

GLIMPSES OF THE GOD-MAN
MEHER BABA
Volume 1
(1943-1948)

By

Bal Natu

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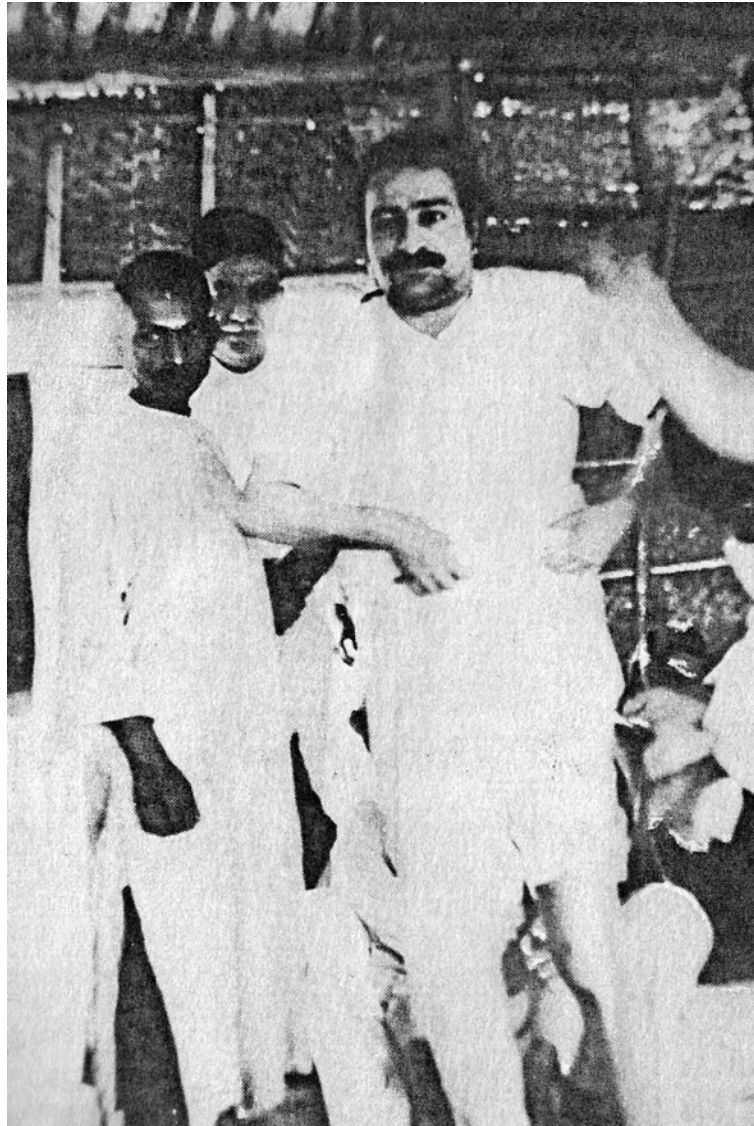
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Glimpses of the God-Man, Meher Baba



MEHER BABA, 1940s

Glimpses
of the
God-Man,
Meher Baba

Volume 1 (1943-1948)

Bal Natu

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*To the Loving and Abiding Presence
Of the God-Man, Meher Baba*

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Bal Natu

Meher Prasad

Kurduwadi, M. S., India

June 7, 1974

Bal Natu

Introduction

What is man?

A state of full and complete consciousness limited by the individualized human mind.

What is God?

The Infinite Consciousness, unbounded and immaculate.

When the mind with all its thoughts and feelings is effaced, there is nothing to limit the infinitesimal "drop" of consciousness and it experiences itself as the "Ocean" of Infinite Consciousness. This is the very purpose of Creation. This is the state of Self-realization or God-realization. This final experience confers complete absorption of the "drop" in the infinitude of God. Such a one is not aware of the world — for him it does not exist. If by the Divine Will he regains normal human consciousness and spiritually guides people, he is called a Perfect Master — a Sadguru or Qutub. Thus a man-become-God is a Man-God. He is the Individualized Ocean.

Once in a while, however, it is ordained that the Infinite Consciousness apparently "descends" into the world of Illusion and assumes a human form to give a worldwide spiritual push to everyone and everything created. Such a One is known as the Avatar — the Buddha, the Messiah, the Christ, the Prophet. It is part of the Divine Sport. Thus the God-become-man is the God-Man, the Oceanized individual. Such a recurring Advent of God is as ancient as

Creation itself, so He is called the Ancient One. He comes amidst mankind to set a noble example of Divine Life and to reaffirm the faith of man in himself as the potential Infinite Divine Existence. The Sport consists in realizing this Truth consciously. The Avatar's presence coincides with a vital push felt in various fields of life — art, music, literature, sports, science and, above all, spiritual understanding.

In different Advents the man-form changes but the formless God as the Ancient One remains unchanged. In every cycle the declaration of His divinity is in conformity with the need of the time, and His special messages revitalize spiritual precepts. In the present cycle, Meher Baba has verily proclaimed: "I am the Ancient One, the One residing in every heart. I was Rama, I was Krishna, I was this One, I was that One, and now I am Meher Baba." And in one of His messages He has specifically stated: "I belong to no religion, every religion belongs to Me. My own personal religion is my being the Ancient Infinite One, and the religion I teach to all is love for God. I am the Divine Beloved. Therefore, love others, make others happy, serve others even at discomfort to yourself — this is to love me."

Merwan Sheriarji Irani, endearingly called by His followers "Meher Baba," was born of Zoroastrian parents on February 25, 1894, in Poona, Maharashtra, India. While He was studying at Deccan College in Poona, in May 1913 an old woman, a centenarian named Hazrat Babajan, beckoned to Him. Like iron to a magnet, Merwan was drawn to her. She gazed intently into His eyes, lovingly embraced Him and kissed Him on His forehead between the eyebrows. What an incredible meeting! This contact made Merwan experience thrills of indescribable bliss for a period of nine months and marked the end of His college studies. In January 1914 Hazrat Babajan, who was one of the Perfect Masters, made Merwan realize the Infinite Bliss of God-realization. It was the state of nirvikalpa samadhi.

In December 1915 Merwan felt impelled to visit Sai Baba, another Perfect Master, at Shirdi, fifty-three miles from Ahmednagar. He prostrated himself at Sai Baba's feet, and as He got up, Sai Baba looked straight into His eyes and exclaimed, "Parvardigar!" ("God the Sustainer"). Then Merwan was inwardly drawn to visit a small nearby temple where the Sadguru Upasni Maharaj lived. Seeing Merwan at the door, Maharaj flung a small piece of stone at Him and it hit Him exactly on the spot which Hazrat Babajan had kissed. This was the first "stroke of Knowledge" that helped Merwan to regain Creation-consciousness in addition to God-consciousness (nirvikalpa samadhi). Later, Meher Baba conveyed:

Babajan gave me Divine Bliss.
Sai Baba gave me Divine Power.
Maharaj gave me Divine Knowledge.

During succeeding years, Merwan continued to visit Maharaj frequently. Maharaj had moved to Sakori, three miles from Shirdi. From July to December 1921, He stayed with Maharaj continuously for six months. At the end of this period, Maharaj completely unveiled to Merwan His role and status as the Ancient One. Once, with folded hands, Maharaj said to Him, "Merwan, you are the Avatar. "

Merwan's Avataric activities commenced in January 1922, and out of deep reverence, the first group of disciples who gathered around Him began to call Him "Meher Baba," the Compassionate Father. The late Saiyed Saheb, an old disciple of Merwan, was the first to call Him Meher Baba.

Avatar Meher Baba's life had so many phases — internal and external — which kept Him engaged in the inner spiritual work of Awakening. Here, I mention a few of them in their partial outward expression. In the mid-twenties He opened a school in the ashram at Meherabad near Ahmednagar, but the curriculum and the ways in which it was

conducted were inimitable. He also set up a free hospital which afforded a training ground for His disciples to render selfless service. In the early forties, He distributed with His own hands food-grains and cloth to thousands of needy villagers, but His identity was not disclosed. He washed the feet of lepers and bowed His head on their feet. He once conveyed, "These are beautiful 'birds' in ugly cages."

Apart from such philanthropic works, Meher Baba's main concern was to awaken the hearts of mankind, so at times He toured parts of India to give darshan to the thousands of His followers who craved for His physical presence. He also visited the West — particularly England, the United States and Australia — thirteen times between 1931 and 1958 to meet His dear disciples and devotees. All these activities were interspersed with long periods of seclusion and partial fasts. And it was amazing to see Him attending to all these programs even though He had commenced observing silence on July 10, 1925. His silence continued until He dropped His body on January 31, 1969. From 1927 to 1954 He used an alphabet board to convey messages and discourses, but from October 7, 1954, on He discarded it and used only gestures and movements of His hands and fingers to express His thoughts. How, in spite of His silence, He managed to cope with the enormous scope of His external work — correspondence, interviews, darshan and sahasas programs, etc. — was a day-to-day wonder! He once stated: "If my silence cannot speak, of what avail are words! Things that are Real are given and received in silence."

Avatar Meher Baba's work with the God-intoxicated souls needs special mention. It is an unprecedented phase of this Advent. Meher Baba referred to these souls as masts — "the men of God." In their intense love for God these persons were so absorbed in their ecstatic state of consciousness that they had no thoughts for physical needs and

comforts. They were found in secluded places and in crowded cities alike. Meher Baba visited such sites and places in the nooks and corners of India to contact them. To clarify this phase of work I prefer to quote Meher Baba's words: "Masts are those who become permanently unconscious in part or whole of their physical bodies, actions and surroundings, due to their absorption in their intense love and longing for God ... The masts alone know how they love me ... I work for the masts, and knowingly or unknowingly they work for me."¹ For a detailed account of this unique phase, I recommend that readers refer to *The Wayfarers* by the late Dr. William Donkin.

Meher Baba's life as the God-Man lies far beyond human understanding, but His life as man was a visible and tangible expression of His divine Love. His relationships with the animals and birds were with the same love that He bestowed upon His followers. In the early days He visited theaters, and He was especially fond of music and singing programs. He liked to play games, especially cricket. He also played marbles and was fond of flying kites. Above all, His sense of humor was superb, and that helped all who met Him to experience His closeness and humanity. He was the Perfect Person. His messages, which reflect His deep love for humanity, drew to Him a following in all parts of the world — people from different religions and nationalities. All His messages could be summed up as a universal message of Love.

Bal Natu was in Meher Baba's contact for twenty-five years and had opportunities to stay with Him for long periods at Poona and Meherazad, Baba's residence near Ahmednagar. In this book he has tried to present glimpses of the God-Man from the year he heard about Meher Baba — 1943. I am sure seekers of God in general, and those who

¹ Meher Baba, *Listen, Humanity*, p. 260.

are devoted to Baba in particular, will happily share with him the Sport of the Ancient One, Meher Baba.

Jai Baba!

Adi k. Irani

Meher Nazar
Ahmednagar, M. S., India
June 1, 1974

Preface

It was summer 1957 when Avatar Meher Baba directly instructed me to take down notes of the two meetings held in His presence. When in the early sixties He permitted His followers in India to see Him at Poona, He allotted me the special duty of noting down the explanations that He might feel pleased to give on different spiritual subjects. I also kept a diary, recording what transpired during these small and large gatherings, including the accounts of a few interviews. Some of these notes were later read out to Meher Baba and duly edited. This duty awakened in me a great interest in collecting information about the different activities and phases of work in Meher Baba's life. For me this turned out to be a very pleasant hobby.

In January 1969 Meher Baba most unexpectedly dropped His physical body. There was a feeling in me of something vitally missing, so I had to find my own way of maintaining contact with Him. I commenced writing about His life and my life with Him beginning in 1943 — the year I first heard about Him. There was no fixed plan, and I had no idea that the articles would be published in book form. I simply desired to share what I understood of Meher Baba with those who wished to know more about Him. I claim no authority, and I do not profess to teach anything to anyone. Meher Baba as the God-Man (the Avatar) drew the hearts of His dear ones to Him as He alone is capable, and He is still drawing many others in various lively ways.

While narrating certain events, for clarification I have brought in similar or relevant incidents in Meher Baba's life which happened either in earlier or later years. As the motive for my writing is a free exchange of views, of course based on facts, I have frankly recorded my interpretations, but these inferences are personal and open to correction. Anyone is free to have his or her own outlook. What Meher Baba expects of everyone is purity of heart and honesty in life.

What Meher Baba is, everyone has to find out for himself. He, however, categorically declared, "I am the Avatar — the God-Man." Instead of saying anything about His Avatarhood here, I prefer to quote what He said about Himself and the reactions of those who heard or read about such a claim by Him. In one message, Meher Baba clearly stated the following:

When I say I am the Avatar, there are a few who feel happy, some who feel shocked, and many who, hearing me claim this, would take me for a hypocrite, a fraud, a supreme egoist or just mad. If I were to say that every one of you is an Avatar, a few would be tickled, and many would consider it a blasphemy or a joke. The fact that since God is One — indivisible and equally in us all — we can be naught else but One, is too much for the duality-conscious mind to accept. Yet each of us is what the other is. I know I am the Avatar in every sense of the word, and that each one of you is an Avatar in one sense or the other.

It has been an unalterable and universally recognized fact since time immemorable that God knows everything, God does everything, and that nothing happens but by the will of God. Therefore it is God Who makes me say I am the Avatar, and that each one of you is an Avatar. Again, it is He Who is tickled through some and through others is shocked. It is God Who acts and God Who

reacts. It is He Who scoffs and He Who responds. He is the Creator, the Producer, the actors and the audience in His own Divine Play.²

In the light of the above message, I may be allowed to say that the writing of Glimpses and the responses of the readers will form a part of the Divine Play of God.

Non-English words used in this book which may be unfamiliar to the reader are printed in italics. I have defined some of these words at their first occurrence; however, some words such as mast, mandali, darshan, prasad, etc., are used often, so I request that the reader refer to the Glossary.

Words fail to express my gratitude for the unconditional compassion and love of Avatar Meher Baba, so I offer my humble salutations to Him with the request that He accept this book as a token of my "little" love for Him.

Bal Natu

Meher Prasad
Kurduwadi, M. S., India
June 7, 1974
Bal Natu

² A message given by Meher Baba during the Mass Darshan Program at Ahmednagar, India, September 12, 1954. Also printed in *The Awakener*, vol. 2, no. 2, Fall 1954, p. 1.

Glimpses of the God-Man, Meher Baba

1

Tidings of Joy About the God-Man, 1943

He Drew Me to Him

"HOW did you come to Meher Baba? What was your experience of Him?" are questions often asked me whenever I have the opportunity to meet Baba lovers, particularly those who are new acquaintances. It is quite natural to ask such questions of anyone who has had an opportunity, by virtue of his luck, to come in contact with any great personality, and especially so regarding contact with the Enlightened One.

The answers may vary with each person in accordance with his temperament and receptivity. The replies may appeal to some, and to others they may not. The fact remains that every person's contact with Meher Baba has a unique personal fragrance which may or may not be adequately expressed in words. Words that come with clarity may help others get a feeling of life with Meher Baba. I do not claim such clarity, yet I wish, though a bit hesitantly, to recall my life with Meher Baba, of course with readiness to correct any statements or information through those who may have better knowledge.

My answers to the above questions are simple. Meher Baba drew me to Him. My life with Him was His act of compassion and love, unmindful of my weaknesses. This is my experience.

"Why Should I Suffer So Severely?"

