste of many such ordeals they had to go through later on. The strange part of this episode is that notwithstanding the stagemanaged scare and fright and the resultant agreement of the written undertaking connected therewith, not a single member of the party suffered any discomfort of even an ant-bite, in spite of sleeping at night in the open fields and at places, if seen by day, uncanny enough to scare away even the sleep of death.

After a short stay at Munshi Abdur Rahim's quarters at Charni Road Gardens, Bombay, Baba and *mandali* took up residence in a rented bungalow at Dadar Main Road, on 7th June, 1922. It may be mentioned here that Baba, who was observed to be quite indifferent for over six months to his bodily tidiness and care as regards bath and clothing, quite unexpectedly indulged in a wash and change of clothes during his stay at Chari Road Gardens.

The Bombay phase is associated with the memory of *Manzil-e-Meem*—the name given to the bungalow by Baba himself and it is characterised by the two notable features for all concerned. Firstly, after the divulgence of the secret of his esoteric circle, Meher Baba automatically came to be accepted by most of the members as a spiritual Master besides being a friend or a benefactor, and secondly, Baba's devotees and admirers who until then had been contacting him infrequently for short periods at Poona and elsewhere, were for the first time taken out of their worldly settings and were afforded the first experience of its kind towards a life of non-attachment and self-discipline under Baba's personal care and supervision.

In fairness to the early members in *Manzil-e-Meem*, it must be conceded that one and all were fired with an intense enthusiasm for the Path, as a direct result of which they were in a mood to do and dare anything that Baba would have desired of them at the time. But Meher Baba, like a past Master in the Knowledge of human nature, took particular good care not to push matters to extremes. He did everything possible to keep the interest and enthusiasm of the mandali for a spiritual life alive and burning, but at the

same time, prepared them for the reaction which he anticipated by explaining that an aspirant of the path has always to pass through the three stages of the mind, viz., enthusiasm, indifference and despair. And when despair or disappointment reaches its extreme limit, the unexpected happens.

In the light of this explanation, the import and significance of Meher Baba's oft-repeated injunction to the *mandali* "not to leave him at any cost and to stick to him through thick and thin to the end," becomes self-evident. And who amongst the early members to-day does not recall to mind with poignant interest and significance the words of Hafiz when he said, "Oh *Saqi* (cup-bearer), pass round the cup of wine; the path of Love seemed to be an easy and comfortable one in the beginning, but now I know better—it is surcharged with unimagined difficulties, trials and tribulations."

As to actual living conditions in *Manzil-e-Meem*, the voluntary or involuntary captives of Love were very delicately and sedulously handled by Meher Baba prior to their getting acclimatised to the situation. The residential *mandali* were allotted rooms with two or three members in each and amenities of decent living, like mattresses, mosquito-curtains and choice food were liberally provided. In-door and out-door games such as chess, draughts and cricket were freely indulged in. Dependents of those who had left behind them their homes and occupations were adequately provided for according to individual needs and circumstances. The religious scruples of different people were given due deference by allowing Mohomedans to arrange for *Milad* (recitation of religious and spiritual songs) now and then and the Hindu section indulged in ceremonies

peculiar to them such as *Bhajans* and *Artis*.

In spite of the physical comforts and the humouring and pampering of individual likes and dislikes in social and religious matters, one could feel the tightening of the net. The disciplinarian and task-master in Meher Baba became manifest as time went on with more and more certainty and energy. Getting up early in the morning, daily cold bath, followed by an hour's meditation, became compulsory. For a time the *mandali* were asked not to read or write anything. News-papers and even reading sign-boards on shops when out for work or on an errand into the city, were strictly prohibited. No friend or relative was to be cognised or talked to when confronted with. During a stay of about 11 months in the *Manzil-e-Meem*, many times the *mandali* were asked to go a hunting in the City of Bombay, for the maimed, the blind and the lepers to be bathed, clothed and fed under Baba's supervision. Of particular note, was the duty imposed by Baba on some to distribute hand-bills and sell the biography of Upasni Maharaj in the City of Bombay. It was a most ego-crushing ordeal for me and Khaksaheb to move about with advertising posters hanging round our necks through the dense mass of humanity consisting mostly of Muslims on the occasion of the annual fair at the shrine of the famous Saint of Mahim (a suburb of Bombay).

Besides the foregoing methods and means of self-discipline the *mandali* were going through, the mental department of the individuals also came in for a good deal of Baba's attention. In fact, the mental domain of everyone concerned, was almost literally studded with warnings and sign-posts of "do and

don'ts" of Baba, coupled with his frequent and unexpectedly awkward inquiries as to what one was thinking. The inmates of *Manzil-e-Meem*, to avoid feeling guilty in the matter of concocting a reply for the occasion, sometimes deliberately attempted to be blank in mind in the presence of Baba. He however, preferred them to give honest and truthful replies even if the thoughts they were thinking were good or bad. It may be interesting to note that at this stage the method of corrective applied by Baba to members of the mandali over their lapses in literally following his orders, was to hold forth threats of his self-incarceration and a very severe fast of a shorter or longer duration to be undergone by him in proportion to the urgency and importance of the mistake committed. This disciplinary imposition had invariably the effect of cutting very deep into the mind of the guilty person who would have much preferred to suffer himself some physical punishment at the hands of Baba.

As for Baba, he was imposing upon himself, during this period, all sorts of physical austerities such as fasts of long duration, sometimes on water, milk, tea or lemon juice, feeling none the worse in bodily activity and energy. In particular, Baba's prolonged ordeal of striking his forehead against the ground or a piece of stone to bleeding point repeated a number of times daily for a certain period, was altogether inexplicable and shocking to the onlookers. The only explanation forthcoming by Baba, was that a realized being never needs undergo any penance. The present suffering of his was intended for the benefit of others, especially his circle. Explaining his acute illness and the consequent physical sufferings, on one occasion, he said that he was

undergoing this torture and pain in connection with a certain member of his circle whom he actually mentioned by name. He further declared that in his spiritual working for the circle, he would be required to die and suffer in that manner for each one of the members connected therewith.

For a number of days, a very interesting entertainment for the inmates of *Manzil-e-Meem* was provided at break-fast time by Baba asking everyone of those present to recount their overnight dreams, pleasant or unpleasant. Herein one can see his subtle method of not releasing hold on the minds of the mandali even during the state of sleep and the result has been some wonderfully striking dreams experienced and recorded by many of the inmates. Some of the outstanding ones I was ordered by Baba to write out and put on the notice board.

During this period of life in *Manzil-e-Meem*, not only outings to the city and suburbs of Bombay were indulged in by way of visits to important shrines of Muslim saints in the vicinity as also for picnics and sports, but trips to places outside of Bombay were also undertaken. On 28th July 1922, Baba accompanied by Khaksaheb, went to see Upasni Maharaj at Sakori and the inclusion of Khaksaheb in this trip was with a view to gathering first-hand information and details with regard to the life-history of Upasni Maharaj whose biography in the Urdu language (“*Garibonka Aasra*”) was then under preparation. On 5th August 1922, the *mandali* members were afforded the second opportunity of having Shri Maharaj’s *darshan* at Sakori.

The stage of enthusiasm through which the *mandali* was passing through at the time can be, to a



greater extent, said to be the direct outcome of a regular feast of spiritual explanations and matters connected with the esoteric side of the Path. As far as I know and understand these things from such a distance of time, most of the spiritual truths and occult secrets were given out by Baba during this period, and these very same incomplete notes have been subsequently rearranged, enlarged and commented upon by various members of the mandali in their later writings and works.

It is necessary to point out that some of the esoteric facts and occult truths recounted herein have been given out by Meher Baba to his disciples in *Manzil-e-Meem* piece-meal, stretching over along period of time and these stray bits, as far as I can recollect them to-day, are put together in order to make the subject as informative as possible.

### **Esoteric Facts Given Out By Baba :**

There are always five Perfect Masters (*Qutubs* or *Sadgurus*) who are the leading lights of the saintly hierarchy which governs the world.