Before I relate the incident that drew me close into Meher Baba's personal contact, I would like to mention briefly my earlier life, in which His invisible hands and heart were at work. When I was eighteen years old and studying in college, I felt deeply impressed by the ethical and philosophical greatness of Hindu culture. The days I spent in the company of Dr. Hedgewar, the founder of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh — a cultural movement of the Hindus in India — were highly influential in shaping my daily life in the light of the ideal enshrined in my heart. I joined a band of selfless and honest workers and participated in the work of organizing the Hindu society in order to earn a noble and honorable living such as was intended in the better days of old. All was going well when, due to overwork and excessive cycling, I had a heavy hemorrhage from the lungs. In spite of medical care the illness took a serious turn, and it was declared that I had tuberculosis in the third stage. I became so weak that for months I could not even move sideways in bed.

"Why should I suffer so severely?" I asked myself. "Is there God? And if He is, is He just?" I was thoroughly disturbed by the conflicts and contradictions within me and around me. After surgical operations in the Mission Hospital at Wanlesswadi, Miraj, I felt better physically but the psychological confusion was still dominant. To add fuel to the fire, and as a bolt from the blue, my father died unexpectedly — and with this the dreams of my youth for material prosperity and social service abruptly ended.

Decision to Seek Aurobindo

By chance, my family decided to settle at Kurduwadi (Sholapur District, Maharashtra). Under the circumstances

I needed to seek a job, but that was physically impossible. Confinement at home compelled me to think seriously and furiously about life, God, and His wonderful Creation. I was drawn to the literature of saints and Sadgurus of Maharashtra — Tukaram, Ramdas, Dnyaneshwar, Eknath and others. This reading consoled me to some extent. I was also very much impressed by the teachings of Ramakrishna Paramhansa. His simple words, expressing a depth of meaning, brought tears to my eyes. But my uppermost thought was: "All these Masters have dropped their bodies. I must meet someone in person who has realized the Truth. Where to find such a One?"

During this period I heard and read about Shri Aurobindo of Pondicherry and later about Bhagwan Raman Maharshi of Arunachalam. They were living personalities. The life of Shri Aurobindo was a source of great inspiration to me. His life, and particularly the vision he had in jail about Lord Krishna, touched my heart. I was so drawn to him that I nearly decided to visit Pondicherry to request him to accept me as one of his followers, but the place was far away towards the southeast coast, a thousand kilometers distant. I used to meditate on Shri Aurobindo's picture and even celebrated his birthday, all alone in a field, on the fifteenth of August. Perhaps as a result of this meditation I felt that in a dream I saw Aurobindo standing on a hill. But the significance of it was revealed to me later when I met Meher Baba at Meherabad.

A Miracle!

It was March 1943. Meher Baba agreed to visit Sholapur and Barsi on the tenth and eleventh of March. People were permitted to meet Him in silence and to offer their respects. The news of His arrival appeared in the newspapers and this aroused a very old memory in me. As a teenager

I was traveling with my father in a second-class compartment on a mail train from Jhansi to Bombay. Meher Baba coincidentally got into the same compartment with a few of His disciples, at Deolali or perhaps Nasik Road. I was deeply moved by His personality but I did not know then who He was. At Bombay I learned from my father that the impressive personality was Meher Baba. As the years passed I completely forgot about that incident. The news in the local papers revived this memory and I felt a strong pull within me to see Meher Baba in person, but by this time He had already left Sholapur. This occurrence, however, was instrumental in kindling the desire to know more about Him.

Then a "miracle" happened! Miracle in the sense that the cause of the episode remains unknown even to this date, or else it is plain coincidence. One of my neighbors, Kakasaheb Ghatnekar, who was working as a ticket collector for the Railways, was not much interested in reading. One day, however, while visiting a hotel near the station, he met a person who had a new book in his hand. Impulsively Ghatnekar inquired about the book. It was the life of Meher Baba, written by Deshmukh in the Marathi language. Ghatnekar asked the person if he would lend him that book, and strangely enough the man happily parted with it and left the hotel. They did not know each other nor did they introduce themselves. My neighbor immediately handed the book over to me. The man who owned it never contacted Ghatnekar again to get back his new book. Thus, in a sense, began my life with Meher Baba.

Correspondence with Meher Baba

After reading the biography of Meher Baba, I felt that He could be the One whom I should contact. His philosophy and teachings, from my limited capacity of understanding,

were in accord with the teachings of the Upanishads and of Maharashtrian Masters — but He was not born a Hindu! And I was a bit dogmatic in this respect. There would be, however, no harm in just having His darshan or a formal audience, I felt. I did not know Meher Baba's address, so I wrote a reply-paid postcard to: Secretary, c/o Meher Baba, Ahmednagar. It was my first letter to Meher Baba. In those days He was deeply engaged in His work with the masts, God-intoxicated souls, hence I did not receive an immediate reply.

During the fourth week of May 1943 I got a reply from Adi K. Irani (familiarily known as Adi Sr.), Meher Baba's secretary. He wrote:

"I showed your postcard to Meher Baba ... You can write to Meher Baba direct, asking any questions or for any information. He is very happy and He sends His blessings to you." And I really felt blessed.

I thought, "What should I write to Him? Am I qualified to put questions to Him?" In sending the reply to Meher Baba I wrote that I knew nothing of God and the spiritual Path. Thus instead of asking Him questions, I wholeheartedly wished to learn the alphabet of spirituality at His holy feet. Meher Baba appreciated my reply, but concerning the request to see Him in person, He instructed me to communicate with Him by the end of June 1943. I did not miss writing to Him as He instructed.

Condition of Implicit Obedience

In August 1943 I received a letter from Adi K. Irani giving me the information that a congregation of Baba lovers was expected to be held at Meherabad in January 1944. He further wrote: "Those who will be called to attend the congregation will have already agreed to obey all instructions of Baba. Should you feel inclined to obey implicitly,

please let me know earlier so that I may put you up as an aspirant to be supplied with the necessary circulars. . . Baba sends His blessings."

I felt a bit puzzled as I read this letter. Instead of just meeting Him, I was to be invited for a stay with Him at Meherabad. This was more than encouraging, but the condition of obedience to Him had to be seriously considered. After much thought, a reply was sent by me as follows: "Baba, I have not yet met you personally. I do not know much about your teachings. I do not have any idea about the nature of the obedience expected of me. So, however much I wish to see you and be with you, will it be proper to reply, 'I will implicitly obey you?' I need your guidance to be honest to my conscience. Please help me inwardly to arrive at the right decision."

During the previous few months I had become acquainted with the late R. K. Gadekar, one of Meher Baba's dear disciples, who lived at Sholapur, about eighty kilometers from my place. I used to visit him to learn more about Meher Baba. A few days after posting the above letter I went to Sholapur. I showed Gadekar the letter received from Adi Sr. and told him the contents of my reply to Baba. He explained to me how my reply to Him was wrong. I should instead have willingly agreed to obey Meher Baba. He added, "Whatever the Master orders is invariably for the highest good." He told me that I was all the more fortunate, for Baba had given me the opportunity of obeying Him before meeting Him in person. So on that very day I conveyed posthaste to Baba my readiness to obey Him implicitly!

The next day when I reached my home a letter from Adi Sr. awaited me. It read: "Baba is pleased with your sincerity, frankness and purposeful decision which you strive to arrive at in obeying Him. Baba tells you not to worry about the decision now. He sends His love and blessings." But

I did not receive any reply to the letter sent from Sholapur. From this incident I learned that in my life with Meher Baba I should take whatever decision I honestly felt. Baba preferred one's honest efforts irrespective of the decision itself.

A regular correspondence continued and I used to receive replies to practically all of my letters. I was not a poet then, nor am I now, but somehow I used to compose some lines on Baba's divinity and mail them to Him. He would convey that He liked them. What an unconditional love! Regarding seeing Him, I was asked to wait until the opportune moment. In one of the letters it was stated: "Baba says that He knows your heart. Baba knows your feeling full well." I wondered how it could be and, if so, what could that feeling be! Thus passed the year 1943, the year that brought me the tidings of joy about the God-Man.

"The Task For Spiritual Workers"

Although I did not participate in any of the external activities of Meher Baba in 1943, I shall relate briefly what transpired during that year. This account is based on information that I gathered later from circulars and books and from those living near Him. It is an attempt to give an idea about a few phases of Meher Baba's life.

During January 1943 Baba stayed mostly at Meherabad. According to the Zoroastrian calendar, February 14 was His birthday. On that day seven congregations were held at different places — Bombay, Poona, Madras, Nagpur, Sholapur and Lahore (now in Pakistan). A representative appointed by Baba read out a special message previously dictated by Him. This message, with the caption "The Task For Spiritual Workers," explained the nature of the work expected of His disciples and devotees. It also included some practical hints. I take the liberty of quoting only one

paragraph and request my readers to refer to the entire message in the book *Messages of Meher Baba Delivered in the East and West*. In the message Meher Baba stated:

"As spiritual workers, you have also to remember that the spiritual wisdom which you desire to convey to others is already latently present in them, and that you have only to be instrumental in unveiling that spiritual wisdom. Spiritual progress is not a process of accumulating from without; it is a process of unfoldment from within ..." ³ By the time these meetings at different places were over, Baba shifted His headquarters to Mahabaleshwar. Shirinmai, Baba's dear mother, passed away on the twenty-fifth of February. In March He visited Sholapur and Barsi at the request of his devotees. On April 1 a circular was sent to some of His dear ones. Part of it is given below:

" ... I have finally decided that you should be present in Meherabad on May 15, 1943 for five days ... You will ask me no questions but listen to my instructions which will be clear and precise."

A Meeting at Meherabad

Some of the instructions given by Meher Baba at the time of the May meeting were as follows. He expected the participants of the meeting to lead their lives in the light of these directives.

1. Amidst all your duties and attachments let the background of all your thoughts be the only thought that God alone is Real and all else is illusion.
2. Infuse into others the idea that the ultimate goal of life is to know God in His true, Infinite aspect.
3. Think less of yourself and more of others by trying to make others happy, even if you have to suffer for it.

³ Now printed in: Meher Baba, Discourses, 3:110

Some specific suggestions to be carried out for the period of one month beginning from May 15 to June 14, 1943 were as follows:

1. Observe strict celibacy even if you are married.
2. Avoid all entertainments.
3. Every morning, the first thing is to be a sincere prayer from you to God to make you understand Him and His will.

It was in this meeting that Baba explained, with the help of colored charts, the process of evolution, reincarnation and realization. This explanation was later published in book form on fine art paper. I had the good fortune to receive a copy as a present. The name of the small book is *Divine Theme*.⁴ When Baba explained the subject matter, Chhagan, one of His disciples who was entrusted with the food arrangements, was not present. After some time he approached Baba and expressed his unhappiness over being absent when Baba explained the divine theme. Baba smiled and gestured, "Don't worry. I will tell you the gist of it." He then conveyed the following sentence on His alphabet board: "You live in 'water' not knowing what 'water' is! That's all." And He asked Chhagan to attend to his duties. At times Meher Baba's replies were cryptic. So short, but so significant!

In the beginning of July, Meher Baba, with a large group, left for Lahore. This city was His headquarters until the third week of November. The following mandali, mainly, stayed with Him: Masaji (Baba's uncle), Gustadji, Kaka, Baidul, Vishnu and Nilu (Dr. Nilkanth); while Chanji, Dr. Donkin and Eruch would visit Baba regarding work. Margaret Craske and Irene Billo were allowed to stay with the women mandali. On the first of August, Baba called a meeting of the men mandali, but fourteen members who had

⁴ Now printed in: Meher Baba, *God Speaks*, 2d ed., pp. 234-243

attended the special meeting at Meherabad on December 27, 1942 were not present at Lahore so a report in the form of a circular was sent to them. The circular concluded with the following significant statement:

"I call upon you to be ready to die for God and live as God."

The God-intoxicated Wayfarers

The period of ten years beginning February 1939 has special significance in Meher Baba's life. This is due to His contacts with the masts, the God-intoxicated wayfarers. The years 1941 to 1947 were intensely devoted to searching out such God-intoxicated souls from the nooks and corners of India.⁵ Usually Baidul, Kaka and Eruch accompanied Meher Baba on these hazardous mast tours. During 1941 and 1942 Baba journeyed as many as 18,000 and 15,000 miles, respectively, in search of such souls. I will mention some of the contacts made by Baba in the year 1943.

In February and March Baba stayed mainly at Mahabaleshwar. From there He visited the southern part of India to contact God-intoxicated souls. At Guntur He contacted Nawab Ali Shah, who used to cover his body with pieces of cloth and rags. He preferred to rest and sleep in a shop selling charcoal, so you can well imagine how clean and beautiful he might have looked! But Baba knew the inner richness of his heart and felt happy in his company. Bhiku Baba, a great mast, was contacted at Polavaram. This mast lived in a hut and kept piles of sand by his side. He used to shovel the sand towards himself with his hands. After some time he would change his place and repeat the same gesture. That was his fancy. At Kottalanka, Baidul met a mast, Saiyid Ahmad Ali Shah, who

⁵ For details concerning Meher Baba's work with the *masts* refer to: William Donkin, *The Wayfarers*.

casually disclosed to him the news of Meher Baba's presence in the city, although Baidul had not told him this. He was looked after by a Brahmin. After contacting the mast, Baba left with the Brahmin a small sum of twenty rupees for the purchase of a mattress and perfumes for the use of that mast.

"God Is Equal to Meher Baba"

During Meher Baba's stay at Mahabaleshwar, He sent Eruch to Poona to find some masts in that city. While there, Eruch met one named Bundle Shah. This mast used to carry a bundle under his arm all the time and so he was called thus. Strangely enough, he was also known by the name "Father." Eruch was trying to persuade him to go to Mahabaleshwar and so invited him to his house in Poona. He did not tell him anything about Meher Baba. While seated in the house the mast asked for a piece of paper. Eruch handed over to him an exercise book. As the mast opened it, by chance he found a loose block print of Meher Baba but there was no name printed on it. The mast then commenced writing endless figures with plus and minus signs on the back of the picture. This scribbling finally ended with " $= 7 = \text{God}.$ " Then pointing to the picture of Meher Baba that was on the other side, he said, "God is equal to Meher Baba." The rest of his talk was not relevant. Eruch knew that Baba was generally averse to contacting those masts who at the outset recognized Him as Meher Baba, the God-Man, so this mast was not taken to Mahabaleshwar. Later Eruch checked those numerous figures and, surprisingly enough, found that the final figure, seven, was correctly worked out.

In April, Baba visited the districts of East and West Khandesh in Maharashtra to contact some masts. After the meeting at Meherabad in May, Ali Shah, a most remarkable

mast, was brought to Meherabad from Ahmednagar. This was his first contact with Baba. Later on he became one of Baba's "five favorites." He was a perfect jamali (mild tempered) mast and had childlike simplicity. Meher Baba treated him as a first-line reserve mast and kept Ali Shah near Him at different periods to intensify His spiritual work.

Mast Contacts Near Lahore

In July, Meher Baba proceeded to Lahore. He stayed there from July 7 to November 21, 1943 at 6 Amrit Kuti, Garden Town. Some masts were contacted at and near Lahore and Rawalpindi.

Baba Hosh was a mast living at Chorkot. When visiting this place, in addition to the usual mast "experts," Dr. Ghani, one of Baba's dear disciples and childhood friends, accompanied Him. Dr. Ghani was not used to the life of hardships encountered on the mast tours. While returning to the railway station after the mast contact, a donkey was commissioned to carry two of the mandali, including Dr. Ghani. Being foreign to the art of "donkey-drive," both fell off its back. They had to walk very fast to keep pace with Baba, who was a fast walker, to reach Khudian Khas railway station in time. As they sighted the station, they noticed that the train for Lahore was already on the platform. Baidul ran ahead and requested the station master to detain the train for a few more minutes. Dr. Ghani, too, had to run to get into the compartment — but then he fainted. This is enough to illustrate how strenuous the mast tours were. After contacting a God-intoxicated soul, Baba would be in a hurry to get back to His headquarters.