Every *Qutub* or *Sadguru* has an esoteric circle of twelve disciples, whom it is his divinely incumbent duty to make as perfect as himself.

The disciples are one with the Master in point of Realization, but differ in duty and authority. Realization may be likened to the store-house of Divine Treasure and authority is the ability to help others therefrom. Want of this authority to use the Divine powers born of Realization is much more tantalizingly painful than the longing and thirst for God-realization itself. Indicative of this poignant situation is the

statement of a Hindu saint who said that he would suffer being born a dog a hundred times if it enabled him to redeem a single soul from the bondage of *Maya*.

A *Qutub* or *Sadguru* at the fag-end of his mission in life always takes care to appoint his chargeman to whom he transfers all his spiritual heritage. That which is given by a Master to the chargeman is not power which is already in him, but the authority to use it for the spiritual awakening of others.

The beginning or end of a cycle of time connotes the *Avataric period* (*Daur-e-Nabuwwat*), when one from amongst the five Perfect ones, comes to be known as an *Avatar*—Prophet—or *Qutub-Aqtab*.\*

Unlike the five Perfect ones, the *Qutub-Aqtab* or Prophet has 120 members to his esoteric circle i.e., 10

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\*In the later writings in his name, particularly *GOD SPEAKS* (Dodd Mead & Company, New York 1973 pp. 158-159) a book of major importance, Meher Baba states explicitly: “. . . at all times and in all ages, there are always five *Qutubs* (*Sadgurus* or Perfect Masters) living on the earth amongst humanity, wielding infinite aspects of *ahadiyat* of the *arsh-e-ala* or *vidnyan* of the *vidnyan bhumika* of the Beyond state of God in the form of infinite knowledge, power and bliss for the progressive emancipation of all in the field of illusion. According to the divine law, these five *Qutubs* or *Sadgurus* or Perfect Masters, at the end of every cycle precipitate the advent of the direct descent of God on earth in human male form. Hence, at the end of every cycle, when God manifests on earth in the form of man and reveals His divinity to mankind, He is recognized as the *Avatar* the Messiah—the Prophet. . . .”

co-centric circles consisting of 12 members in each and each outer circle being subservient or dependent in point of duty to the inner one. Besides the other members of the circle who perform duties much in the manner of different vital organs and limbs of the body in order of their utility and importance, it always falls to the lot of the one from amongst this number to play the unenviable role of “Judas.”

There are always two types of recipients of a Perfect Master’s spiritual grace—the Elect and the Select. The Elect, or the chosen ones for reasons of a spiritual connection with the Master, and their number is always fixed; while the Select ones are those who earn and induce the grace of a Master by service and sacrifice and their number is unlimited. To speak exoterically, because of my spirituality being derived from two Masters—one a Hindu and the other a Muslim i.e., Shri Upasni Maharaj and Hazarat Babajan, my circle of disciples will be a cosmopolitan one consisting of Zoroastrians Hindus, Muslims, and Christians (Westerners).

All the members of the esoteric circle have always existed with me in my past incarnations and have played their individual parts round about my personality. It is this service and sacrifice, or even antagonism, rendered unto me in the past that determines the spiritual relationship or connection with the Master. In this Path, position, learning, wealth, or blood relationship does not count. Past connection with the Master entitles the aspirant to claim spiritual heritage.

It was between 4 and 5 A.M. in the early morning that Babajan gave me Divine experience, and it

was the same time when Maharaj brought me down to normal consciousness. The members of my circle too shall get realization between the same hours 4 to 5 A.M.

From the view-point of Divine gnosis, the Muslims progress from Oneness (*Wahadat*) to manyness (*Kasrat*) and the Hindus from Manyness to Oneness i.e., the Hindus and Muslims represent the extreme and opposite points of a diameter of a circle with God as the Centre. Zoroastrianism is midway between the two extremes and hence the choice at this juncture of a Zoroastrian form in me as the vehicle of spirituality derived from Hindu and Muslim sources.

The East represents that portion of the bubble on the ocean of Cosmic Consciousness which is directly in touch with the ocean and the West is that part of the bubble which is farthest away from it. Hence East is the land of spirituality and West is the land of materiality. Even in the East, India represents a unique position in the world of spirituality and as it happens to-day, all the five Perfect Masters are functioning in India only.

### **Some Prophetic Utterances :**

Making some Prophetic disclosures about the nature and scope of his work, Meher Baba said:

Although I shall live to a long and hoary age, my mission in life will evoke a good deal of opposition everywhere, so much so that it will culminate in a violent death for me at the hands of Zoroastrians.

A few members of my circle will die before Realization.

War will break out again and it will be a worst holocaust the world has ever seen. Almost all the

nations will be dragged into it either militarily or economically. My manifestation will synchronise with the fag-end of the war that I see coming. India also would suffer a great deal.

I shall travel extensively for my spiritual working and my work will necessitate my going to Western world as well.

I shall not come into my own until the disembodiment of my two spiritual Masters—Hazarat Babajan and Shri Upasni Maharaj.

### **Some Experiences of Visitors to Baba in Manzil-e-Meem :**

Professor S. of Deccan College, came to see Baba one afternoon. After the exchange of formalities, Baba, without rhyme or reason, addressing the Professor, said, “Now-a-days, I am putting on a Turkish cap on my head when I go out,” and looking to the *mandali members*, remarked, “Is it not a fact?” Those present confirmed the assertion by saying that since coming to Bombay Baba has been noticed preferring a fez whenever he finds it necessary to put on a cap. The subject discussed seemed to everyone concerned quite irrelevant, but much light was thrown on the enigmatic situation when Professor S. volunteered the following explanation:

“My brother, who is sitting at Maulana Saheb’s *Mazar* (Shrine) at Bandra (Bombay) since the last twenty years, asked me to go and see Meher Baba and ascertain what particular head-gear he used.

Finding Baba bare-headed, I felt quite baffled as to how to elicit the required information. To my utter

surprise and relief, Baba himself furnished the necessary information about the head-gear without any the slightest hint from me.”

...

One Moulvi Abdul Wahed of Hyderabad on a visit to Bombay was staying for some time in the Dadar mosque opposite to Manzil-e-Meem and recounted the following experience to the mandali:

“While engrossed in meditation and prayer in the mosque opposite, I saw some effulgent light emanating from the direction of the bungalow (*Manzil-e-Meem*) and I therefore concluded that this light must be due to the presence of a Divine personality in the locality. I therefore began to investigate and heard of the presence of Hazarat Meher Baba putting up here with his disciples.

“This experience of mine was vouchsafed to me once again while I was undergoing the practice of my daily meditations. I saw the same light, but this time in the centre of the halo created by the light, I could read the name ‘Manzil-e-Meem’ very clearly. This experience goaded me to come out and see things for myself and hence I am here.”

Moulvi Abdul Wahed, when enquired of by the *mandali* whether he desired anything of Baba, replied, “I want nothing from him.”

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Two spiritually-minded Muslim brothers, engineers by profession, had some strange experiences

about the spirituality of Meher Baba. The following strange but illuminating incident is narrated by Mr. N.A. from Bhiwandi when he came to see Baba one morning (19-11-1922):

“On my return from . . . where I had gone to see my brother . . . I was informed by one of my servants that a guest had arrived in my absence and was at the moment in the nearby mosque offering prayers. The guest turned out to be a venerable old man and his hoary age was denoted by the fact of his eye-brows also being completely grey. He gave out his name as Abdul Wahed and during conversation he let drop a hint as to why I did not go to Meher Baba. I replied that I hesitate to do so, since Meher Baba was not a Mussalman externally. The old man said, ‘Faqirs have no religion. He (Meher Baba) is the first one of his time who has been appointed on a special duty of making as many *Walis* (saints) as possible. His state is such at the moment that he can transform any one whom he embraces into a *Wali*. He will be the first to meet Imam Mehendi. I am also with him (spiritually) for the last so many years and now the time is fast approaching for me to declare myself to the world. Go and see Meher Baba and give him my *salams*.’”

Simultaneously with the above episode, the brother of Mr. N.A. had a similar experience. Mr. A. A. came down to Bombay to see Baba and said that he was told by a spirit to go down to Bombay and see Meher Baba at once.

Thus the two brothers had strangely peculiar experiences about Meher Baba almost simultaneously.

Mr. A.A. narrates the following strange experience on the occasion of his visit to the shrine of

Baba Abdur Rehman, Dongri, Bombay, accompanied by Munshi Abdur Rahim and Syed Saheb. Mr. A.A. while offering his homage to the Saint in the Muslim way on such occasions by touching and kissing the *Gilaf* (the covering over the tomb), heard a voice from inside the shrine and the words that caught his ears were to the effect, “Convey my *salam*s to Sheikh Baba Merwan and this salutation should be conveyed through the medium of Munshi Abdur Rahim.”

### **A Few Striking Dreams :**

Mr. N.C.T. relates the following:

“I saw five triangles of light suspended in space without any visible support. The triangles of light were arranged in such a manner that four of them formed a square and the fifth one was placed exactly in the centre. I saw Maharaj and Meher Baba come there and no sooner I became aware of their presence, I found myself eliminated physically although I continued observing the phenomena mentally. Meher Baba took his position in the central triangle and no sooner he did so, there was a terrible crash and with a lightning splendour, the scene faded away from my vision.”

Dr. A.G. saw the following dream:

“I found myself sitting near Babajan at Char Bawdi. At first I felt Babajan was looking at me very frowningly. After a time, she drew near and made me seated in a queer manner near to her with the backs touching each other and faces turned in opposite directions. In this position she continued rocking me to and fro. Then reclining in my arms she began playing with me in the most lovable manner. In this position I



had a novel experience. One moment I used to feel Babajan fondling and playing in my arms and the very next moment Meher Baba instead. This continued for some time.”

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Dr. A.G. (27-1-33):

“I saw in my dream a saintly person whose figure and nationality I could not exactly determine. Approaching him, I put him very many questions concerning Meher Baba as to who and what he is, what he meant doing by us, the real meaning and the significance of the word ‘circle.’ In reply to all my queries, he spoke as follows:

‘You have heard that there was a Prophet by the name of Jesus Christ; after him came Mohomed of Arabia; the present-day personality is that of Meher Baba. It is good that you have gone to him (Meher Baba) just in time.’”

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A dream on another occasion by Dr. A.G. reads as follows:

“I saw a hand holding a paper containing the photographs of Baba Tajuddin, Hazrat Babajan, Narayan Maharaj and Upasni Maharaj in the four corners with Meher Baba’s photo in the centre. The physical body of the person holding the photo for my sight was not to be seen—only the hand was visible, but I could hear the voice explaining to me the significance of the picture before my eyes.

“The voice explained to me that the four Masters, whose photographs were in the four corners, were all expressing their spiritual force at the moment through the central figure Meher Baba. After giving this explanation, the hand began to tear the photograph beginning with the corner in which Baba Tajuddin was represented followed by Babajan and so forth. I could not follow thereafter the exact order in which the corners were torn, but it seems to me this action refers to the order in which the disembodiment of the said Masters would take place.”

### **Sidelights On Spirituality:**

The Muslim inmates of *Manzil-e-Meem* came in for a good deal of Baba’s attention , and much light was thrown on the vexed question of *Shariat* (external religion)—the bugbear of the Muslim world when confronted with spirituality and saintliness.

In reply to a poser of a Muslim friend of mine quoting the words of the Persian poet Saadi:

“Verily it is worse than the tortures of hell  
To walk into heaven with the feet of  
another.”

Meher Baba said, “It is really a commendable attitude if heaven can be earned by one’s own exertions instead of depending on its acquisition on the grace of another. Leaving aside the question of aspiring for *Khuda-Shanashi* (God-realization), the regrettable position is that even the problem of heaven is being relegated to the mercy and grace of *Rasul-e-Khuda*—the Prophet of God.

“My disciples are not concerned with heaven or

hell. They find themselves confronted with the ideal of the realization of Truth-God-Divinity. This Gnosis of God is impossible for anyone to attain without the help of a *Murshid* (master), and the Sufi world insists upon the need of a master in unmistakable terms. By one's own and unaided exertions, one either creates heaven or hell and both are limitations and bindings. Heaven represents the resultant of too many good actions (*Neki*) and hell is the outcome of excess of bad actions (*Badi*). In order to attain *Najaat* (*Mukti*-liberation), a correct balance of good and bad actions must be struck. The credit and debit side of good and bad actions must cancel each other, and the balance-sheet must show zero on both sides. This result can only be brought about by a Master, otherwise if left to individual efforts, one or the other side must predominate bringing in its wake the situation known to the laity as heaven or hell.

“I do not advocate even the state of *Najaat-Mukti* (Liberation of the individual soul), because you were already that prior to the precipitation of the universe. If Salvation means reverting to the original state of the Ocean, then all the trammels and travails of the bubble (individual soul) through the long and laborious stages of evolution have been to no purpose. With me *Najaat* means the Realization of *Abdiat* (bubble-state) and *Mabudiat* (Ocean-state) at one and the same time. Whosoever realizes this state, can be said to be perfect. This stage of Perfection is known to the Sufis as the Reality of Mohamed (*Haqiqat-e-Mohomadi*)—the Divine I-state, the *raison d'être* of creation.

“Amongst many other methods advocated and practised for realizing the state of Perfection, the best and the easiest is the company of a Perfect Master.

Living with me as you are, you are considered to have renounced the world in spite of living in it. Every moment passed in the company of a Master may be said to be spent in what the people call *Ibadat* (devotion)."

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Referring to the spiritual potentiality of saints after disembodiment, Meher Baba said:

"After the death of a saint, he enjoys eternal Bliss and the Power is there with him, but not the authority to use it which he had during life-time. Wherever there is a shrine or *Samadhi* of a Master, there the spiritual power is and it is the faith of people in that spiritual power which becomes a medium and utilizes it for one's benefit. The benefit accruing from such sources and drawn upon by the individual's faith in the disembodied saint, is invariably material in character. Spiritual benefit can only be imparted when the Master is in bodily presence on the material plane. A Master gives the aspirant nothing that was not already latent in him; he is only instrumental in rousing the aspirant to the consciousness of the Divine treasure already in him.

"There have been some rare instances of people deriving spiritual benefit from shrines and disembodied saints. Spiritual benefit is derived from enshrined saints in special cases only, where the earthly connection of the receiver and the giver of spiritual benefit has been cut short by unavoidable circumstances. But such instances are very rare and far between. Material benefit from disembodied saints is more common and is in accordance with the faith of the receiver."

*"Jeenay se marna bhala, marnay se darna bhala,*

*darnay se bharnay bhala, bharnay se karna bhala.*” (It’s better to die than to live, better to fear than to die, better to fill than to fear and better to do or make than to fill.)

Baba uttered these words at random and when requested by those around to explain, he laid bare in his own inimitable way the esoteric import of the above saying. He said, “To *die* here means not the ordinary death that men die, but real death of the ego, i.e., to die before death which amounts to becoming one with God. To *fear* is not to be interpreted literally. To *fear* is to be in the state of *banda* (devotee), i.e., the created one in spite of realizing oneness with the Creator or God. This state of spirituality is superior to that of a *Mazjoob*—one who remains immersed eternally in the ocean of Divinity. To *fill* means to inundate the hearts of people with the wine of Divine Knowledge. The perfect state is to *make* others as thoroughly complete as one’s own self. This is the highest possible attainment, i.e., to make others perfect in power, duty, authority, and Realization. This is the stage of a *Qutub* or *Sadguru*.”

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Citing the instance of a Muslim saint who contacted 19 Masters—11 Muslims and 8 Hindus—prior to Realization, I requested Baba to explain the reason why it was found necessary for the saint concerned to contact so many spiritual Masters. Baba explained:

“God-realization is always given by one Master only. It is only for *Irfan*—*Gnosis*—that sometimes contact with more than one Master is necessary. There are numerous cases amongst Hindus and Muslims who have contacted two or more Masters.