The next day Baba visited Kul Mokal to contact another mast. Needless to say, Dr. Ghani did not accompany the party. This journey was memorable for the admirable conduct

of a Sikh restaurant owner, who prepared a good meal for the group and carried it himself to the nearby railway station where Baba had stopped. It was nearly midnight, and yet this man was there to serve them. He refused to accept even ordinary charges for the meal. This is an example of the hospitality and reverence shown by Indians to saints and Masters. All enjoyed the meal, for they were very hungry. Such timely comforts were rare on mast trips.

A Strange Offering!

A mast contact at Kanganpur was remarkable for quite another reason. As soon as the mast, Saiyid Rehmatullah Baba, saw Meher Baba he began to dance, saying, "Come, come here. I am waiting for you." He made Baba sit on his bed, then he led Baba into a room in a cemetery and it was a secluded contact. Afterwards the mast presented to Baba a dirty sack and pieces of iron and wood. With this "treasure," for whatever was given by a mast was regarded as a treasure by Baba, the party rushed to the station to catch the train for Lahore.

At Lahore Baba met a young mast whose father was looking after him and regarded himself as the "spiritual son" of his own son. Later Baba remarked, "That was a delightful pair." Baba gave the pair the name "Bap Dikrawala Mast" which means "the father and son mast."

One more contact of a different nature took place at Lahore. Baidul spotted a mast, Nawab Ali Shah, while he cycled through a suburb named Baghbanpura. The mast held a cryptic conversation with Baidul. He said: "I want to go to Aligarh city (perhaps he meant Allah's Ghar, meaning the House of Allah), but the road is blocked. There is a world-famous Doctor who has recently visited Lahore. I will ask His permission and if He grants it I will go." Baidul asked the mast the name of the doctor and he answered, "Mauni" ("the Silent One"). Thus he made an indirect reference to Meher Baba's divinity. Some masts felt Baba's presence before He

contacted them on the physical plane.

Near Lahore, at Bhat, Meher Baba contacted Baba Shahabuddin, one of the two seventh plane Majzoobs in India. Meher Baba first bathed Shahabuddin, who then led Baba to a suitable place for secluded contact.

At Rawalpindi, Baba contacted two naked masts. One, Nanga Shah Mastan, had a strange habit of doing all activities in circles, irrespective of whether he was sitting, standing, eating or drinking. If given food, he used to squat on the ground and shuffle around in a circle as he ate. Baba seemed very pleased with this contact. After the meeting He sat for three hours in seclusion on a nearby hill. The other naked mast, named Nanga Khan Mastan Peshawari, was a marathon runner. Local people offered him food as he trotted past and the mast ate it as he continued to run. He would run four to five miles at a stretch. He was born a mast. An important contact at Rawalpindi was Unti Mai, a mastani, of Company Bagh. She beckoned Baba to sit near her on a pile of bricks and offered Him a piece of dry, moldy bread. God knows how stale it was! Baba, however, accepted the piece lovingly and ate it, too.

Nanga Baba of Jasgiran

In September 1943 Meher Baba proceeded to Kashmir, where He visited a number of masts. Many of these were contacted again in 1944, so I wish to present that account later. During the stay in Kashmir, Baba visited Jasgiran, situated in the hilly part to the northwest of Srinagar. It stands on the left bank of the Indus. Here Baba contacted a unique mast named Nanga Baba. It was learned that he had been sitting on a hilltop for years in a cross-legged position, unmindful of the seasons or the snowfall. The most incredible thing about Nanga Baba was his daily diet. He ate dry bread along with a paste of stone and wood!

This, in fact, is beyond belief. But Meher Baba and the mandali were present when this "dish" was prepared for him by his attendants. Meher Baba was there for about three hours, but He could not contact this mast privately as he was surrounded by people all the time. The mast, however, pointed at Meher Baba and casually remarked, "He is my elder Brother. He adjusts and protects the whole world."

The journey to Jasgiran had been made through hills on a stony track with unbridged streams, and Baba and the party used ponies, but while returning they traveled on foot as far as Harpalpur. It was indeed a very hazardous journey. Meher Baba alone knew what sort of spiritual work He achieved through such mast contacts while undergoing so many hardships. Once Baba stated that it was mutual help in the spiritual work.

People Fed at Calcutta and Lucknow

From Kashmir, Baba went to Calcutta. In those days Bengal was hit with a terrible famine. Many people died of hunger. As a token of love for humanity Baba arranged a feast for about a thousand middle-class people at 44, Landsdowne Road. At the same time, distribution of 10,000 chapatis (thin wheat bread) was organized around the streets. He also donated a substantial sum for the purchase of two thousand vests for children. On the way back to Lahore, Baba halted for a few days at Lucknow. There, again, a good meal was served to 300 poor and infirm people at Varma Memorial Hall Library. Baba Himself participated in serving the food and gave each person a rupee as a present. Meher Baba once explained that when a Perfect Master gives charity to poor or needy people, the recipients serve as a medium for the spiritual benefit that accrues to the world, including the recipients themselves. The work of feeding the poor appeared

to be the conclusion of Baba's work with the masts for that particular year.

By the fourth week of October Meher Baba had reached Lahore via Kapurthala. Upon His return He dictated a special circular on October 25, 1943. In this He intimated to His followers that the trip to Iran would be in March 1944, and the one-month meeting of His followers which was to be held in January would instead be from May 15 through June 15, 1944. By the end of November, Baba had returned to Meherabad and stayed there until the end of the year. Thus, with a memorable meeting in May 1943 at Meherabad and a host of striking mast contacts, mainly in the Punjab and Kashmir, the year 1943 came to a close.

As for me, I had to wait for about a year for the blessed moment of my personal contact with Meher Baba. In that waiting there was a delightful inner ache and exhilarating impatience, too!

2

Meher Baba's Headquarters at Aurangabad, 1944

A Memorable Year in My Life

1944 — the blessed year! It was in this year that I had the great good fortune to meet Meher Baba, the Perfect Master, in person. For me, a major part of this year was a period of reading and rereading articles by and about Him. *The Discourses* by Meher Baba, Vols. 1 to 4, were the books I loved most. These were my "readers" too, for my reading of English commenced with these books. Copies of the *Meher Baba Journal* provided a regular feast — I was much impressed by the series of articles, "Meher Baba and My Spiritual Path," written by Countess Nadine Tolstoy. I felt there was a ring of truth in what she wrote; it struck a chord within my heart. Sometimes the words of the lovers of God are equally appealing and helpful. I also liked the articles, "Come and See," by Kitty Davy. The "Diary Notes" by Baba's dear secretary Chanji (F. H. Dadachanji) revealed to me the beauty of some facets of Baba's personality — so profound and so powerful — His work with the masts was an entirely new thing to me. This phase of His work remains unparalleled even to this date.

I was a regular reader of all the eighteen cantos of the Bhagavad Gita. I read somewhere that if one reads the entire Gita continuously for six months, one is entitled to

have Divine Knowledge. It was well-intentioned bait. I haven't had a glimpse of that Knowledge, even now, but I am sure that this reading helped me to meet Knowledge personified, Meher Baba.

I also felt inclined to read the literature of Theosophy and was influenced by the articles and books of Annie Besant. The talks of J. Krishnamurti made a deep impression upon me because of the clarity and profundity of his understanding. Sayings, and particularly the gospel of Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa, stole my heart. Dnyaneshwar, Tukaram and Ramdas, the great Perfect Masters of Maharashtra, sustained my enthusiasm and search. With the limited scope of my understanding and reading, I humbly wish to state that the intricate topics of sanskaras, reincarnation, Maya, ego, etc., were not as systematically explained, step-by-step, by others as by Meher Baba. All this serious reading was not mere disporting on the superficial level but a dive within myself to find out the significance of life. A mere triumph of intellect may lead to tragedy of heart, I feared.

In those days I used to write what I felt to Baba. In a reply to one letter, Adi Sr. wrote, "Received your loving poem. He (Baba) is very happy and says that He is with you all the time. He tells you not to worry about anything. He sends His love and blessings." My career as a schoolteacher also commenced this year. The headmaster of the local school sent for me and requested that I work as a teacher as far as my health would permit. This was a Baba-sent blessing, a gift of His invisible grace. In short, all the roads were leading me home, to Meher Baba.

Circular Issued from Aurangabad

As 1944 began, Meher Baba's headquarters were at Meherabad. For the first two months He did not seek any mast contacts, but in March the work with the masts commenced

and by the end of November He had traveled about five thousand miles, contacting over a hundred masts. During this year He contacted about three thousand poor people and gave prasad to each of them.

On February 5, 1944 Meher Baba moved to Aurangabad, where He stayed with a large group until April 10. In March a circular was issued from Prem Basera Ghati, Aurangabad. It contained the following information:

1. The visit to Iran: The passport difficulties not being yet removed, the Iran visit problem has still remained unsolved.
2. Rationing: Owing to the recent rationing regulations, the coming together of 200 signatories has become very difficult.

At the end of the circular Meher Baba stated:

All the difficulties mentioned above are real in the gross sense and from the worldly practical point of view and are, as such, facts without flaw. And yet I, being what I am, who knows everything and knew all, could have arranged everything as I wanted. This, therefore, leads to the natural conclusion and conveys the only meaning that I, myself, created these difficulties and situations for a further postponement, which has a precise purpose and definite and predestined reasons behind it which the fortunate ones alone will know.

A Majzoob-like Primary Teacher

From Aurangabad, Meher Baba visited nearby towns like Bhir, Parbhani, Paithan and a few other places to contact masts. Along with this work, Baba also continued to contact incognito the poor of the land by way of helping them with their primary needs. In the middle of March, at Paithan, He distributed food, grain and cloth to 3,000 people. He gave

three seers of jowar and two yards of cloth to each person. Two days earlier He gave some monetary help to about a hundred and one wandering sadhus.

At Paithan, Baba came across a man named Maulvi Abdul Wahab Mudaris. He was employed in one of the Urdu schools as a teacher. He was regarded as a holy man, and daily the school authorities would send someone to request him to come and at least sign the muster roll. Sometimes his state was like that of a majzoob. He was taken to Aurangabad, but as they reached there he requested the mandali to permit him to get down in the bazaar area, and from there he slipped off to another village. Baidul had to search for him and bring him to Baba for His contact. It was noticed that some masts in the beginning showed willingness to come for Baba's contact, but on one pretext or another they tried to escape and avoid meeting Him.

At Bhir, Meher Baba contacted a mast named Chandu Mian Baba. Baba remarked that he was one of the eighth type of masts. Baba has classified the masts in eight categories, and the eighth type represents the ones who are half mad and half mast. Three-quarters of the masts are in this category. Another contact at Bhir was Shanta Bai, a good mastani. She kept some dogs always about her, and, as was common with other masts, she fed these dogs before she ate. Shanta Bai would usually give away the costly presents she received. Precious stones for the masts are as good as pebbles.

Gorab Shah, Shivanand and Vasudeo Swami

By April 10, 1944, Baba had gone to Pimpalgaon, where He stayed until July 7. Pimpalgaon ashram was later named Meherazad. Here, Ali Shah from Ahmednagar was brought for Baba's sahas for a short period. Soon Baba left Ahmednagar to visit Jhansi, Gwalior, Khandwa and other places to continue His work with the masts. At Khandwa, Baba contacted Gorab Shah, a very good and very old mast.

Normally he did not accept anything from anyone, but as an exception he willingly accepted the sweetmeat brought by Baidul, who was sent by Baba. At Borgaon, Baba contacted Shivanand Brahmachari Swami, an adept pilgrim. To reach this place He traveled at night in a bullock cart. Shivanand seemed to recognize Baba as a Perfect Master, and so Baba left the place quickly without taking any food that was offered to Him. Generally Baba accepted with pleasure whatever was given by the masts, but here He did not. Why? When Baba was recognized as Meher Baba, He left the place at once without accepting anything, and sometimes even without contacting that particular mast. Baba once remarked that in such cases His work would have been made more difficult.

On the way back to Pimpalgaon, forty poor people were collected in a dak bungalow at Barwaha. Baba washed their feet and gave some money to each as prasad. A fortnight later at Narayangaon, Poona District, He contacted twenty four heads of middle-class families and gave fifty rupees to each person. A mast from Dhulia (Abdul Khaliq Mastan) who was brought to Pimpalgaon had a maggoty wound. When the maggots dropped out, the mast would put them back on the wound. So unconcerned are the masts about their gross bodies!

During this stay at Pimpalgaon in May 1944, Baba personally visited Ale to contact Vasudev Swami. Later this mast was brought to Pimpalgaon. Spiritual practices had caused the Swami to become God-mad. He wore a saffron colored garment, and his bedding was scrupulously clean. His peculiarity was that he never lay down on his back. For sleep, he would bend his back and drop his head on a pillow. An uncommon thing about him was his fondness for toys. A peculiar mast indeed, with a peculiar trait.

A Stay at Raipur

In the second week of June, Baba visited Meherabad to attend a small group meeting of the *mandali* to get further

information about the passports for Iran and the one month meeting. Tentative decisions were communicated to the signatories concerned through a special circular.

On the way to Kashmir in the first week of July, Baba stopped for some days at Raipur. One of His very dear disciples, Jal Kerawala, was working there as the Food Commissioner. Baba especially visited this place at his request and in connection with the probability of inviting the signatories for the one-month meeting. There was a small darshan program for which some Baba lovers from outstations had also come, including Babadas and Vibhuti. These two moved from place to place to spread Meher Baba's name among the people, but they found fault with each other about the method of approaching the masses. Baba said to them, "You both love me. You distribute the pamphlets of my messages among the people with love. I wonder how you dare to quarrel with each other! Do what you feel like doing honestly, but why criticize each other to the extent of quarreling! Honesty begets humility that refuses to criticize others. It ungrudgingly works its own way, leaving the results to my divine will." With these words of advice Baba made them forget their differences of opinion, and they embraced each other lovingly in Baba's presence. It was a happy ending.

Baba stayed at Raipur from July 9 to August 9, 1944. From here He visited Amravati, Ellichpur, Basim, Badnera, Dhamangaon, Tatanagar and a few other places to contact masts. One day He especially visited Dhamangaon to contact Mungsaji Maharaj. The monsoon was in full swing and Baba had to wade through the muddy fields for three miles. While returning, the party had to travel more than fifteen miles in a bullock cart. Such experiences had to be undergone to realize what hardships were encountered on such trips. Baba never showed any concern about the physical discomforts of mast tours, rather the mandali would find

Him especially cheerful if the contact with the mast was made to His satisfaction. Baba was happy to have contacted Mungsaji Maharaj, who later remarked, "Baba is the Emperor."

At Badnera there was a mast named Badri Baba. He would stand in one place, in one position, even for a day or two at a stretch. Sometimes he was seen lying in an open place for hours on end. Baba gave him six cups of milk, which he happily drank. At Ellichpur, Baba met a *mast* who used to sit near a mosque. People kissed his hand as they entered for the prayers, and every time, this *mast* would mutter, "There is no one in the mosque to respond to the prayers!" At Tatanagar, Baba contacted Chuni Shah Baba, who used to consume two ounces of tobacco every day without expectorating it. In the same town a good mastani Budhi Mastani lived in a hut, and she chewed pan (betel leaves) all the time, day and night. She offered pan even to Baba, who lovingly accepted it.