“Very often it is only one Master that gives God-realization and Gnosis as well. In my case, Babajan gave me God-realization and for Gnosis (*Gyan*) I had to spend seven years with Upasni Maharaj. During this period of my return to normal consciousness if I had connection with some other Masters, I would have surely contacted them too. The number of Masters who impart Gnosis to a disciple, each one of them is entitled to be called a *Murshid* (Guru) but from the Realization point of view, there is only one Master.”

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On another occasion when questioned by me as to the reason why a written authority (*Sanad-e-Wilayat*) for a saint is required prior to being put in charge of a spiritual jurisdiction. The case in point being that of the Muslim Saint Ali Ahmed Sabir who was ordered by his Master to get the authority of his saintship signed and endorsed by another Master Hazrat Jamal Hansvi prior to assuming chagemanship of the district of Kalyar. Meher Baba explained:

“This is one of the ways of giving spiritual charge externally. The last four months that I was with Maharaj at Sakori, I had to externally take charge from him in writing. The stamp-paper and other agreements that I got written and executed from the mandali although not so very important as compared to the *Sanad-e-Wilayat*, the documentary authority for saintship, still they are not without meaning and spiritual significance. The spiritual transfer of power and authority that takes place between a Master and a disciple, has always to be symbolized by giving it a

concrete form externally. Amongst Muslim saints the Masters invariably give to their chargemen the *Khirqe-Khilafat* (the robe of chargemanship) in the form of some wearing apparel, like a cap, a turban, an apron or some such tangible token.”

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While discussing the temperamental make-up of a certain disciple of Baba, I happened to inquire whether the human nature of a man undergoes any radical transformation after God-realization, or whether the said characteristics in him do persist even afterwards. Baba said:

“The nature of *Tabiyat* of a person after becoming one with God remains the same, but it is expressed in a different light. Formerly in the ordinary state a man’s anger, greed, curses, abuses, were for himself only and besides being harmful to the surroundings, they usually recoiled on himself, because they were the outcome of his self-egoism. Where there is ego, there is no God and where there is God, there is no room for egoism.

“But the actions and words of a God-realized man are devoid of all egoistic tendencies and although the original characteristics of his mind and nature do persist in him after God-realization, they do nothing but good to the surroundings whenever expressed. Hafiz has said:

*Khatiram waqti havas kardi ke binam chiz ha  
Ta tora didam na daram juz badidarar havas.*

“The couplet explains very clearly ‘that it was ingrained in his nature to see different and various

objects, but on seeing Him, he now does not want to see anything else but Him.’ It only means that the desire of his nature *to see* things was still there. In the early stages of his humanity he wanted *to see* and enjoy variety of things and objects, and now he wants to see God only. The desire of *seeing* remains the same, but it is not shorn of its egoism. Likewise the habits of anger, abuses, beatings, etc., remain ingrained in a person even after his becoming a saint, but a colossal change takes place in its expression. Whenever and on whomsoever it is expressed or expended, it results in nothing but good to the recipients thereof, since there is no personal motive behind it.

“When a saint is in the most perfect and peaceful internal state, or that some internal working of his is nearing completion and success, there sometimes occurs automatically an overflow of the internal state externally. The external outburst by a saint is the shadow of the internal perfect state, and is radically contradictory of the Bliss within and consequently in its outer manifestation it takes the form of abusive language, beatings, etc. But whoever receives these ego-shattering blessings from a Master in the form of abuses and physical chastisement, is very lucky indeed and undoubtedly a good deal of benefit accrues to him especially in external affairs.

“Now you people since your connection with me is settled and determined from *Roz-e-Azal* (the first day of creation) and which connection no power on earth can alter or modify, you have no need of these outbursts in the form of abuses and beatings. Even when it occurs you should not mind. During the course of my spiritual working very often the cup of my Bliss overflows and I



desire it with the fortunate one nearest at hand.”

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One night while seated alone with him I found Baba in a very communicative mood and a little teaser from me brought forth the following discourse on the subject of Divine Love. Reciting the Persian couplet:

*Ishq awwal dar dile mashooq paide mishawad  
Ta nasoozad sharma kai parwana shaida  
mishawad.*

(Love originates first in the heart of the Beloved; unless the lamp burns, how can the moth go mad after it?)

Baba explained:

“It is assumed that there is a lover and the beloved and the connecting link between the two is Love. Although God is Love universal, let us for the sake of argument concede that God at first begins to love or attract a *Talib* (aspirant) by means of sufferings. The aspirant, not understanding the true significance of such an overture from Him, begins to protest and resist. This results in easing the situation for the time being and again a pull is exerted towards the party to be attracted. The moment that sufficient love is kindled in the heart of the aspirant which expresses itself in the desire for seeing God, He then becomes indifferent. In this manner the process of attraction and repulsion continues for an undefinable period ultimately resulting in the union of the two. This is exactly what Hafiz tries to explain when he says:

*Yak sare mooy ba daste mano yak sar ba doost  
Sal ha bar sare in nukta kashakash daram.*

(With one end of the string in my hand and the other end in the friend's hand, this tug-of-war has been going on for years on this point.)

In proportion to the love that may be awakened in you, there will be moments when you will hate me also. This hatred or repulsion is the resistance offered by you when I am trying to attract you towards me by my internal love. In course of time, you will begin to respond to my love with equal intensity and then the force of my love will relax, i.e., I shall become indifferent. The Master has love for all the members of his circle and this treasure of Divine Love, which has come to me through Babajan and Maharaj will be shared at its proper time with the members of the circle and others in accordance with their connection, services and sufferings. The esoteric fact which I want you to remember is that the Beloved (God) is more keen and eager to realize the lover (man) than the latter's anxiety and longing for such a Union."

### **On Shariyat (External Religion) :**

Dilating further on the subject of *Shariyat* (external religion) for the edification of Muslim inmates in Manzil-e-Meem, Meher Baba said:

"There are two states—internal and external—divided by a mental curtain. To cleanse or purify the internal by one's individual efforts is a very difficult task indeed. This inner purification can only be achieved by the help and grace of a spiritual Master. Unless such a Master comes to you or is contacted by

you, it is best to engage oneself in keeping the external i.e., body clean, and this is what the ceremonial side of all religions teaches and emphasises. The purpose and meaning behind this is obvious enough.

“By following *Shariyat* to Perfection, one has a chance of coming into contact with a living Master (*Salik*). The observances of external cleanliness as taught by different religions does brighten upto a certain extent the mirror of the mind, but its complete purification whereby the individual soul can stand reflected in all its divine effulgence and glory, rests in the hands of a spiritual Master.

“Thus to understand or realize God, one of the two ways should be adopted and no half measures would do. All the religions concern themselves with the purification of the external only by means of reading, praying, worshipping, sitting, standing, bodily baths and ablutions, tidiness of clothing and selection of food, etc. With the eyes you enjoy the sight of good, holy and religious objects; with the tongue and lips you utter prayers; with the ears you hear divine recitations, and with the hands you offer supplications and count the beads of a rosary. Thus all the great prophets and religious law-givers have very knowingly enjoined upon their followers the necessity of external purification pending the arrival of the stage of inner enlightenment.

“The middle course as pursued by Yogis (*Rahib*) is almost always a failure, as they hopelessly intermingle the internal and the external for the realization of their goal. By bringing the mind into play in the process of concentration and meditation and by trying to force a collusion of the upper and lower breaths in the region of the brain, they are poaching into

the internal domain prematurely, while by indulging in *asanas* (fixed posture) muttering of mantras (*Zikr*), fasting and physical mortification, they take the help of the physical paraphernalia and consequently their efforts invariably yield disappointment. It is best therefore for everyone concerned to follow the observances of one's own religion until such time one is luckily drawn into the orbit of a spiritual Master's influence.