The Five Great *Masts* of Kashmir

From Raipur Baba went to Delhi, where He contacted the spiritual chargeman of that city. This wayfarer used to cover his face with a veil (*neqab*) and so he was called Neqabi Hafizji. He wore clean clothes, which was rather uncommon with the masts. Baba contacted him early in the morning. Sometimes the masts were contacted by Him even at midnight to avoid public disturbance. From Delhi Baba proceeded with a small group of disciples to Srinagar. He stayed near Shalimar village from August 11 to September 26, 1944. It was during this visit that Baba contacted the five great *masts* of Kashmir.

The first was Nab Saheb of Chhundangam. At the time of contact the *mast* put Baba's hat on his head and placed his dirty cap on Baba's. If a mast was found to be in a good

mood Baba would happily allow such things. The second was very powerful, Pandit Kashkak of Mangom. The face of this jalali mast reminded Baba of Sadguru Upasni Maharaj. The third was Rahim Saheb of Tulamul. He presented to Baba a lump of brick. What a present! He was quite an old person. The fourth mast was Asat Saheb of Wanagam. At the time of contact he asked Baba to scratch his back. Baba did so, and this made them both happy.

Before coming to the fifth great mast of Kashmir, I feel it necessary to give some information about the types of masts classified by Meher Baba. Here are the first five types: The first is jalali, hot-tempered or fiery. The second is jamali, mild-tempered. The third is mahabubi — he wears articles of feminine attire. The fourth is ittefaqi; he becomes intoxicated with love for God accidentally. The fifth is madar-zad, born a mast.

There is a sixth type of mast which has a fixed number in each cycle. Baba once remarked, "In this present cycle there are five masts of this very, very rare type — three in India, one in Egypt and one in Arabia." These are regarded as the highest of all the eight types of masts. Nur Shah of Chindlur belonged to this sixth type. He was also the fifth great mast of Kashmir. At the time of contact Nur Shah gave Baba a cucumber, which He later ate. It must have had a very, very rare taste, of the sixth type! Through such visible give-and-take with the masts, perhaps an invisible exchange of handing over and taking over spiritual responsibilities was being registered. Only Baba knew.

In the vicinity of Srinagar, Baba contacted about twenty masts, including a mastani who had the peculiarity of eating grass. An advanced pilgrim, after being contacted, wrote a letter to Baba in which he addressed Him as God in human form. Two more contacts are worth mentioning. Guruji was an old person and a mast who had a fancy for sweet oil. He often drank it, and his clothes were saturated with it. How queer are the responses to external needs of

those who are on different planes of consciousness! Subhan Mattu was brought to Baba by Masaji. This mast used to besmear his face with mud and hina — a fine Indian perfume. In Baba's presence Subhan rolled on the ground with the sheer joy of seeing Him and, most reverently looking at Baba, cried out, "He is Allah!"

The Passing Away of Chanji

During Baba's stay in Kashmir, one of His most dear disciples, F. H. Dadachanji, alias Chanji, passed away. He was given the best of treatment at Srinagar under the loving supervision of Dr. Daulat Singh, but on August 25, 1944, dear Chanji dropped his body. He had worked strenuously for Meher Baba and His cause from the day he joined the mandali in 1925. His diary notes are treasures giving authentic information about Baba's activities. The major correspondence with the East and the West was attended to by Chanji very efficiently and to Baba's satisfaction. Even in trains, he would be seen typing Baba news and Baba pearls — a very loving and energetic person, with a rock-like faith in Baba's divinity. I had not had an occasion to meet him, but somehow I feel a great affinity for him.

Meher Baba dictated a special circular that was issued on December 15, 1944. The gist of the main points follows:

The death of Framroze Dadachanji, one of my most beloved and intimate disciples, has resulted in my personally attending to the details of the work connected with the long-delayed one-month meeting. So I have decided to send Adi K. Irani by the end of this month to the signatories, to choose finally any one month between February 15 and May 15, 1945.

The circular also contained information regarding Baba's visit to Nagpur and Saoner in November 1944. The venue for the one-month meeting was to be Raipur (Madhya

Pradesh). Before the end of the year, Baba was to visit Peshawar to stay for a short while in "no man's land" for His spiritual work.

Peshawar to Aurangabad

By the end of September, Baba left Kashmir. On the twentieth He reached Peshawar via Rawalpindi. At Rawalpindi He contacted a mast named Ghafur Rahman. While Baidul was searching for another mast, a man recognized him and related that a mast who was contacted the previous year by Baba had become majzoob-like. He had closed himself in a hut. Being incontinent — wanting in self-restraint for the calls of nature — he was sitting in filth. Baba had given him a watermelon as prasad the year before. This might have resulted in this changed higher state. This time Baba did not feel it necessary to contact him.

From Peshawar, Baba went for a short stay in "no man's land." Baidul and Kaka Baria were with him. On His way back to Aurangabad He spent a few days at Agra and Mathura. At Agra He contacted five masts. This time He missed a mastani who had been contacted three and a half years earlier. She was known as Mastani Mai and was living in an old stable near the Taj Mahal. When Baba and the mandali had reached that place, they heard a sound like the roaring of a tiger. Getting near, it was found that Mastani Mai, with her unusually bright face, was pacing to and fro, roaring. She greeted Baba with respect. Baba gestured for Eruch to ask her if she was happy at Baba's visit. She replied, "Very happy." Baba later remarked that she was really a high type of mastani. Some God-intoxicated souls have dropped their bodies soon after Baba's contact. Mastani Mai was one of them. Perhaps the gross body was not strong enough to contain the bliss of meeting the Avatar — God in human form. Baba reached Aurangabad by October 8, 1944, to join His group living in Prem Basera Ghati.

Why the *Avatar* Gets Bound

After reaching Aurangabad, Baba did not undertake long trips to contact masts; however, in November He resumed His mast work by visiting Ajanta. There He contacted one very advanced mast named Mian Saheb, who was about a hundred years old. He readily consented to the proposal of meeting Baba for a contact. Some masts, though overpowered with intoxication in their love for God, were immensely responsive to Baba's spiritual work, as was Mian Saheb. Baba and the mast climbed to a room on an upper floor. Mian Saheb requested Baba to occupy a seat on a sofa. Then the mast embraced Him most affectionately.

At the time of a mast contact the mandali accompanying Baba stood away, or at least outside the room. That day they heard the mast lovingly weeping aloud. Once he cried out in Persian (as translated):

Of your own, you were free;

Of your own, you allowed yourself to be bound.

This symbolically refers to the Infinite One getting Himself bound for the betterment of humanity. At Guruprasad in Poona, Baba once stated, "In Me I am free, but in you I feel bound. In the Parabrahma (Beyond) state there is no binding; there is absolute Freedom, absolute Existence. What a sublime state it is! From that sublime state I have come to your level. Babajan often used to remark on my having come down from that exalted state to get myself bound here, quoting to me the Persian lines meaning: 'Having gained Freedom, you have come back as a prisoner (to free others).'

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⁶ Manija S. Irani [Meher Baba's sister], *Family Letter*, October 3, 1963, p. 2.

Darshan Program at Nagpur, 1944

On the Way to Meet Meher Baba

THE blessed moment of my seeing Meher Baba was drawing closer. In October 1944 I heard from Pandoba Deshmukh the consecrated news of Baba's visit to Nagpur. It was to be from November 11 to 14, 1944. Pandoba was working in a printing press at Barsi. His faith and love for Baba were most admirable. He had lived at Meherabad with the mandali during Baba's Meher Ashram activities — the school and the hospital. He told me many incidents of that period which nurtured my longing to meet Baba in person. As per the circular, Pandoba was one of the members who was to attend Baba's programs at Nagpur. Permission for me to be present at Nagpur and also at Saoner for all the programs was secured. Accordingly, on November 10 I left Kurduwadi with Pandoba and Bhagat to catch a mail train at Manmad, bound for Nagpur.

As we reached Manmad, I learned that Baba had already arrived there with the mandali. The luggage, including many bags and bedding rolls, was well piled up in the waiting room. Gustadji was there to guard it. Pandoba introduced me to him. I knew that he had been observing silence for over sixteen years. Gustadji, in ultra-white trousers and shirt, a brown-colored Parsi-fashioned long coat, a black round cap and, above all, his simple, silent gestures,

looked like a child in an old form. I preferred to sit silently by his side in that waiting room. When he went outside, I tenderly touched the luggage and, finding no one in the waiting room, reverently bowed down to it. It was Baba's luggage! Just before the arrival of our train Baba came and sat on a bench at the far end of the platform, rather a secluded spot. Pandoba told me that Adi Sr. was sitting by His side. I didn't dare go near Him and disturb Him. The train arrived. Kaka Baria had come from Bombay with seats reserved for Baba and the *mandali* in inter class, a class in between third and second. We three got into another compartment. It was very crowded, but even if I had secured a special berth, I wondered if I could have slept well because of the joy of being with Baba on that train!

He Looked Like Beauty Personified

The next morning we reached Nagpur. His lovers had gathered at the station to receive Baba. Deshmukh was the chief host. Baba was profusely garlanded. He stood for a minute or two at the door of the compartment. He looked very fresh and radiant. With His broad, luminous forehead, sharp and pointed nose, lustrous eyes, moderately flowing hair, and fair skin that failed to contain His beauty, He looked like beauty personified. The rose petals from the garlands round His neck were vainly competing with His complexion. I was lost to myself. In that madness I felt He looked at me — a thin, slim, insignificant creature in that big crowd — and smiled. Amid loud cheers of "Shri Meher Baba ki jai!" He stepped onto the platform and left the station.

When I came to my senses, I found that the wallet in my pocket was gone. I had been prey to a pickpocket! It contained three railway tickets from Kurduwadi to Nagpur and some money, too. Someone said, "It's good to lose something

when you meet a Master!" I was not normal enough to catch the joke! Our bags and bedding were already placed with the *mandali's* luggage, so we passed through the gate of the platform just as visitors would do, along with the crowd. As I stood outside the gate I felt a pat on my shoulder. There was a ticket collector standing by my side. I thought he was there to ask me for the missing tickets, but instead he said, "Do you not recognize me?" He was my school friend, whom I thus met again after a period of about eight years. The moment of fear turned into minutes of happy reminiscences of school life.

God and Religion

Meher Baba and the *mandali* were accommodated in K. K. Thakur's bungalow at Dhantoli, near Deshmukh's residence. Some of us were asked to stay on the second floor of a nearby building. I have a weak heart and doctors have advised me to avoid going up and down stairs, but in my enthusiasm and joy I forgot all about it. For meals we all had to go to Dr. Deshmukh's place.

In the evening there was a big public program. It had been arranged to be given on the premises of Gorakshan Compound, where Sant Tukdoji Maharaj sang beautiful *bhajans* which he had composed. Baba gave a message, "God and Religion." It was read out by Justice Sir M. B. Niyogi. During Baba's programs at Nagpur and Saoner He gave eight illuminating messages. I wish to give just a part from each here and request my readers to see the original messages in the book, *Messages of Meher Baba*, compiled by Adi K. Irani. Baba's first message said in part:

Dogmas and beliefs, rituals and ceremonies can never be the essence of true spiritual life. When religion has become merely a matter of external rituals and

ceremonies, it has become a cage for the soul. Nor does it help very far to change one religion to another; it is like going from one cage to another. If religion does not help man to emancipate the soul from spiritual bondage and realize God, it has no useful purpose to serve. Then it is time that religion should go to make room for God.⁷

God as the Only Reality

The next morning, November 12, I visited Thakur's bungalow. A *bhajan* program was going on. It was my first occasion to see God in human form seated before His devotees, who sang devotional songs in His praise. All the time, irrespective of the language and the contents of the *bhajans*, my eyes were set on Baba's figure. I was trying to store the form of the formless One in my heart. In the afternoon Baba visited Ramakrishna Ashram. Swami Bhaskararanand received Baba. He had first met Baba in December 1937 at Papa Jessawala's place. He used to talk with Eruch about spiritual life, and Eruch would tell him about the life of Meher Baba. The Swami was not convinced of the divinity of Baba and expressed a wish to get some points clarified by Baba Himself. But when he had had the opportunity to see Baba in person, he remarked to Eruch, "I have no more questions to ask Him, although I came prepared with a long questionnaire." It was quite natural that he felt honored to welcome Baba to Ramakrishna Ashram. We moved through the *ashram*—the premises were very neat and clean. The atmosphere seemed to invite the hearts of the lovers of God to offer their services at the feet of the Lord. Baba looked especially pleased to visit this place. His message, "God as the Only Reality," was read

⁷ Meher Baba, *Messages of Meher Baba* (Ahmednagar, M. S., India: Adi K. Irani, 1945), p. 65.

to the gathering by Justice W. R. Puranik, Vice-Chancellor of Nagpur University. In this message Baba said:

God-realization is sometimes mistakenly thought to be a selfish purpose of the limited individual. There is no room for any selfishness or limited individuality in God realization. On the contrary, God-realization is the final aim of the limited and narrow life of the separate ego ... The life of the God-realized Master is a pure blessing to all humanity.⁸

The Program at the National College

Then followed a program arranged at the National College. In the evening people crowded in and outside the Hall of the College. Many collegians were also present. It was a crowd provoked by curiosity. A local paper had published an article warning people to keep away from saints and *Sadgurus* - also mention was made of Baba's name. The reporter for this newspaper seemed to be prejudiced against any religious attitude. To me that was a discomfoting situation, for I failed to understand that life has its own excuse for being either sane or insane, on different levels, at one and the same time. I had longingly waited to have Baba's *darshan* for about a year and a half, and here some persons were making the worst of this rare opportunity, so easily had. Later, I noticed that whenever Baba went out for *darshan* programs the aspect of opposition would have some expression somewhere, as if Baba would not feel happy enough if all went well and fine. Inside the Hall Dr. Deshmukh performed a *kirtan* to honor Baba's divinity, while outside the Hall some collegians made fun of his devotion, which showed that they were devoid of humanity. "Youth! Let not thy name be impudence!" I thought. Unaffected, Dr. Deshmukh boldly continued the *kirtan* and

⁸ *Messages*, p. 68

openly expressed his faith in Baba as God incarnate. Baba looked nonchalant and happy, for His presence was all inclusive. Baba's beautiful message, "God and Love," was read by Advocate Khare and follows in part:

The spiritual Path is like climbing up to the mountain top through hills and dales and thorny woods and along steep and dangerous precipices ... If there is one thing which is most necessary for safe and sure arrival at the top, it is Love. All other dualities which are essential for the aspirants of the Highest, can and must come to them, if they faithfully follow the whispers of the unerring Guide of Love ... If you lose hold of the mantle of this Guide there is only despair in store for you ... The gateway to this highest state of being One with God is firmly closed for all who do not have the courage to lose their separate existence in the restless fire of Divine Love.⁹

The Two Aspects of Divinity

Late on November 13, R. K. Gadekar arrived with his family. I personally owe Gadekar and Pandoba Deshmukh much for this memorable and life-giving contact with Baba. Gadekar brought the news that my mother, with one of my sisters, had left Kurduwadi for Baba's *darshan* and they were at Wardha. They expected me to go to Wardha and bring them to Nagpur. I was living with the *mandali* and attending all the programs. Until this time I had not had an opportunity to introduce myself to Baba. I knew, however, that when one was with Baba it was a rule to seek His permission if one had to attend to some personal affair, so through Pandoba I wrote a note about the arrival of my mother and Baba permitted me to go to Wardha.

⁹ *Messages*, pp. 69, 70.