“When once the internal is purified by the grace of a *Salik* (a Perfect Master), the external formality of religion is no longer needed under special circumstances and considerations of duty that one has to perform in the world of his choice. It is for this reason that saints are generally seen to be in the most dirty state externally and the worldly people unaccustomed to such sights fail to recognize the spirituality of a person in such surroundings. Whether recognised or not, what do such people care for details of external habits after having realized their goal?

“Everyone is aware that a new swimmer has necessarily to have the use of floats to help him learn the art of swimming. No sooner one becomes perfect in swimming, the floats are automatically discarded and are no longer found necessary. Who would ever think of expecting the swimmer to use floats perpetually even after mastering the art of swimming?

“But Perfect Masters have been known throughout the religious history of mankind to go in sometimes for externalism also for the sake of the masses during their life mission on earth.”

At this stage Baba made read the relevant passage from Swami Vivekananda, viz., “The only true teacher is he who can convert himself, as it were, into a

thousand persons at a moment's notice . . . and who can immediately come down to the level of the student and transfer his soul to the student's soul, see through the student's eyes and understand through his mind. Such a teacher and none else can teach."

Explaining this Baba said, "A teacher, an M.A. teaching alphabets to the students, must of necessity bring himself down to the level of his students and thus he must read, write and repeat, the alphabets A, B, C along with them. Then only such a teacher is able to impart his knowledge to them and gradually lift them to his own level. If he does not bring himself down from the transcendental heights of his own attainments, then the labour bestowed by him will be wasted upon the students. A *Salik*, therefore, has perforce to stoop to the ordinary level and talk in the language of the students, when occasion demands it.

"Take the instance of the life-story of the Arabian Prophet. When persecuted by his enemies and finding his life in danger, he actually had to flee from Mecca and take refuge in Medina. Here the greatest spiritual Master of the world, by fleeing from the place of his birth, acted after the manner of an ordinary human being when faced with a crisis. He never drew upon his spiritual powers to confound his enemies. Jesus, known for his life-giving miracles, suffered himself to be crucified with his prayers on his lips for the salvation of the misguided ones.

"It is the ordinary role played by some of the perfect ones in their times that has given rise to misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the relative importance of the pulpit of the mosque and the pulpit of the heart. The religious formalists deny the spiritual

status of a saint observing no ceremonialism around him, and the half baked Sufis condemn the externalists for their physical acrobatics, and both ignore the fact that the pulpit of the church is a stepping stone to the pulpit of the heart, the seat of the manifestation of Divine Glory.”

Looking in the direction of a Muslim disciple, who happened to be extra-punctilious on the point of *Shariyat* (externalism), Baba remarked, “Who is there amongst you who knows more about *Shariyat* than myself? You won’t be able to point to a more true and perfect Muslim than myself today. I am what I appear to you externally, but who can have an idea as to what and where am I internally? Prayers and forms of worship are only the means for the realization of God, while you are much lost in the formality of the thing and its details that instead of God you worshipping the prayers. By all means perform your prayers, but do not become an automaton.”

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### **On Knowledge:**

One morning when questioned whether the worldly knowledge, education and intellectuality of a person are an additional asset to him after God-realization, Baba delivered himself as follows:

“There are two varieties of knowledge. The worldly knowledge relating to the material world and the Divine Knowledge, the result of God-realization. A person having become one with God, when dealing with

matters relating to this material world, his actions and words reflect the Divinity in him although no divine knowledge is spent by him. Consequently the utterances and actions of such a person are invested with a sort of a secrecy and grandeur which is often lost sight of by worldly people. It is like a precious ruby in the hands of a rustic who does not appreciate it, but the same piece of stone in the hands of a jeweller will speak differently.

”A person endowed with worldly knowledge and education is, no doubt, able to make the best use of his worldly information on the strength of his Divine Knowledge which, however, is not drawn upon in the least. But a God-realized person, even if he be illiterate, can astound the world on the strength of his Divine Gnosis, by making the blind to see and the dumb to speak, and the two notable examples whereof within living memory are the Prophet of Arabia and Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa.”

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### **On Initiation of a Disciple by the Master :**

Referring to the question of *Piri-Muridi* (the ceremonial relating to the initiation of a disciple by the Master) obtaining in the spiritual world of Islam, Baba said:

“I know of no such initiation symbolized by making the disciple drink a cup (*Piyala* or *Jam*) prior to his acceptance by the Master and neither my Masters—Babajan and Maharaj—ever practiced it. They neither gave me outwardly a cup (*Piyala*) to drink nor held a

formal ceremony of discipleship (*Muridi*) in my case. In fact, no such external ceremony is ever indulged in by Perfect Masters of all times, and nobody can say that Masters alive today like Baba Tajuddin of Nagpur and Narayan Maharaj of Kedgaon have any such system with them. With Perfect Masters (Kamileen) the question of *Piri-Muridi* never arises at all. Their spiritual eye at once discerns the potentiality of a spiritual aspirant and he is bestowed the unique privilege of his *sahavas* (*Sahbale-e-Auliya*)—company.

“Some such external token of acceptance to discipleship very rarely displayed by Perfect Masters in the case of a particular disciple, is blindly imitated by the so-called spiritual Masters (*Pirs*) who are invariably not found to be adepts in playing the custodian of the spiritual welfare of the novitiate in their charge. As happens with everything that is sublime and spiritual in significance and meaning, the interested people try to make a fetish of it and degenerate its original meaning and import into a lifeless ritual. From my viewpoint you can be an aspirant (*Talio*) to many Masters, but a disciple is only entitled to be called so when he actually receives the Master’s grace and a Master can only be styled as such when he palpably bestows his grace on to the aspirant. Until then a Master is only a saint in the eyes of seekers of Truth and the potential disciple is only in the stage of an aspirant.”

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## On Blessings of a Perfect Master:

Once Baba very good humouredly remarked that, “People coming to see me almost always ask me to pray for them. These simple souls do not know that Masters neither bless nor curse anyone. The fulfillment of their worldly desires, from approaching a divine personality, is in direct proportion to the faith they bring towards him and their prayers are answered by the divine *Shaktis* (*Tajalliat*—Powers) active around him. A Perfect Master (*Sadguru*) works in the spiritual domain while the Mahatmas (those on the Path) can be said to bless for it is their spoken word that brings about the desired result. When approaching a Perfect Master with the object of deriving material benefit, one should rather request him for his curse, because such an one’s blessing, if at all he spends it in a particular case, is likely to uproot him from his worldly surroundings with a view to making him one like himself.”

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## Some Queer Happenings and Oracular Words:

Some queer happenings and oracular words spoken at random by Baba are recorded here and their full meaning and significance are left for time to elucidate and clarify:

(1) A very disconcerting and enigmatic order was issued by Baba that the following three from the *mandali* whenever free from their particular duties, were to sit near him in the following manner:

Adi to sit on Baba’s right, Ramju on his left and

Doctor facing him. This strange order was in force for some time and was scrupulously observed by everyone concerned at all times and awkward places lest he should get displeased in the matter.

(2) While on night duty chafing his limbs, Baba explained to me that, “The physical contact of a human being with my body keeps away the spirit world for the time being from me and thereby I am enabled to snatch a little sleep. My sleep is not the sleep of ordinary human beings; it is a sort of a mental rest for me from my spiritual working. A spirit always accompanies me wherever I go and whatever I do. This same spirit was seen by a *mandali* member at the *Jhopdi* in Poona. Maharaj has entrusted this spirit to me and no one need feel scared if perchance seen.”

Does this signify a particular manner of revelation (*Wahi*) vouchsafed to Perfect Masters and which is a controversial subject with the mystics of Islam? Some maintain that this revelation in the case of some saints is through their senses, with some through their minds and with others in some tangible form like writings on paper. One school of thought affirms that both the prophets and *Qutubs* have revelations vouchsafed to them, the prophets have them in the form of an angel visible to physical eyes and the *Qutubs* are aware of the presence of an angel without actually seeing him. Whatever it may be, the spirit in charge of Baba is left for the mystics to guess and interpret.

(3) One afternoon (1922) while the trio were sitting around him in the manner described above, the question of the ages of different members of the *mandali* came in for discussion. After a time, Baba suddenly

pointing to the parties concerned, remarked, "Doctor's age is 20, Adi's is 16 and Ramju's 10." When pressed for an explanation he tactfully evaded the subject.

(4) One fine day when the Parsi festival *Papeti* was being celebrated on an unpretentious scale by the inmates of the *Manzil-e-Meem*, a pigeon comes from somewhere and surrenders very meekly when one of us tried to catch it. The bird was taken to Baba who immediately became engrossed in tending and nursing it after the manner of a baby finding a new toy to play with. In spite of the best care and attention, the pigeon died that night and Baba very strangely made quite a ceremonial of the burial by his own hands in the premises of the Bungalow. Before laying it to its final resting place, Baba spoke to those around as follows:

"Do you remember my words spoken some time ago that I would be receiving a very important message from Babajan very shortly? This is the pigeon that has brought the important news from my Master. The import and gravity of the message may be gauged that soon after delivering the message the bird dies." After the burial Baba composed an "In Memoriam" for the bird consisting of some half a dozen Persian couplets. As if in pursuance of the queer message received and strangely delivered, Baba with a few disciples left for Ajmer by train the same evening (11-9-22).

After about ten days' stay at Ajmer and a visit to Pushkalraj some ten miles distance from the place, Baba and party returned to *Manzil-e-Meem*. What with frequent outings in the suburbs of Bombay and short trips to places like Ghodbunder, Kalyan, and Malangad, the tussle and indecision over the persistent invitations to Meher Baba by Upasni Maharaj, who was at the time

undergoing self-incarceration in a cage at Sakori, the increasing frequency of threats by Baba to leave the *Mandali*, which he did carry out a few times, coupled with the notice of Baba's intentions to send away a few members to their homes, one could feel and foresee the slow disintegration of a settled life at *Manzil-e-Meem* which ultimately came to an end on 19-4-23, with Baba and party removing with bag and baggage to Arangaon (Ahmednagar).

While the Poona phase was characterised by all interest and curiosity of everyone concerned revolving round the personality and spiritual potentiality of Meher Baba himself, the Bombay phase was noted for the *mandaii*'s newly found but blissfully elevating interest in their own-selves and in their spiritual future.

## MEHERABAD PHASE

THE little village of Arangaon, about five miles distant from Ahmednagar (Bombay Presidency), came to be known as Meherabad after Meher Baba's name on account of his long association and activities at the place with a band of willing disciples. In spite of the frequent break-up and demotion of the settlement at Meherabad, necessitated by Baba's oft-recurring journeys and travels and short sojourns in different parts of India, it assumed to itself the dignity of being looked upon as the headquarters of Meher Baba's activities.

In fact Meherabad has made history in the matter of being utilized by Meher Baba and his disciples as a sort of a jumping off ground for ceaseless and intense spiritual work in India and abroad. It may be said to have acquired to itself the unique honour and importance of being the first centre of Meher Baba's spiritual activities on the material plane, inaugurated by him till now. But at the same time, in the eyes of those concerned, Meherabad marks a definite stage in the esoteric training of his disciples.

To those who have lived through that period, Meherabad Phase represents the following prominent features of Meher Baba's activities, viz.:

(1) His fasts, seclusions and other austerities in which the *mandali* were often called upon to participate.

(2) His journeys and sojourns in different parts of India and Persia.

(3) Premashram, Babajan High School, Hospital and dispensaries at Meherabad.

(4) His vow of silence, commencing from 10th July 1925.

(5) Visits to Europe, England and America and world tours.

(6) The Western disciples coming over to live with him in India (1936).

(7) The Mad-Mast contacts.

The detailed description and account of this long and varied phase has already been recorded by the biographers\* of Meher Baba. Herein it is intended to review this period from the standpoint of the *mandali* and to assess the quality and quantity of their preparation and training for a spiritual life under the direct guidance and personal contact of a Perfect Master like Meher Baba. For the disciples concerned, this period may be styled as the preparatory stage for them with Meher Baba emerging as an uncompromising task-master and strict disciplinarian, surprisingly unlike the one they were used to at Poona and *Manzil-e-Meem* (Bombay).

Very often questions are asked by well-meaning people with regard to actual working conditions obtaining in the various *Ashrams* run under the auspices of Meher Baba and the outstanding peculiarity and significance of the esoteric training of the disciples. The answers usually given evidently do not satisfy the questioner and such an one if only a curiosity-monger, is easily discouraged if not scared. The truth of the situation is that there is nothing approaching the mystical about the *Ashrams* of Meher Baba and nothing ascetic in the make-up of his disciples. One fails to find here the atmosphere

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\**Perfect Master & The God-Man* by C.B. Purdom, London. *Avatar* by Jean Adriel, U.S.A.

generally associated with spiritual *Ashrams* in the East and India in particular and the inmates in this case perform duties to all intents and purposes comprising selfless and benevolent services to mankind.

*Ashram* life in India is generally associated with strict dietary discipline and physical and mental austerities such as Meditation and Yoga practices in some form or the other. More so, such an atmosphere is expected of institutions blessed with the physical presence of a spiritual Master. An outsider in my opinion ought to be held excused if he feels dissatisfied when trying to take stock of things in the short span of a few hours or even a few weeks. Such a visitor drawn by the spiritual reputation of Meher Baba, finding nothing approaching his pre-conceived notions of what an *Ashram* should be like, is very easily tempted to think loudly about it. More often than not it has been observed that these so-called seekers after Truth and Knowledge, come to the institutions of Meher Baba, more with the attitude and demeanour of self-appointed inspectors than true aspirants.

It is the conclusive experience of most of his seasoned disciples that it is a sheer impossibility to understand Meher Baba and his working even after years of association with him. In the light of this rather disconcerting knowledge, any hasty conclusions on the part of a chance visitor are pardonable, and the disciples in this case deserve sympathy for not being able to parade the stock in trade of recognized *Ashrams*.

It is said of a school teacher that he was in the habit of preserving the specimen hand-writing of every new pupil on the first day of his arrival and, if after a time, any one from amongst them happened to complain

of no progress in the matter, the teacher would produce the first day's specimen copy and leave the pupil to judge for himself whether or not any progress has been made, invariably with convincing results. Such is the case with Meher Baba's *Ashrams* and his disciples. To the outside world Meher Baba may be just a spiritual claimant, one amongst many in the East, and his disciples, to a superficial observer, are matter-of-fact and mundane, engaged in non-descript activities, apparently belying the spiritual life they are supposed to lead.

Looking back over twenty years, I can now confidently describe and assess the extremely subtle manner of Meher Baba's unorthodox working and the superhuman tact and forbearance shown by him in the training of his disciples—a phase hitherto not properly gauged and understood by the outside world. Like the teacher referred to above, the Master is now in a position to tell the disciples to see for themselves any spiritual change wrought within them, and the disciples subjectively alive to the colossal reclamation within them, can never bring themselves to say otherwise.

The world upto now is only aware of a few outstanding events and activities in Meher Baba's spiritual career of the past twenty years or more. The establishment of *Ashrams* at different places with the concomitant features—the schools, hospitals and other philanthropic activities, the later abolition of a few of them, his itineraries in India and his foreign travels, represent some of the facts and events known to everybody. But no one, except the crystallized *mandali* who have been with him through thick and thin, knows anything about the esoteric side of Meher Baba's



working during this period. The relatively secondary aspect of it—the *Ashrams*, schools and hospitals have never been the ends in itself, but they happened to be the means to an end, which is nothing but the fulfillment of his divine mission in life—the spiritual awakening of humanity.

In the present enlightened age, in spite of a material outlook and scientific ego, the spiritual activity of a Perfect Master like Meher Baba could not long remain unrecognised. The publicity accorded to Meher Baba by the Press, has aroused the sedate element in the world to evince a lot of interest in him. Thousands of people have approached him till now, but the sorry part of it is that majority of them have invariably sought the information as to the ability of Meher Baba to work miracles, as also concrete instances of persons receiving material or spiritual benefit from him.