In the morning there were some house visits, and in the afternoon there was a meeting of the Shri Meher Baba Reception Committee at K. K. Thakur's bungalow. Baba looked pleased when the members of the reception committee were introduced to Him. They were the elite of the city. The messages given by Baba at Nagpur provided nourishing food for the minds and hearts of these people and this drew them closer to Baba in love. Justice Bhavanishankar Niyogi was the president of the reception committee. It was during this visit that the Honorable Justice Hidayatulla, who later became Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, had an opportunity to meet Baba. Dr. Abdul Ghani Munsiff, one of the *mandali*, read aloud Baba's message which explained the two aspects of Divinity, from which I quote:

There are always two aspects of Divinity, perpetually and eternally active in the affairs of the world. The destructive aspect of Divinity as expressed in Persian [*Shama-e-Jalal*] means "Self-glorification," and the constructive aspect of Divinity is called in Persian "Self-beatitude" [*Shama-e-Jamal*]. The aspect of Self glorification by God, when it gets palpably active, entails suffering and destruction on a colossal scale ... The aspect of divine Self-beatitude, when it asserts itself, brings in its wake peace and plenty.

In the aspect of Self-glorification, Divinity repels itself through its own creation, and in the aspect of Self-beatitude, Divinity attracts or loves itself through its own creation. The former is a negative method and the latter is a positive method, and both these methods ultimately are instruments of divine Wisdom, to rouse humanity to their divine heritage, which is Self-realization ... My blessings to all — those who heard my message and those who have not.¹⁰

¹⁰ *Messages*, pp. 71, 72.

This was indeed a message of "Cheer and Hope to the Suffering Humanity," as it was entitled. Because of the prevalent world situation, this particular message appealed to me deeply and, in a way, helped me to gain a new perspective to my understanding of the Divine Sport of God, if it could ever be understood!

In the afternoon, I came out of Thakur's bungalow rather unwillingly and was trying for a rickshaw to take me to the station, for I had to go to Wardha. Just then I was accosted by a man whom I could not recognize at first. He told me to meet the train on which my mother would arrive at Nagpur. He was one of my distant relatives. Had he missed seeing me I would have gone to Wardha, which would have caused great inconvenience to me and to my mother. I felt that Baba in His compassion timed this meeting! My life with Baba has many times demonstrated a chain of incredible coincidences. Perhaps He had ordained that I should be benefited by all the programs at Nagpur, although outwardly He did not give any such indication.

Visit to the Theosophical Society

On the morning of November 14 there was a visit to a branch of the Theosophical Society at Nagpur. This Society has indeed done a great work in inspiring and awakening people to discover the life which lies beyond the ordinary range of the mind, and to the Truth within. Baba was warmly welcomed, and during this short visit the Secretary of the Society read a message from Baba, "The Dynamism of Love":

True Love is very different from an evanescent outburst of indulgent emotionalism or the enervating stupor of a slumbering heart. It can never come to those whose heart is darkened by selfish cravings or weakened by

constant reliance upon the lures and stimulations of the passing objects of the senses. But to those whose hearts are pure and simple, true Love comes as a gift through the activising grace of a Master.

... Those who have got the courage and the wisdom to surrender themselves to a Perfect Master are the recipients of His grace ... and when it comes, it enkindles in the human heart a love divine which ... enables the aspirant to become One with God . . . There is no power greater than Love.¹¹

In the Convocation Hall

The Baba people with whom I became acquainted at Nagpur were Pankhraj, Kapse, Lokhande and a few others. Pankhraj had been caught in the divine net two years earlier and was one of Baba's active workers. When Baba came to Nagpur He gave Pankhraj a specific duty. Baba had instructed Vishnu to wire him every day in care of Dr. Deshmukh regarding the welfare of the men and women *mandali* at Aurangabad. Pankhraj was to collect the telegrams and hand them over to Baba. A simple thing. For three days it all went well, but on November 14 Pankhraj did not get the expected telegram. In the afternoon Baba called him and inquired about the wire. Baba looked a bit annoyed to learn that the telegram had not arrived. Considering Baba's huge correspondence, this telegram was a small affair; however, I wish to narrate this episode in detail for it revealed something of Baba's relationship with His lovers and His keen interest in every instruction that He gave. Baba said, "Vishnu won't fail to send the telegram." Pankhraj replied, "Baba, these are days of war, and top priority is given to military and not public communications." This was his common sense point.

¹¹ *Messages*, p. 73.

Baba persisted, "Go to the post office. Inquire well and bring me the telegram. There could be a mistake somewhere."

After a short time Pankhraj set out for the post office, and Baba proceeded to the Convocation Hall with the *mandali*. The program in this hall was one of the grand functions in Nagpur. Justice W. R. Puranik, Vice-Chancellor of Nagpur University, had arranged this program. Principals, professors, judges, lawyers and mostly educated people had gathered to hear Baba's message and have His *darshan*. Baba looked very radiant — there was a loveliness and beauty about Him. Some prominent persons were introduced to Baba, and a few delivered short speeches in His honor. During this solemn program Baba spotted Pankhraj standing near the far end by the door. He looked at him and gestured to ask if the telegram had been received. Pankhraj shook his head to express no. Later in my life with Baba I witnessed other such silent communications, which were carried on with the persons concerned without disturbing the public programs.

During this *darshan* program the Honorable Justice Sir Niyogi read Baba's message, "The Unity of All Life," a part of which is given below:

In the one undivided and indivisible Ocean of Life you have, through ignorance, created the pernicious divisions based upon sex, race, nationality, religion or community; and you allow these self-created divisions to poison your heart and pervert your relationships ... Slowly but surely must you imbibe ... Truth at the feet of the Masters of Wisdom; slowly but surely must you shed prejudices and get disentangled from the superficial distinctions, ... slowly but surely must you tread the Path to the formless and the nameless One ...

When you enthrone the nameless One in your mind-

heart you do not necessarily put an end to the game of duality. You have to play your divine role in the drama of creation without being caught up in duality ... The unity of life has to be experienced and expressed in the very midst of its diverse experiences ... All life is One and all divisions are imaginary. Be ye established in this eternal Truth which I bring.¹²

A Wonderful Way of Replying to a Letter

The program in Convocation Hall was one of the best. The next day Baba was to visit Saoner. Special cars and buses were reserved to take the *mandali* there. After supper Baba called Pankhraj and said, "Tomorrow I am visiting Saoner. You should not join the *mandali* in the morning but come by a later bus after today's telegram is received."

Then Pankhraj was again called at about 9:00 P.M. for the same inquiry. In exasperation he answered, "No telegram. I have made the necessary inquiries. What else can I do in this matter? I can't help."

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

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

This served as a reply to the letter Pankhraj had addressed to Baba two months earlier. He had expressed his desire to work in place of Chanji, who had dropped his body in August 1944. Baba called Pankhraj near Him and twisted his ear and remarked, "Do you now know how competent you are for Chanji's work?"

Pankhraj felt very sorry about his reply but was happy, too, with that "pleasing punishment" which, in fact, was an

¹² *Messages*, pp. 74, 75.

expression of divine intimacy. Was this not a wonderful way of replying to the letter?

At about midnight Kaka Baria woke Pankhraj up, for he was being called by Baba. Pankhraj hesitatingly went into Baba's room but felt at home on finding Baba in a very happy mood. Baba conveyed through the alphabet board: "Someone handed over the telegram to Kaka on his way to the bathroom. He placed it in a drawer of a mirror-stand and then completely forgot about it. A little while ago when Kaka went there again, he chanced to open the drawer and found the telegram. Go. Have a good rest. Do join the *mandali* going to Saoner without fail."

In a minute Pankhraj came out of Baba's room wondering about His ways — so exacting, so loving!

Visit to Saoner

It was a pleasant winter morning. A goodly number of cheerful faces from Nagpur had gathered near Baba's residence. Many were to follow the One whom they desired to follow for their whole lives. Fairly early the buses sped for Saoner. On the way we stopped at Angewada. It was two miles off the main road, beyond a river bed, so some had to get into bullock carts. The cow dung-plastered huts looked tidy. Here the simple-hearted villagers welcomed Baba in an unpretentious way. By the side of the river there was a small Baba Center. It was named "Baba Ashram" by Vibhutidas, one of Baba's men. Baba blessed the gathering and they were all happy. After *arti* and *prasad* this program was over.

Saoner, twenty-three miles from Nagpur, was reached by 10:00A.M. and Baba was warmly received by the crowds, Baba lovers from villages had specially come in their bullock carts for Baba's *darshan*. The crowds were pressing, and so Baba had to come out of His room often to give

darshan. Chounde Maharaj, famous for his work of *gorakshan*¹³ came especially to see Baba and asked for His blessings. Baba replied: "I am the Power House. The Power House will never fail provided one is careful about the connecting wires."

D. H. Pophali, one of Baba's stalwarts and one of His very dear ones, was the chief host. He is a lawyer there. Even now the whole family — wife, children and grandchildren — forms a devout group with singular devotion to Avatar Meher Baba. We had our lunch at Pophali's residence. I still remember that long plantain leaf, which was not a large enough plate for even the first helping of the delicacies so lovingly prepared. The whole family treated Baba's visit as a period of greatest jubilation and good fortune.

Here I am reminded of a small incident related to me by Shriram, one of the sons of Pophali. Baba had once remarked that next to *masts*, He loved children. In the company of children Baba looked extraordinarily happy. He used to make jokes and amuse them with playful tricks. Shriram had the good fortune to be in Baba's company when he was a child. Here is a trick or game that Baba played with him. Baba held the five fingers of His right hand in the grip of His left and asked the boy to find the middle finger, which he invariably missed. Baba remarked to those near Him, "You seek the true; you come upon the false. Beware!" Shriram, himself now the father of a few children, still remembers these words and treats the remark as a beacon ever guiding his life.

"Unquenching Fire" and "Divine Heritage"

After a little rest Baba paid a visit to Meher Adhyatama Ashram at Saoner. This was a private program and, as such,

¹³ Welfare of the cows.

Baba lovers of the place had an opportunity to come closer to their beloved Master. It was a Baba-family gathering. Harkare, a lawyer in Saoner, delivered a short speech about the activities carried on at the Center. As he performed Baba's *arti* tears rolled down his cheeks. Baba's message, "The Unquenching Fire of Spiritual Longing," was read out to His devotees:

... The life of desires is always and necessarily constrained to an unending oscillation between the opposites of joy and suffering, gratification and disappointment, good and evil ...

But even in the very midst of the tumultuous pains and pleasures of the ego life, there dawns, in the ripeness of experience, and through the Grace of the Master, the clear perception of the utter futility of desires, which seek fulfillment through the false and the transient forms of life ... This is the beginning of the life of spiritual longing, accompanied by constant discrimination between the true and the false ... When the spiritual longing is thus awakened, it can never be entirely set at rest or evaded. It becomes an unquenching fire that burns the very roots of limiting desires ... Thus shall the Pilgrim arrive at his Abode of Peace through keen spiritual longing.¹⁴

The public program was arranged in a specially erected *pandal* in the Municipal School Compound. Thousands gathered to hear Baba's message. Chounde Maharaj performed a *kirtan*. He said:

"In Meher Baba we find the *sangan* - confluence of all the world religions."

With deep reverence he prostrated himself before Baba and implored Him to awaken the heart of humanity. Jal

¹⁴ *Messages*, pp. 76-77.

Kerawala, Divisional Commissioner, read a message of Meher Baba's entitled, "The Divine Heritage of Man":

... Man is constantly feeling thwarted and limited; and he is ever in the clutches of unrelieved agony or suffering, because, not knowing his own true nature, he identifies himself with the body or the desires or the limited individual mind, and thereby becomes a victim to their respective limitations and sufferings. It is only by knowing himself to be different from and beyond all these that he can fully enter the Divine Heritage of the Abiding Happiness ...

The Master does not give to the aspirant something which is not already within the aspirant in a latent form; he only unveils the real Self of the aspirant himself and enables him to come into his own Divine heritage which is rightfully his.¹⁵

We had our evening meal at the house of another Baba devotee, Jai Narayan, and left Saoner by 7:00 P.M., reaching Nagpur by nine o'clock. Some admirers of Baba from Nagpur, mostly Muslims, had arranged a *qavvali* program in Thakur's bungalow, without the consent of the host. But Baba condescended to be present at the program, which continued until midnight.

Visit to the Buddha Society

In the morning on November 16, 1944 Baba made two visits, first to the residence of Justice M. B. Niyogi and the second to the bungalow of Justice W. R. Puranik. This was the last day of our stay in Nagpur. Later the same morning Baba attended a small gathering in the Buddha Society

¹⁵ *Messages*, pp. 78-79.

where His secretary, Adi K. Irani, read out the following message, "The Hidden Treasure of the Self":

“There is not a creature but is destined for the Supreme Goal, even as there is not a river but is on its winding way to the ocean; but, in the human form alone is consciousness so developed that it is capable of reflecting and expressing the glory and perfection of its own true and highest Self, which is, at the same time, the Self of all ...

“One by one, the multicolored attachments to the false have to be relinquished; and one by one, the *sanskaric* faggots that feed the deceptive fires of the separative ego have to be surrendered in favor of the imperative claims of the invincible flame of the Truth ... The clouds of *sanskaras* have to disappear completely before the sky of consciousness is illumined by the inextinguishable Light of God, who is the real Self of all. My mission is to help you to inherit this hidden treasure of the Self; and all who earnestly seek it have my blessings.”¹⁶

It was the last program during Baba's stay in Nagpur and, as such, the above was His parting message to His dear ones in Nagpur.

The Embrace that Covered My Whole Being

Baba and the *mandali* were to leave Nagpur that same evening. While we were busy packing, someone came to me and said, "May I know the railway station where you want to get off to reach your home?"

"Why, what's the matter?" I inquired. The man told me that he was in charge of purchasing

¹⁶ *Messages*, p. 80.

tickets for Baba and those going with Him. He also told me that a third-class bogie had been reserved for the party traveling with Baba from Nagpur to Manmad — a journey of about twelve hours. It was a surprise to me. I was to be allowed to travel with Baba, and in His compartment, too! Hard to believe!

The *mandali* accompanying Baba were so busy with the program that I did not find any opportunity to get acquainted with them. During Baba's programs in Nagpur I moved with Him but did not approach Him to touch His person, not even to offer a garland or some fruit. I would mostly sit close by on the ground or stand in a corner watching, observing His inimitable, loving movements and the expressions on His divine face in response to the yearnings of the devout hearts of His devotees. I had had no personal interview with Baba. But without His consent, traveling with Him in the same compartment was not permitted, that much I knew. Then how had this come about? These were the showers of His grace! What else can be said?

After lunch and rest, I placed my bag and baggage with the *mandali's* luggage and felt impelled to purchase a garland and some fruit to offer Baba. Without telling anyone I left for the market on foot, not knowing where it was — and Nagpur is an extensive city. I purchased a fine rose garland, some oranges, a coconut and a lotus. By the time I returned to Thakur's bungalow I found that the luggage lorry and the *mandali's* bus had left. I went straight upstairs to Baba's room. Fortunately, there He was, resting in a chair, Adi Sr. by His side. Baba very lovingly looked at me with those deep, luminous eyes and smiled. He accepted the garland, the oranges and the coconut. He held the lotus in His fingers and twirled it. He looked very pleased. He motioned me to embrace Him and then stood up to leave for the station. I wondered whether He was told that I was

missing and hence He waited for me! I did not tell Him anything nor did He ask me anything, but in that one embrace He covered my whole being. He told Adi Sr. to tell one of the Baba workers to take me to the station in a *tonga*.

On the Train with Baba

Baba lovers from Nagpur had gathered at the station for the farewell. Some looked deeply affected; a few were sobbing. Deshmukh, Justice Niyogi, Miss Dinesh Nandini and many more had come to the station. As the train pulled out we could see the waving and heard many throats ringing in one voice, "Shri Meher Baba *ki jai!* "

In the compartment Baba later distributed fruit to all with His own hands. He asked some of us to entertain Him with jokes, and a few sang some songs. I was quietly enjoying this Baba-family atmosphere. All of a sudden I had a passing thought, "Why not sing a song to Baba? "

At that very moment Baba pointed at me and gestured: "Sing one. How did I know what you were thinking about?"