The world unhappily judges a man from results achieved and not from the ordeals and struggles leading to the same. It is universally recognized in the spiritual domain that the greatness of a Master lies in bringing about results in the ordinary way, almost always in conformity with natural laws. From the highest standpoint of spirituality, Masters all over the world have emphatically denounced the use of shock tactics—miracles, which are only resorted to by imperfect beings and those of low spiritual caliber. How pregnant with meaning is Meher Baba's remark when he said, "Greatness of Mohomed is not *Ka'ba* (the place of pilgrimage at Mecca) but *Karbala* (the place of martyrdom of the Prophet's grandsons in the cause of Truth)." The greatest miracle that Meher Baba intends presenting to the world is the spiritual transformation or

regeneration of his disciples, towards which end he has been exerting for more than twenty years. The world has very little knowledge about this particular esoteric phase of his activity, which is likely to prove an eye-opener to them when it becomes a realized fact. To me, the promised Manifestation of Meher Baba connotes a definite and almost a final stage of his spiritual working, synchronising with the completion of the process of the spiritual training of his disciples through whom he is likely to work for the rehabilitation of humanity throughout the world.

Meher Baba's spiritual greatness consists in being too ordinary, and this characteristic in him makes him an enigma, even to his most intimate disciples. He has been repeatedly heard to remark that Realization can be imparted to anybody he desires, in the twinkling of an eye, but the grounding process is necessary for achieving authority to help others spiritually. And to bring about this desired result, which only Perfect Masters are capable of doing, the spiritual awakening in disciples and aspirants of the Path, is sought to be brought about in conformity with natural laws. This process necessarily entails a long period of novitiate in the service of the Master, with all the attendant mental tortures, suspense, disappointment, longing, which varied phases and experiences, according to Meher Baba, are much more valuable than the goal itself.

This indeed is the real miracle that is being wrought by Meher Baba in the case of his disciples, and it is purely a question of time when the adepts in the process of making [spiritual progress] under his spiritual care and guidance will provide an irrefutable testimony to the spiritual greatness of the Master than all the

miracles that he may be credited with.

Since the real mission in life of Meher Baba consists in the spiritual awakening of those deserving and desiring, reasonably the estimate and appreciation of his work is not to be based on the number of *Ashrams*, schools and hospitals he may have at any given time. These are of secondary importance and when the purpose behind them is served, they are liable to be scrapped any minute as has been the case so often before.

In spite of the almost complete absence of any exoteric formula and teaching, how Meher Baba had gradually and subtly moulded the disciples for a life of renunciation, resignation and selfless service, is a matter the recipients of his grace can only understand and feel. It is the Meherabad phase, undoubtedly, that is associated in the memory of his disciples as being the most crucial period of their spiritual training.

This phase, according to them, is remarkable for affording sufficient scope for the exercise of all the four *yogas* viz., *Karma*, *Bhakti*, *Raj* and *Dnyan*, according to each one's aptitude and ability. A comparison here with life in *Manzil-e-Meem* would go to show how subtly the disciples were led into a life of self-discipline and self-denial at Meherabad. The comfortable life of *Manzil-e-Meem* had become a thing of the past, a dream to be forgotten. The menu consisted of plain rice and dal for lunch, and bread and vegetable for dinner. Even this simple menu very often underwent drastic curtailment for some reason or the other, as a result of which, the *mandali* had to subsist for long periods on one meal a day and milkless tea. The sectarian scheme in the matter of cooking and eating food observed heretofore,

was abandoned at Meherabad, and a cosmopolitan atmosphere was introduced. Meher Baba having achieved the task at *Manzil-e-Meem* of drawing in the net for his disciples and finding them safely landed in the area of his influence, gradually and subtly developed into a hard task-master, so much so that the vagaries of his moods and temperament at this period could have put to shame any weather forecast by the meteorological department. The slightest laxity in duty and the breaking of a simple order would invite corporeal punishment which was never so very poignantly felt by the defaulters concerned as when Meher Baba occasionally ordered himself to be caned for the faults of others.

Like *Manzil-e-Meem*, Meher Baba here continued giving baths to the boys of the depressed class and even the lepers, with the help of the *mandali*. Physical and manual labour of some kind or other was imposed on all the inmates there with the avowed object of improving the grounds and repairs to dilapidated buildings. For a few months the daily programme of grinding corns with the help of stone grinders manipulated by the hand, was indulged in by Baba, and sometimes a few of the *mandali* were also allotted that task.

Meher Baba has a happy knack of doing things by himself, particularly his physical ordeals and penances (if they can be called so), the *mandali* helplessly playing the accessory thereto. Many would offer themselves to share if possible his spiritual tribulations and sufferings, symptomatic of which were his frequent fasts, seclusions and other physical austerities, but these loving offers were invariably

turned down by the Master with an assurance that he only knew what was best for them all. The disciples were enjoined to carry out his orders conscientiously, and to stick to him at all costs leaving the result entirely in his hands.

This aspect of the question left nothing else for the *mandali* to do, except to go through the daily round of monotonous routine duty and work. After pondering over the question for a good length of time, the *mandali* has ultimately arrived at the conclusion that Meher Baba wants them to eliminate themselves altogether by living in him and thinking in him.

Meher Baba throughout this phase has taken great pains to bring home to the disciples concerned, the importance of complete surrendrance to the Master. The whole trend and process of his training was directed to achieve this desired result. The disciples, in course of time, automatically realized the situation that it would be wise of them if they never allowed their minds to argue and reason out the orders of the *Guru* who knows too well what is best for the aspirant.

According to Baba, the disciple who allows his mind full play, creates nothing but difficulties for himself without materially altering the issue involved. *When the mind of the disciple ceases to function, the Divine Will of the Master takes possession of it and works through it.* Although in the beginning, this condition of the mind is terribly annoying, it attunes itself after a time to the dictates of the master-mind whereby the disciple is eventually endowed with that poise, self-sufficiency and contentment—a sure sign of the Divine Bliss to come. When Christ said, “Leave all and come unto me,” he not only meant the world and its

affairs, but also the mental paraphernalia.

So far as the *mandali* is concerned, the tours and short sojourns to places like Toka, Nasik, Karachi, Quetta, Persia, etc., provided just a wee bit of a diversion as a result of new circumstances and surroundings, but so far as the disciplinary life with Baba was concerned, it meant for them just the change over o[n] the side of pain and nothing more.

The concluding period of the Meherabad phase is connected with Meher Baba's mad-mast activities, inaugurated at Rahuri (1936) and it has since then been actively carried through the length and breadth of India. The reason behind this activity and its spiritual significance has been dealt with by me in my article "The Mad Ashram."

The present phase of Meher Baba's activities, with the Westerners playing a prominent role therein, has entered a very definite stage constructive in character, and is much wider in scope than heretofore. Meher Baba's mode of address and attention which was till now concerned with his immediate disciples and individual aspirants, is to-day very aggressively diverted to the world at large. In place of the temporary *Ashrams* and secluded activities studiously shunning publicity of any kind, his working is assuming decidedly concrete and permanent features like the Byramangala Universal *Spiritual Centre* near Bangalore, and other similar ones in the course of construction in different parts of India. This universal character of Meher Baba's work at the moment is definitely taking a tangible shape, and it is hoped the world will realize the magnitude of his Spiritual Mission much sooner than expected.

## THE MAD ASHRAM

Of all phases of Shri Baba's activities extending over a period of about twenty years, the Ashram for the insane and mad at Meherabad, stands out in bold relief and possesses a significance of its own. Readers already familiar with the personality who has inspired this Journal,\* can easily understand that Baba, whatever activities he initiates, he does with a set purpose and that is nothing but the achievement of some spiritual end. Baba aims and plans nothing short of this. The humanitarian aspect of such a work is only secondary and which more or less provides a training ground for his disciples.