I sang. God knows how it appealed to those present. Baba, however, made a sign that it was good! To Baba even the "worst" is but a degree of "good."

Later on in my life with Baba there were other occasions when He did disclose to me exactly what I was thinking about. But that was the first incident which enabled me to understand that He *knows*.

After some time Baba stretched out on the bedding and covered Himself from head to foot with a white sheet. During this period everyone kept quiet. "Is He sleeping or is He working?" I mused.

We reached Manmad by early morning. Some of us had to catch the train for Ahmednagar. Baba got off with the *mandali* and, after a round of loving farewells, left for Aurangabad. My first *sahavas* week with Baba was over.

From the first day I saw Him at Manmad, He had silently spread the feast of His love each day until we parted, again at Manmad. The beginning and the end were at the same place, but what a difference! The silent, symbolic significance of this occurrence is still beyond me, but the perfume and the taste of this divine feast continue to linger in my little heart, even to this day. I felt deeply satisfied, but there was still a craving for more and more of Baba's *sahas* — this caused a pleasant disturbance. The spring of life that had dried up now began to bubble forth.

My First Visit to Meherabad, 1944

On the Way to Meherabad

MEHER Baba's stay at Aurangabad ended on November 27, 1944 and He shifted His headquarters to Pimpalgaon (Meherazad), where He mainly stayed till the end of the year. On December 1 a circular was issued giving the following information:

- (1) The *darshan* program at Allahabad will be in April 1945.
- (2) Six hundred signatories will stay with Baba at Ahmednagar for one full month in May 1945.
- (3) Baba will distribute food-grain worth 10,000 rupees among the poor people in May 1945.

I personally did not receive the above circular, nor did I know of the change in Baba's residence from Aurangabad to Pimpalgaon. I was so absorbed in that blissful week at Nagpur that I did not even care to write to Adi K. Irani for information about Baba's whereabouts.

Once after my return from Nagpur I visited Barsi. There I met V. J. Kher, one of Baba's admirers, and told him all about that wonderful week spent in the company of Baba. Kher had met Baba a year before during His visit to Barsi. Being very intelligent and also a student of philosophy, he went to meet Baba with a number of questions boiling in

his mind. In Baba's presence, however, he realized the futility of those questions and felt that Baba's silence pointed at something beyond the intellect, beyond the mind. He was intent on seeing Baba again but could not manage to come to Nagpur.

On December 24, the school closed for ten days for Christmas vacation. Kher came to Kurduwadi. We planned to visit Meherabad to inquire about the possibility of having Baba's *darshan* and the place where we could have it. We were not pressing a wrong key to give out a wrong note, for we were not demanding *darshan*.

Within a few hours we left Kurduwadi and by 8:30 P.M. we reached Ahmednagar by train. It was getting fairly dark and Meherabad was about five miles away. The *tonga* demanded high fares. We had a tentative thought to stay in the city for the night and proceed to Meherabad the next morning. Kher told me that a few months back he had been to Ahmednagar, but instead of going to Meherabad he stayed in the city for the night. The next morning by the time he reached Meherabad he found that Baba had just left the *ashram*, so we did not wish to commit that mistake again. We thought of going on foot to Meherabad, staying there for the night on the veranda without disturbing anyone, and then inquiring about receiving Baba's *darshan* the next morning. We started. First things first, comforts afterwards, was our conclusion.

The Unexpected Happens

I was not strong enough to walk briskly all the way as the distance to be covered on foot was more than five miles. It was rather a problem for me, but my dear and robust companion offered to carry my bag along with his. Thus, with a slow and steady pace, we were off on our journey to Meherabad. There were no lights on the road — the stars

lit the way, and love lit our hearts. Time passed swiftly, for the more we talked about Baba the more "turned on" to Him we became. Eventually we noticed some electric lights. Kher said:

"Meherabad is a small, primitive place by the side of a village named Arangaon, and perhaps the *ashram* is beyond these electrified buildings."

But as we neared the lights, to his great surprise he found that this *was* Meherabad. What a change!

It was about 10:00 P.M. Many people were seen resting on the veranda and in the rooms. A few were awake but we were strangers to them. We knew practically no one. "What's this all about? What should we do now?" I thought.

Just then we met Dr. Ghani and the whole situation changed. He introduced us to Pendu, the manager of Meherabad, and in no time he made us feel at home by seeing to our necessary comforts, including supper and a *gadi* (mattress). The whole atmosphere was glowing with the warmth of Baba's love. I felt as if I was in a wonderland.

Dr. Ghani told us that on December 24, the very day we arrived, Nariman Dadachanji and Arnavaz were married in Baba's presence, and the next day was to be the birthday celebration of one of the women *mandali* living with Meher Baba; hence there was the big *pandal*, the feast and the electrification. We were told that we would be seeing Baba the next morning. What else could have made us more happy! Baba had already been in Meherabad for a few days. We had come uninvited, and we felt a bit puzzled. We were prepared to leave Meherabad just after *darshan*. The next morning people got up early — it was Christmas morning, too. With our tea we had *rava* (a sweet dish). If I remember correctly Eruch served the *rava*, and he still continues to serve the "Baba-sweets."

Baba came down from the hill early and went to His cabin

in lower Meherabad. The morning rays of the sun were bathing the land with tender radiance, and there in the cabin the real Sun whose light is the light of the Self was silently radiating His love, ready to attend the programs of the day. Soon we were summoned into His cabin. Baba looked all love. Without any inquiry He allowed us to stay at Meherabad for two or three days, as long as was conveniently possible.

"Have a free mind and be at home," Baba gestured. For us, it was more than being in heaven. The unexpected had happened.

A Qavvali Program on the Hill

December 25, 1944 was a festive day. Baba lovers from Ahmednagar, Poona and Bombay had assembled at Meherabad. With a carefree mind and a loving heart, I enjoyed the day while conversing with new acquaintances about the glory of the Glorious One. A special *qavval* was invited for this birthday program. I do not remember whether his name was Peshawari or he came from Peshawar (now in Pakistan). His program was presented on the Hill, Upper Meherabad, so that the women folk might hear it, also. The women were seated behind a curtain. In those days the women *mandali* were not allowed to visit the men's quarters, nor the men theirs.

It was my first hearing of a *qavvali*. The place, the atmosphere and the mode of singing — everything was new. But within a few minutes I was won over by the sweet music and the words, still sweeter. I understood Urdu just a little, and Persian not at all. Baba expressed His appreciation either by swaying His head sideways with eyes closed, or by keeping time and rhythm on the alphabet board with His slender, delicate fingertips. At times He looked immensely solemn.

Music is an extraordinary phenomenon and it is rightly called the universal language. When it is accompanied by *ghazals*, it has a divine touch about it. In *ghazals*, the subtleties of love and longing for the Beloved, the Perfect Master in human form, as well as the shades of challenge and utter submission to the Beloved, are delicately presented. Here, the depth of the voice of the *qavval* was vibrant with the significance of the words. Meher Baba's presence at the program made it all the more vital. The atmosphere was melodiously vibrant, rippling with love. No wonder I saw some persons silently shedding tears of joy. When such singing comes to an end, it does not dwindle quickly but for days it continues to bubble inside the heart of the listener. It was so with me, a beginner. This interest later inspired me to collect a number of *ghazals* which had been sung before Baba. It is a ready-made food for the heart, any time.

Dr. Ghani introduced me to the beauty and significance of *ghazals* and helped me to develop the right attitude to appreciate them. Some of us would sit by his bedside and he would quote line after line in Urdu, explaining them in English. With his sense of humor he always kept the atmosphere lively.

I do not remember whether Meher Baba explained some of the lines during the above program, but the two that I could vaguely recollect are given below. The day of departure was close at hand and there was a strong desire lurking within me to prolong my stay at Meherabad. The remembrance of these lines might have their roots in this feeling:

O Beloved, treating me as a madman, I have been driven out from the house.

Have not the tiny stars the privilege to keep company with the Moon?

During this stay I met one visitor from Nasik. I noticed that sometimes his eyes would glisten with tears as he looked at Baba. He knew Urdu well. Once I approached him when I saw him standing at a distance, lovingly gazing at Baba. During our conversation he quoted one Urdu couplet meaning:

With your every glance, O Beloved, the lover gets deeply intoxicated.

I am convinced beyond doubt that there, within your eyes lies the exciting divine tavern.

I thought that, in a way, through this couplet he explained his own state of mind.

A Matchless Funeral Service

During my stay I learned that December 1944 had been an unusual month of light and shade — happy and unhappy events rolled into one. In contrast to the marriage ceremony and the birthday celebration, some days earlier Gulnar, Adi Jr.'s wife, had passed away; and also Masaji, Pendu's father, had suddenly expired. He had been to Poona to fetch necessary materials for the birthday program to be celebrated on December 25. While returning to Ahmednagar in a lorry the glare of the sun had a fatal effect on him, though it was not immediately detected. Masaji was not alive to attend the birthday program for which he had worked so hard. Baba was pleased with his services and took him unto Himself.

A special funeral service took place on December 23, two days prior to my arrival. It was a matchless event, revealing the spirit of those who went gallantly through everything for the sake of their beloved Master. In accordance with Baba's instructions, a foundation for the column of the

Memorial Tower was laid near the railway lines. The names of Baba's dear ones (men only) were to be inscribed on the column after they had dropped their bodies. A grave was dug, and in Baba's presence the coffin containing the body of His dear Masa (uncle), the eldest of the *mandali*, was lowered into it. The bedding roll of Chanji, who had expired at Srinagar the preceding August, was also placed in the grave. Then Baba dropped rose after rose as Adi Sr. read out the names of those men who had passed away while rendering a life of service to Baba and His cause. Margaret Craske, who was present at the time of this touching scene, related:

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

It was ... the only funeral service I ever attended in which death was robbed of all sadness and was given instead a happiness in the memory of those who had only lived for Baba.¹⁷

A Message for the Memorial Tower

For the above occasion Meher Baba gave a special message, part of which follows:

You are today witnessing a solemn occasion of supreme importance. While the world is feverishly occupied with the vanishing things of the moment, there

¹⁷ Kitty Davy, "Twenty Years with Meher Baba," *The Awakener*, vol. 3, no. 3, Winter, 1956, p. 32.

are always those who gain a true perspective of life through the grace of the Master, and these lucky few are ever willing to make their whole life an ever renewed and ceaseless dedication to the universal and ageless truth of the imperishable and undivided life divine. The spiritual grandeur of those who set aside all thoughts of the self and make their life an offering to the divine and imperative cause of the Master is in itself ineffable, but while it surpasses all description, it is something much more than an ornament of crowning glory for those souls themselves. A visible memorial like a tower, which symbolizes their life of unflinching loyalty and love, can itself become a medium for inspiring the generations to come.

The Memorial Tower of my departed devotees will be a reservoir of inspiration and power for posterity. Their memory is not being perpetuated for their sakes — they had absolutely no desire for fame or name. But their memory is being perpetuated because it will be an example for those who are living as well as for those who are to come. The symbolic representation of these departed souls through flowers dispenses with the separative burial or cremation ceremonies, and the putting of all these flowers in the same foundation is intended to emphasize the truth that though the bodies of these devotees were different, they were all parts of the one eternal and indivisible Soul. The Tower will be in memory of men belonging to different religions and will, in fact, represent the fundamental unity of all the great world religions.

"I Am Beyond Time"

Life at Meherabad was more intimate than that I had experienced at Nagpur. I really felt at home. On a few occasions we would be sitting near Baba in the hall of the old *ashram* building. Till this time I used to read the lives and articles of the Perfect Masters of the past and their relationship

with their dear ones—now I had the unique opportunity to witness, in silence, Perfection in action. It was interesting to see how Baba used the Roman alphabet board for languages other than English. In one such sitting Baba conveyed His divine status through the statement, "I am Infinite." This baffled my reason. On another occasion, in an informal talk a reference was made to the delay in the fulfillment of a promise made by Baba. In answer to this Baba spelled out, "I am beyond Time." Intellect with all its vanity tried to fit such statements into a rational form, but the next moment Baba would be so human, so full of humor, that I wondered what state that could be!

It was winter and so a bit cold in the hall. I went out into the sun and towards the railway lines. It was an exhilarating and cool morning. The sky was cloudless, and it was a joy to look at the hill with green grass adorning it. As I looked at the hill from the road, for we were not permitted to go up the hill, I was reminded of a dream that I had had a year previously, before meeting Baba. I mentioned it earlier. It was in connection with my meditation on Shri Aurobindo. In the dream I felt that I saw Shri Aurobindo on a hill. As I woke up I marveled and wondered if there could be a hill near Pondicherry, where Shri Aurobindo resided and which is situated on the east coast of India. Again I had a thought, "Aurobindo has flowing hair and a beard, too. How is it that he had no beard and instead was clean shaven?" Yet, I thought then that I had had Shri Aurobindo's *darshan*. At that time I had not heard of Meher Baba, but now it was suddenly revealed to me that in those days of intense longing Meher Baba made it possible for me to contact Him through that dream, and the hill I saw was Meherabad Hill. This strengthened my belief in Baba's divinity, though that was just a beginning. Indeed, He knew me and loved me before I met Him or even heard about Him! "He is really beyond Time," I felt.

“He Will See My Full Form”

I was to leave Meherabad that day. Kher, my companion, had already left for Barsi. Before departing everyone would go to Baba to offer pranams and seek His permission to leave — this was the custom. I had had no personal interview with Baba nor did I ask for it. To some extent, during those few days I was oblivious of worldly affairs and duties, so I totally forgot to convey a message to Baba from one of His devotees, a schoolboy. He had not seen Baba physically, but one day as he chanced to see Baba's picture in my room he felt so drawn to Him that repetition of Baba's name and meditation on His form became his joy. Because of his simplicity and innocence this boy began to see Baba's form, but strangely enough he did not see His face.

During his meditation the boy felt blissfully happy. He told me about his experience and asked me why he should not see Baba's full form. He thought that because of my age and my cupboardful of books, I would know. Spirituality is, in fact, beyond scrolls and sermons, age and learning. It is a gift, received unawares. Whatever it might be, I told him two things:

"Do not disclose this experience or any other experiences of this sort to anyone else. When I meet Meher Baba again I will tell Him about this, and request Him to bless you that you may see His full form."

As days passed by, the boy had additional uncommon experiences, but he kept his word and did not speak of them to anyone except me. Now it was my turn to tell Baba about his request, as I had promised.

In the morning when I saw Baba coming out of the cabin, I approached Him to seek His permission to leave Meherabad that day. He stopped and gave me a steady look, His face lit up all the more. With folded hands I told Him about my departure and added: "Baba, there is a boy who loves

you very much. He sees your divine form as he repeats your name or meditates on you, but it is always below the neck. He misses seeing your glorious face."

Baba inquired, "By what train are you leaving?"

"The afternoon train, Baba," I replied.

As He blessed me He remarked: "Permitted. Don't worry. Be happy!"

He was about to move ahead. I thought, "Has He no message for that little loving soul?"

Just then Baba gestured and one of the *mandali* interpreted for me: "My *Nazar* is on that boy. He will see my full form."

Baba conveyed all this in such a natural way, as if He knew all about the boy. He did not ask me for any information regarding the teenager, not even his name. I wished to tell Baba something about the boy but He briskly walked away towards the *ashram* building with the *mandali*.

I reached Kurduwadi that same night. Relaxed in body and heart, I slept, thinking to convey the good news to that lucky lad the next morning. To my surprise he knew about my return and was in my room even before morning tea. With a happy expression he disclosed to me in his sweet voice, "Early this morning, for the first time, I saw Baba's form with that divine face!"

I felt extremely happy and yet slightly shocked. This set me thinking. I had recently read a book by a French author on autosuggestion. Had the boy seen Baba's face *after* I gave him the message, I might have felt that Baba's suggestion had worked on his innocent mind. Now the situation was quite different. Baba had made a silent gesture at Meherabad and it had miraculously worked before I could convey it to the boy. Spiritual experience that is vouchsafed by the God-Man ever stands far above psychological interpretation and, if I may say, beyond psychoanalysis and psychotherapy.

Thus ended the year 1944, which altered the course of my life. The last two months of that year, November and December, hold such charm and have such significance for me that they will ever remain fresh in my memory. Words fail to express adequately the happenings of these two months. Yet, what a joy to share these experiences with others!

Meherazad and Meher Spiritual Center, 1945

Mind, a Marvelous Means!

WONDERFULLY spent were the days with Meher Baba in November and December of 1944, rich in spiritual atmosphere and with a real human touch about them. My whole being wished for a recurrence of that precious period. I intensely desired and longed for it, even immoderately — that was my weakness, that was my strength. That was my delight and that was my plight, too, because I had overestimated the worth of my efforts, rather than Baba's grace and will. It dawned on me later that on one's own, one cannot approach the God-Man, Meher Baba. He draws His own, in His own way and time, even after He drops His body.

I had seen Reality enformed; I had met in person the Impersonal; and, what a pity, I now wished to measure the Immeasurable with too unreliable a measure, the intellect! I wanted to compare the Incomparable with the images I had formed through thinking and reading, whether right or wrong, about Reality. This meant that, having seen Him, I had not seen.

This was the state I was in during the year 1945. The mystic and the skeptic were both wide awake in me. Mind —

what a marvelous issue of *Maya!* It accepts and rejects, lauds and scoffs, at one and the same time. Some maintain that such diametrically opposite responses are perhaps stepping stones to soaring higher in the realm of spirituality. Inconceivable is the working of the mind, anyone's mind. This reminds me of the two lines by Francis Brabazon. In one of his *ghazals* he writes:

To go on or not to go on, equally is disaster;
At this point one is ready to meet the Perfect Master.

In this sense I was fully "qualified" to meet Baba off and on. But during this year I met Him, or rather saw Him, just once, at Meherabad in the last week of May 1945; otherwise it was a blank year for me. But does meeting the Master mean companionship only on the physical plane? Assuming of the *Avataric* form by God is an overture of the formless to quicken the ways of drawing Creation to Him. But I was not responsive enough to Him and His ways — I had my own misgivings and waverings, yet He was always benevolent towards me.

A Dream Directs My Life

The days of doubts about His divinity were amply compensated at night. I would wake up with cool, soothing tears rolling down unwarranted. Many times I would see Baba in dreams. To talk of them all would sound ludicrous, even meaningless, to some people. Some dreams were utterly disconnected and quite fantastic, but to me they all brought the touch of His presence which was ever sympathizing with me in my funny venture to understand Him, the un-understandable.

I used to note down the details of these dreams, with dates and approximate timings, but after some years I had

a fancy that to keep such a record was to feed the egoistic tendencies. One fine morning I drowned these diaries in the river, with the feeling that I had done something sacred! But does the storing or sinking of such things have any value in itself? The freeing factor is entirely independent. With things such as diaries and other belongings, can we not remain free and light at heart in spite of the natural ego-based responses?

Of all the dreams I had, one dream continues to direct my life even after a long period of twenty-five years. In 1944 I had just commenced my career as a schoolteacher. A year later I was asked by one of the guardians of a retarded pupil to tutor his ward. He promised to pay me good fees. Accordingly, the boy came and I remember having taught him arithmetic — a few sums from "Profit and Loss," though I neither knew what real profit was nor real loss! And in one's business with the Master, the dealings of profit and loss take marvelous and unforeseen turns. The boy did his assignment and went away. That same night Baba appeared to me in a dream. He had a frowning look. He said, "Why do you accept tuition?" Baba's frowning face had as much meaning and effect on me as His loving countenance. I was quick in making a decision and instantaneously replied, "No, Baba, I won't." And with this the dream ended.

The next day the boy was sent back. Thus ended my first and last attempt to accept tuition, and the thought of making money through tutorship terminated once and for all, though this field seemed to open rosy prospects materially. The dream definitely revealed to me that my fragile frame would not bear the extra exertion of tutoring; on the other hand, giving it up afforded me spare time for rest and Baba work. Meher Baba once remarked that whenever the Master appears in a dream it has a significance, though not necessarily comprehensible every time. It is a vision.

Experiences at the Age of Twelve

By the way, regarding the subject of dreams, I wish to mention a rare type of dream experienced by Elizabeth Patterson. In 1937 when the Western group was living with Baba in India at the Nasik retreat, Elizabeth narrated the following incident. When she was twelve years old she dreamed of Baba three different times in succession, and when she first met Him she recognized Baba as the one she had known in the dreams.¹⁸ Many Baba lovers all over the world have had, and still have, different types of dreams of varying significance and creativity. Indeed, Baba has used and is still using the dream-state of man to awaken him from his deep slumber and sleep.

The mentioning of twelve years of age reminds me of another experience, that of Princess Norina Matchabelli. It is of a different kind — a permissible digression, I hope — but it shows one of Baba's divine ways of contacting His people. Norina writes:

Since my very childhood, I knew of God ... He rescued me at the early age of twelve, at the time of my emotional awakening. He came as Jesus Christ and spoke to me.

. . . I met Meher Baba in 1931, and recognized him as the Christ personified. And when the Master [Baba], without any reference on my part, told me that he was the one who came to me in the form of Christ, to give me the spiritual lead, he established in me the unconditional faith in him.¹⁹

Many are the illustrations, exquisitely resplendent, of His time-penetrating presence.

¹⁸ See: Kitty Davy, "Reminiscences, Part 2," *The Awakener*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1964, p. 7

¹⁹ Princess Norina Matchabelli, *Fragments From A Spiritual Diary* (New York: Circle Publication, Inc., 1949), pp. 3-4.

The Real Significance of Spirituality

Apart from Baba dreams, sometimes I beheld small and big stars and designs of light. Such recognitions would be on the borderline of my dreaming and waking states. Strangely enough I would be fully awake, hearing and feeling things about me, but with eyes closed. The moment I opened them, these petty glimpses would be gone. Infrequently I would wake up to find that my whole body was throbbing with light shocks similar to fairly mild electric shocks. These, too, would surprisingly continue while I kept my eyes closed. Even now I do not understand what state I was in then. But does it hold much importance after one's contact with the Master, Meher Baba? Very little, I think, if any.

I used to write letters to Baba directly in those days, but in none of my letters did I make any reference to these experiences — not even in talks with Him in the later periods. But I did pray to Him then that, the sooner the better, I be relieved of such enticing experiences, and relieved I was. Attachment to the panorama of sights and lights is a distraction on the spiritual road. Spirituality does not consist in a change from common clothes to colored robes, from the usual apartments to caves and mountains, from normal perceptions to abnormal glimpses and visions; but it is a life open to God and His will without self-resistance, and that is not very easy at all, though most natural. Adi Sr. once told me of the following incident. One seeker asked the Master, "What is the most difficult thing in spiritual life?"

"To be perfectly human," was the Master's masterly reply. Has this not a fund of meaning behind it?

To me, Meher Baba's discourses on "The Place of Occultism in Spiritual Life" showed the way. This reading helped me to have a right attitude towards dreams, glimpses and occult experiences. So I neither exaggerated the importance of my experiences nor condemned them.

At the end of the series of the above articles Meher Baba states:

“To penetrate into the essence of all being and significance and to release the fragrance of that inner attainment for the guidance and benefit of others, by expressing, in the world of forms, truth, love, purity and beauty — this is the sole game which has intrinsic and absolute worth. All other happenings, incidents and attainments in themselves can have no lasting importance.”²⁰

Meher Spiritual Center
Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, U.S.A.

Meher Baba's external activities of the year 1945 commenced at Meherazad and concluded at Meherabad, a distance of only about fifteen miles. But in between there had been intense Baba activities in the south and north of India. In the first week of January, Baba received a cable about the passing away of Mr. Simeon Chapin, father of Elizabeth Patterson. The next day Baba cabled back to His dear Elizabeth in America: "Your father has blessedly found a place in my infinite heart."

This was literally true, because the present premises of the Meher Spiritual Center at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, were previously owned by Mr. Chapin. The following two extracts, one from Mani's *Family Letter* to the West and the other from an article by Kitty Davy, will make this point clear. Mani writes:

Baba sent dearest Elizabeth and Norina (Princess Matchabelli) to the United States from India in 1941, to locate a site for His spiritual center somewhere in the

²⁰ Meher Baba, *Discourses*, 2:110

United States — one which would comply with the five conditions that He laid down. Two of the above conditions were that "it should be on virgin soil" and that "it should be given from the heart." After a considerable search for the ideal site, the property now known as Meher Spiritual Center, comprising over five hundred acres and two fresh water lakes adjacent to the Ocean, came into Elizabeth's possession through her dear father, Mr. Simeon Chapin. A perfect setting for the establishment of the Center as wished by Baba, it met all the conditions He had set down.²¹

Mrs. Patterson had informed her dear father in advance of her intention to dedicate this property to the cause of Meher Baba, and he had readily and lovingly agreed.

About the formal inauguration of this Center Kitty Davy writes:

The Center was first visited by several of those devoted to Baba who came down from New York with Elizabeth and Norina in July 1944. During this visit the property was dedicated to Baba by those present gathering shells along the ocean and bringing them to a certain knoll in the woods and placing them on the ground so as to spell BABA in large letters. Then each went in various directions calling loudly the name of Baba through the silent forest of pine trees and over the rippling waves of Long Lake.²²

No wonder that during Meher Baba's visit to Myrtle Beach He once referred to this place as "my home in the West." Thus Mr. Chapin had the unique good fortune to lay the foundation of Meher Baba's Center in the West, and

²¹ Manija S.Irani, *Family Letter*, October 24th, 1964, p.3.

²² Kitty Davy, "Recollections, Part 3," *The Awakener*, vol. 6, no. 4, Fourth Quarter 1960, p. 23.

Baba's cable to Elizabeth that her father had found a place in His heart speaks volumes about this wonderful good fortune.

A Rest House Turns into "Meherazad"

In the beginning of this year Baba stayed at Pimpalgaon (Malvi) — not in the village itself but in a bungalow about a mile away, at the foot of a hill. This residence is known as Meherazad. Here I wish to give a short account of how this precious piece of land was selected for Baba's residence.

Formerly there was a small building on the land which was used as a rest house. In the early 1920s Ahmednagar Municipality planned to construct a dam so as to form a lake near Pimpalgaon to serve as a water reservoir for the sprawling city of Ahmednagar. This work, and that of the water-pumping station, was done under the supervision of a special engineering staff. As it was a long-range work, far from the city, the Municipality bought this rest house. It was used as the quarters for the engineering staff working on this site. When the entire project was finished the bungalow remained vacant for years. None dared to occupy this solitary, secluded place and slowly it began to dilapidate. It was proposed that the rest house should be sold, and the municipal authorities placed an advertisement to the effect that it was to be sold at auction.

Vishnu, one of the *mandali*, brought this news to Baba's notice. He knew that Baba wished to have one secluded spot near Ahmednagar for a quiet stay and work. Baba was to leave Meherabad on one of His *mast* tours. He, however, took time to pay a visit to this site with Pendu and Padri. Baba liked the place immensely. Khan Saheb Sarosh Irani, one of Baba's closest disciples, living in Ahmednagar, was the highest bidder at the auction. There was a hitch in the

Municipal Standing Committee sanctioning this deal, but Khan Bahadur, Adi K. Irani's father, convinced the committee members that Khan Saheb Sarosh was buying the property for Meher Baba's retreat (*ashram*). He also told them that Baba's staying at Pimpalgaon would be highly beneficial to the villagers there. In addition to the rest house, the property had a motor shed, a stable, a kitchen, an outhouse, and an approach road of about six furlongs. Khan Saheb Sarosh also bought an adjacent plot of land, and these two plots now form the present premises of Meherazad. The transaction was registered in February 1944, just four months prior to the inauguration of Meher Center-on-the-Lakes at Myrtle Beach.

During April and December 1944 Baba stayed in this rest house and did His work with the *masts*. He brought Ali Shah, one of His favorite *masts*, there from Ahmednagar. This was, in a way, the "house-warming" of the newly purchased sacred soil and hallowed house.

From 1949 on this whole property, known as Meherazad, has been registered in the name of Nariman M. Dadachanji, one of Baba's closest and dearest disciples. Since then Nariman and his dear and generous wife Arnavaz have been taking great care to maintain the property and to keep it in good shape — for Baba's use and, from 1969 on, for His people. The hill that stands behind "Baba House" at Meherazad was called Tembi Hill. Now it is known as "Meher Baba's Seclusion Hill." For Baba's use, Khan Saheb Sarosh Irani acquired the top of this hill, including a right-of-way, on a long lease from the Government.

A Short Stay in Rusi's House

During January 1945 Baba stayed at Meherazad, and the same delightful *mast*, Ali Shah, was brought here for a period of twenty-five days. Baba worked with him daily.

During this stay the plan of repairing and reconstructing the buildings was discussed. As this work was to commence soon, Baba agreed to stay in Rusi Quettawalla's house in Ahmednagar. Rustom Jehangir Irani, alias Rusi, owned a cafe and a general store in Quetta. Baba visited Quetta on work in the summer of 1923 and 1924. During this period Rustom's whole family came into Baba's close contact. In the 1930s, Rustom left Quetta and came to Ahmednagar for a permanent stay to lead a retired life. One of his daughters, Dr. Goher, after passing her M.B.B.S. in 1944, worked for some years in different hospitals under Baba's instructions. She joined the women *mandali* residing with Baba in 1947 at Satara. She was the personal physician of Baba till He dropped His body. Her services to Baba as a disciple and doctor are unique indeed. It is because of such past and future close connections that Baba lovingly accepted the invitation of His dear Rusi to stay at his house in Ahmednagar. Baba was there from January 31 to March 9, 1945.

Baba left Ahmednagar in the first week of February 1945 to visit Jhansi in Madhya Pradesh for *mast* contacts. There He contacted, in all, fourteen God-intoxicated souls, including a *mastani* named Punjabi Mai. She had beautiful features and talked sense sometimes, while Allahuddin was a naked *mast* rather insensible about his words. Unmindful of climatic changes, he was seen resting on his back against a wall, gazing at the sky for years, they said. Baba knows best! Baidul offered him a cigarette and this brought him into a good mood, and Baba was happy to contact him.

After returning to Ahmednagar, Baba discussed with the *mandali* the subject of the one-month meeting of the signatories. The decisions made were conveyed to the persons concerned through a special circular issued on March 1, 1945. It contained the following statements from Baba:

The specific purpose of the meeting is spiritual and until that is properly served, mere bringing together of a number of signatories will not have fulfilled the purpose. There are several difficulties. They must be solved through natural means. Intervention of my Universal Mind at this juncture is not appropriate.

Rising above the mental upsets caused by prolongations and postponements of the one-month meeting can be counted as solid proof of the soundness of faith in following my instructions at all costs and sufferings, whether mental or physical.

At the end of this circular Baba expressed a wish to call a group meeting of about forty persons, representing the signatories in different parts of India, on May 23, 1945 at Meherabad.