Like many other sporadic manifestations of Baba's spiritual activities on the material plane, the Mad Ashram too has never been advertised. Naturally very few are aware of its existence and the idea behind it. It behooves us, therefore, to give the world a little insight into the working conditions of the above Ashram and its *raison-d'être*. It may interest a few and amuse a good many to know why the institution has been started and how it is managed. The "why" is the spiritual object thereof and will be discussed later on in this article. Suffice it to say, the Mad Ashram at Meherabad has very little in common with institutions of its kind in the world. Baba has ordered it to be run on a plan peculiarly his own. The inmates, about forty of them at the moment, are cared for and served by of the seasoned disciples of Shri Baba. They are under strict instructions to treat their charges like normal human

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\**Meher Baba Journal* 1938-1942

beings. Unlike other such institutions, no chastisement of any kind, no chaining, no exaction of manual and physical labour is allowed. The only restriction imposed is that on their liberty of movement, cooped in as they have to be kept, within a spacious but defined area.

The science of medicine may perhaps suspect in this the application of psycho-therapy for the reclamation of unbalanced minds, but it is nothing of the kind. Psycho-therapy, as a curative instrument, is of doubtful efficacy, and is still in an experimental stage. Even conceding it some appreciable success, it is only applicable individually in not very advanced cases, but never collectively.

Baba's method in the matter of reclaiming these mental derelicts is amazingly unique. Divinely dictated, divinely acted, it (Baba's method) cannot become a pattern for others to copy. It is impossible to emulate him, unless they find themselves elevated to the same spiritual heights. It is one more testimony of Baba's perfection. Perfection is the experience of any two or all extreme opposite states of being or conditions at one and the same time.

It has been said, "Man is God playing the fool," then a mad person may be said to be "God playing the child." The insane people are veritable babies, altogether irresponsible, having no control over their bodily actions. Baba treats them as such, and children, we know, respond very quickly and easily to love. Baba's panacea for all the ills of life is love, pure and simple, not the spurious imitation thereof which passes for love in the market of the world. Even parental love of a most exclusive and altruistic kind cannot come up to the love emanating from a God-realized being as it



has its source in Divinity. Divine Love playing the servant through Baba is the *modus operandi* of the Mad Ashram under discussion.

Hence no parallel institution, however idealistically founded, can approach the one at Meherabad under Baba's aegis. Innumerable institutions functioning throughout the world for the mental and physical relief of a suffering humanity are at best the outcome of pity. And pity, you must know, is one of the most subtle and clever disguises assumed by the human ego. All the same, it cannot be despised as it supplies a great motive force, unhampered by barriers of religion, culture and nationality. Pity is the saving grace of mankind; where religion and morality fail, it steps in to save man from degeneration into a beast.

Thus far only ordinary mortals can rise. But where Love appears, it transforms the whole field of action. The most altruistic and selfless motive pales before its glamour, the most beautiful dream of religion and philosophy—the brotherhood of man—looks up to it hopefully to be interpreted into reality.

Nothing in the universe can resist the force of Divine Love expressed through man. History of the world bears ample testimony to this. Divine Love, with man as the vehicle thereof, has flooded the world from time to time, has subdued continents and elevated mankind from depths of moral degradation to heights of spiritual excellence. Meher Baba is the chosen vehicle of Divine Love today. His playful and loving contact with the mad inmates of the Ashram is a practical demonstration on a small scale of what the worried world may expect of him when he manifests himself and delivers the message of Love and Peace on earth. The

upheaval which Baba speaks of is very near, and the message, according to him, once delivered will be irresistible.

Cynics will be convinced and critics silenced, if only they were to witness the astounding and successful results of experimentation with the diseased minds and brains in the laboratory of Love at Meherabad. The personal touch of Baba in the matter of feeding, clothing, bathing and even cleansing the lavatory, has wrought a miraculous change in the inmates of the Mad Ashram. The sub-normal are tending towards normality and the abnormal, that is those stranded or lost on the Path, are given a spiritual push forward or reclaimed. The latter are flaring instances of the dangers involved in treading the spiritual Path all alone unaided by a Perfect Master. The most expensive medical service or even an ultra sincere *Karma Yogi* will fail here, in what is only possible of Divinity in flesh.

It may amuse people to know that the Mad Ashram enacted a drama on 25th September based on the life of the King renunciator *Gopichand*. The chief cast in the play, consisting solely of the mentally deranged, is a feature perhaps the first of its kind ever attempted. For the mad to dance, deliver, sing and play is not only a sign of their returning to normality, but it is also a tribute to the potency of Love as a curative factor.

The spiritual aspect of the question is difficult to explain and perhaps still more difficult for the worldly-minded to accept. The explanation vouchsafed by Baba in one of his playful moods, as to the spiritual significance of the Mad Ashram, will no doubt impose a severe tax on one's credulity. But it cannot be helped; the explanation on the subject is there; take it or reject

it. It all depends on the individual preparedness or susceptibility to matters spiritual.

The Mad Ashram has not come into being haphazard. It is deliberately evolved to serve a spiritual purpose. According to Baba, perfection born of realization owes a certain duty towards creation. This duty towards creation is not a condition precedent to perfection, but a spontaneous acceptance of the situation. It is a mission self-imposed out of Love, on seeing or realizing one's own self at the Self in all. One freed Soul finds itself bound and limited by time and space in innumerable others. Hence to advance others individually or collectively towards freedom, Self-knowledge or Realization is the spiritual object of Divine Incarnation on earth. The end justifies the means. Perfect Masters employ material means for the spiritual end, analogous with Universal Consciousness. Mad Ashram is one of the means in Baba's spiritual programme to restore normality to the war-crazy world. The question, "How he is going to work it" does not lie at all. Miracles of raising the dead to life, restoring of sight to the blind, curing of lepers by a mere touch or glance wrought by Perfect Masters, are accepted facts. Even if explained, it is impossible for the limited mind to understand the functioning part or process thereof. You yourself are an answer to such spiritual or metaphysical questions beyond the domain of mind. Become That.

Baba is prophetic, not merely in his utterances, but lives up to it. His suddenly inspired whirlwind trips round the world, contacts with a select few Westerners, utter disregard for publicity, incognito visits to unexpected places in Europe, affording as it does

sufficient food for thought and speculation, still leaves one baffled as to what really he has up his sleeves. For instance, the sudden and unexpected requisitioning of a particular mad inmate of the Ashram to Cannes (Southern France), where Baba was staying sometime last year with a few Western disciples, left even his seasoned disciples a-guessing. A trip to Europe, by a mad inmate of the Ashram, at great expense and inconvenience ordered by Baba was surely not for reasons of health.

All the above may sound pretty tall, but surely not outside the domain of possibility. A cursory acquaintance with the Master-minds of the world, who have shaped the destiny of mankind leaving so many millions behind as an after-math of the spiritual force released by them, will at once rule out the question of possibility. The affairs of the world are governed by cycles of time and tide, which is popularly termed the repetition of history. That which has happened before can and does happen again; what one man has achieved, it is possible for another to repeat the performance or even improve there on.

A negative attitude of mind to such claims and questions leads nowhere. Almost all questions and doubts with regard to the method and means employed by the Master-minds are generally out of place or premature. The working of the Universal Mind cannot be gauged by measures or standards set up by the individual mind. Only the time factor is there to justify the claimant or the cynic.

Till then, it would ill become the world to ignore the potentiality of Meher Baba as a Divine Manifestation on earth which, according to all religions,

is long overdue. I, therefore, invite all lovers of Truth to seek, search and study the Perfect Master, Meher Baba.

**Register of Editorial Alterations in  
*Twenty Years with Meher Baba***

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4	footnote	1	<i>“Meher Baba Journal”</i>	<i>Meher Baba Journal</i>
10	footnote	6	Com-passionare	Com-passionate
19	2	9	Langote life	Langoti life
23	1	3	Jaunpur	Jaumpur
23	1	19	an an intellectual	an intellectual
23	1	21	afer	after
26	3	1	Kirshna	Krishna
27	2	1	<i>Mahaba-leswar</i>	<i>Mahaba-leshwar</i>
28	1	2	Mahaba-leswar	Mahaba-leshwar

36	1	8	timehe	time he
47	footnote	7	avataric	Avataric
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