Fixing Up a Villa at Hyderabad

Dr. William Donkin was one of the intimate *mandali* living with Baba. He was a British subject, so after the commencement of World War II he had to offer his services as a doctor in the army. In 1945 he was posted at Secunderabad in charge of a military hospital. Baba instructed Dr. Donkin to find a suitable bungalow near Hyderabad for His stay with His men and women *mandali*. Baba wished to make Hyderabad His headquarters for contacting some *masts* in southern India. Dr. Donkin selected two or three bungalows and wrote to Baba about them. Baba sent Pendu with certain instructions to finalize this matter. Pendu saw the bungalows chosen by Dr. Donkin, but in the light of Baba's requirements he did not find them up to the mark. So they both moved through the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. In the part known as Jubilee Hills, Pendu spotted a new villa nearing completion, with a well kept

garden and a small swimming pool. These were items in the terms stipulated by Baba.

Pendu made inquiries of the owner, who was a prominent lawyer in Hyderabad. Baba was then informed about the facilities the villa offered, and He personally visited Hyderabad to find out if the place was really suitable for His stay and work. Baba liked the bungalow and asked Pendu and Dr. Donkin to lease it. The owner was so busy that they could not see him until late at night. They had a talk about the rent and other requirements in the bungalow. Then the lawyer instructed his clerk to prepare the necessary draft of a compliance agreement concerning the facilities in the villa and the advance money to be paid.

By the time the men returned to the hotel it was nearly midnight. Baba looked anxious to hear the report and He asked Pendu to read the draft. It was in Urdu and Pendu could not read it, so Baba asked him to find someone in the hotel who knew Urdu well. Most of the tourists had gone to sleep; however, Pendu heard some people talking in one of the rooms. He knocked at the door. A young man opened the door, welcomed Pendu and asked him to come in and join them in the party and drinks. Pendu inquired if any of them could read Urdu, and fortunately one could. Pendu requested him to visit the room of his "elder brother" in that same hotel. Though drunk, this man seemed sober enough to read out to Baba the agreement drawn in Urdu. While listening, Baba gave certain instructions to Pendu regarding the changes to be made in the draft. Thus a tipsy man, too, was of timely help to the divine *Saki* who held in His eyes the immeasurable love-wine. This account is given so as to convey an idea of how particular Baba was in selecting His residence as He moved from place to place. Perhaps every house or estate where Baba lived or camped has a story of its own to tell. This episode is given as an example. Baba would always be in a hurry,

or seemingly so; hence He left Hyderabad by the early morning train for Ahmednagar.

By the first week of March 1945 the arrangements at the villa in Jubilee Hills at Hyderabad were complete, so Baba wished to shift His headquarters there with His men and women *mandali*. Thus ended the sojourn at His dear Rusi's bungalow. At present this particular bungalow, with its spacious compound, is rented by the state government for the office of the Junior Industries Inspector. Would the staff working there ever have an idea of the "divine industry" carried on by Meher Baba through His divine office in that place!

By March 10, 1945 Meher Baba was at Hyderabad.

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Six Months' Stay at Hyderabad, 1945

Masts, the Innocent Eccentrics

HYDERABAD (Andhra) was one of Meher Baba's favorite places in India. Once He remarked that He liked Hyderabad not just for its material prosperity but for its spiritual background. True to this remark, Baba contacted over sixty masts in Hyderabad, quite a large number. I do not know whether any other city in India ever exceeded this number of God-intoxicated souls.

In March 1945, Meher Baba and His party left for Hyderabad to stay in the new villa in Jubilee Hills. Baba lived there with a group of women mandali, including Mehera, Mani, Naja, Rano, Kitty, Irene, Margaret and a few others. The following men mandali were with Him: Gustadji, Baidul, Kaka, Vishnu, Dr. Nilkanth (Nilu), Dr. Ghani, Adi Sr., Eruch, and others when they were called. They resided in another bungalow nearby. Baba lived there from March 10 through September 6, 1945. During this period He carried out some of His important mast activities in and around Hyderabad and in southern India. The following description of the peculiarities of *masts* may give some idea about those He contacted at Hyderabad.²³

Maqdum was an old *mast* who preferred to put on dresses of many colors. He was fond of keeping several puppies

²³ See: William Donkin, *The Wayfarers*, pp. 248-255

around certain localities on a pony, with a kitten on his lap. Chaman Ali Shah, another *mast*, was interested in his pet pigeons. At the time of contact he asked for Baba's umbrella and it was given to him. He changed his voice while muttering to himself, so that the casual listener thought that a group of persons was talking together. Abkari ("Captain"), a *mast* with a dark complexion, wore dark glasses that made him all the more conspicuous. After Baba's contact he wished to be taken for a drive in Adi's car, and his request was granted by Baba. Shastri Buva, who was once a man of great learning, became a *mast* by a stroke of good fortune and was in the process of unlearning (involution). Baba liked him and remarked that he was on the sixth plane of consciousness. One *mast* (Ahmad Ali Baba) usually asked for money from passers-by, while Chunu Mian, if given money, would at once give it away to someone else standing by. Ghulam Hussein was a mixture of *jalali* and *jamali* types. He wore good clothes and sometimes observed high etiquette, hence the *mandali* used to refer to him as "the gentleman *mast*." Moeinuddin Baba (Nanne Mian) roamed through the streets practically naked. At night he would shut himself in a cage-like hovel, so Baba nicknamed him Pinjara Walla (*pinjara* means cage). In fact, the real names of most of the *masts* are not known, and in their search for the Nameless One they never objected to the names by which they were called.

Children Cheered Rajah Mastan

For the *mast* work Baba rented a special hall near the railway station of Khairatabad, a suburb of Hyderabad. Some *masts* were taken there for contact. Nuruddin, a tall and lanky *mast*, was fond of toddy, and Baba allowed him to visit the toddy shop to refresh himself. One day when Nuruddin was being taken to Khairatabad in a *tonga*, Baba was by his side, with Baidul and Eruch following them in a rickshaw. On the way Baidul

spotted another *mast* named Rajiah Mastan. He wore a dirty loin cloth and a huge turban, and he had a bundle of rags and broken china plates on his back. He walked like a *rajah* (king) through the streets, to the delight of the school children. He had a hole in his neck of which he was entirely unmindful. As he got into the rickshaw with Baidul, a number of school-bound children shouted merrily at him. Baba enjoyed this situation immensely. Such interesting episodes used to refresh Baba's party in the hazardous work of contacting *masts*.

Moeinuddin, a Great Mast and Glutton

I would like to mention the crowning *mast* contact at Hyderabad. Saiyid Moeinuddin was the head of the *masts* there, the Chargeman. He was a *majzoob*-like *mast* of the sixth plane. He was lame but of a typical *jalali* type. He loved sweeping the roads, smoking cigarettes and doing full justice to *barfi*, a kind of Indian sweetmeat. Baba contacted him three times. The final contact expressed His most loving way of responding to the absurd whims of the *masts*. Baba waited patiently for about three hours before the mast would allow Him to feed him. But once the feeding commenced, it seemed to have no ending. After consuming a good quantity of food, Moeinuddin asked for a lot of minced meat and bread, then for a kettleful of tea. This was followed by consuming his favorite *barfi* and then smoking his pet brand of cigarettes. After complying with the rest of his whims, Baba was happy to contact the Chargeman in the way He wished for His spiritual work.

Baba's All-knowing Ignorance!

Now, after giving a general account of Baba's contact with the masts in Hyderabad proper, I wish to describe a few other contacts made in April and May 1945 before He left

for the meeting at Meherabad. Baba visited Bidar in April and contacted four *masts*. One named Maulana Abdul Haq wore a number of clothes and a monstrous turban. His appearance resembled a picture in an advertisement for tires, so Baba named him "Dunlop." He was an entertaining *mast*, but a moderate one. The second contact, Siddiq Shah Majzoob, was a tall, thin, highly advanced *mast* of the sixth plane, fond of chewing roasted *grams* (a type of legume). His comic companion was fond of carrying people's luggage, but he would not accept tips.

Not far from Hyderabad, at Kandahar, Baba contacted a *mast*, Fatruh Mian, whose peculiarity was to stand in water for hours and read aloud the Holy Koran. At first he was not ready to meet Baba, but his brother pleaded for the contact. The *mast* hit his brother hard on the head, laughed loudly and burst out, "I am ready!" Here Baba got the news that there was one God-intoxicated soul named Nivritti Maharaj in a village seven miles away. This was enough to tempt Baba to visit that out-of-the-way spot. No car or bus had access to the place, so a bullock cart was hired. It bumped on and on over the uncared-for road. There being innumerable ditches and dry beds of streams, the party jolted with the bumping cart which shook the bones of everyone. On reaching the village it was found that the *mast* had just left for an unknown destination, so a quick turn-about was made on the same "royal road" in the dead of night! Any *mast* tour with Baba meant sleepless nights and a host of hardships. What a *lila* (divine game)! Baba's love for contacting *masts* was divinely human and full of all-knowing ignorance!

Baba's Party Suspected!

Nanded, Udgir and Bhongir were places visited by Baba near Hyderabad. An incident at Sangareddipet is worth mentioning. Once again the party had to undergo a racking

and rattling journey of over twenty miles in a bullock cart, as the place was in the interior of Hyderabad State. The party arrived at Sangareddipet at nightfall. Baidul's appearance resembled that of a Pathan, so the presence of the group aroused suspicion among the people. They intimated this to the police, who wished to take the party into custody. Eruch insisted on seeing the Sub-Inspector, who became thoroughly convinced that they were real gentlemen. By this time it was quite dark but Baba insisted on meeting the *mast*, Abdulla Saheb, and He did visit him. All had a sleepless night. Baba contacted the *mast* again before leaving in the morning and felt happy about it. They then began the return journey in the same cart, an aching ride of about six hours. As the party reached Hyderabad Baba looked tired physically, but His eyes were nevertheless beaming with radiance, for the contact with Abdulla had been to His satisfaction.

A Meeting at Meherabad

On May 1, 1945 all the signatories joined Baba in a day's fast. Baba alone continued the fast for nine days by remaining on plain water only. This fast was followed by the strenuous *mast* tours described above, and by noon on the twenty-second of May He reached Meherabad to attend the special meeting previously announced.

At the commencement of this meeting Baba remarked, "God plays His part in seven stages," and He explained the gist of evolution and the seven stages of involution.²⁴ From what we have gathered from Baba, it seems that the figure seven has a special spiritual significance. Turning to the political situation in India and abroad, He said: "Outwardly the second world war is over, but the inner war still continues,

²⁴ See: Meher Baba, *God Speaks*, 2d ed., p. 80 ff.

rather it is intensified." At the end He stated: "Through natural and unnatural destruction (and explosions) immense suffering awaits the world." Has this not come to pass?

During this meeting Babadas, Vibhuti, Dr. Daulat Singh and Manek Mehta reported to Baba about the work they had been doing in spreading His message of love. During such hearings Baba would lighten the seriousness by telling a joke now and then. In reference to one of His workers He commented: "His work is indeed good, but the reporting is so confusing that even God is helpless to understand him!" Another time someone suggested that the necessary booklets about Baba be printed in Delhi. Baba, whose wit was gay as a wind and who had a faculty for a quick twist of words, remarked in Hindi: "Delhi *bahot door had*," literally meaning, "Delhi is far away," while the actual sense conveyed was that the thing in question was not an immediate problem.

At the end of the first day's meeting it was decided to circulate to Baba people the following message: "For keeping Meher Baba undisturbed in His universal work, He would have no contact with His disciples and devotees till the end of December 1945, excluding those staying with Him."

On the second day of the meeting, in the course of informal talk Baba remarked:

"Those who stay with me perform neither *jap* nor *tap* but their spiritual worth is much more than those who spend their lifetime in doing such things. A life of obedience to the Master is of great spiritual value." After a little pause, He added: "I would not have served my Master as the *mandali* are serving me." Baba then conveyed in a sentence or two what He felt about each one of the *mandali* living near Him.

Then the question of calling the one-month meeting was

discussed in detail in Baba's presence. The decisions made were later released to Baba's disciples and devotees through a special circular.

After the meeting was over Baba especially delayed His departure in order to attend the wedding of one of His dearest *mandali*, Eruch. Baba was personally present at the Akbar Press, Ahmednagar, where the wedding took place. After blessing the couple, Baba left Meherabad for Hyderabad to resume His work with the *masts*.

A Mast is God Playing a Child

After His return to Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad, Baba decided to visit southern India. He went to Vijayawada, Warangal and Kazipet, now in Andhra Pradesh. Those who usually accompanied Baba on His *mast* tours were Baidul, Kaka, Gustadji and Eruch. At Kazipeth Baba contacted two *masts* named Hyder Wali and Wali Hyder. The first was a moderate *mast*, while the other was a divinely-intoxicated wayfarer. The latter loved toddy best and was indifferent to food. This does not mean that all who drink toddy in excess are *masts*!

At Warangal the following incident which is worth recording took place. Baba usually sent His men to see the *masts* before He contacted them. In accordance with Baba's instructions, Baidul approached a *mast* named Brahmachari Mast the celibate. The *mast* was in a *jalali* mood and cried out, "Don't put your foot inside my boundary!" Baidul had to yield. Then Baba sent Kaka with a message, "We just want to meet you, that's all." To this the *mast* replied angrily, "Can't you find any other man on whom He can throw the burden? I neither give anything to anyone nor take anything from anyone." So Kaka, too, had to return unsuccessful. But Baba instructed Kaka to visit the *mast*

again and to lecture him on being cooperative. The *mast* listened to Kaka for some time, went into a rage and blurted out in an imperative tone, "Leave this place at once!" Kaka had to retreat.

Baba had told the *mandali* not to be harsh with the *masts*, and He never contacted any *mast* against his will. Most of them were very responsive in sharing the spiritual work, while some vigorously repulsed any overtures. Baba, however, treated all the *masts* as His dear children. Is not a good *mast* God playing a child?

Exciting Excursion to Khandal

In July 1945 the main places visited to contact *masts* were Gulbarga, Yadgiri, Madras and Raichur. At Gulbarga the *mast* contacted was Budhi Man, which literally means "an old woman." He looked restless in his activities but had a mild temper. Because of his lovable nature he was much respected by all, and his fancy for traveling by any class in any train was not objected to by the railway authorities. Another *mast* at Gulbarga, Goher Shah, was contacted in a toddy shop. Baba did not mind visiting any place to meet a good *mast*.

About six miles from Gulbarga lies a village named Khandal. Baba went there to contact Guru Appaswami, a naked *mast* from Bijapur. Lately he had been seen wearing clothes. He was fond of roasted *grams*, which he chewed grain by grain. Appaswami was so happy with Baba that he would not allow Him to leave, even after spending a period of two hours in His company. The return journey from Khandal was made in a *tonga*. The road was muddy and bumpy. It was getting darker and darker and the horse would often stumble on the track, so to avoid any mishap Kaka and Baidul had to walk ahead with lighted torches. This is

enough to indicate the delights of that exciting excursion!

The *Jivanmukta* of Tumkur, Yadgiri

From Gulbarga Baba proceeded to Yadgiri where He contacted the great Ishwar Das Swami, alias Telugu Swami. As Meher Baba has explained in His book *God Speaks*, the *Majzoob-e-Kamil* or Perfect One experiences *nirvikalpa samadhi* and his gnosis is, "I am God." In his God-merged state he is not aware of Creation at all — for him it does not exist. The *Jivanmukta* (*Azad-e-Mutlak*) enjoys *sahaj samadhi*. He has God-consciousness with Creation consciousness, but unlike the *Sadguru*, or Perfect Master, he has no duty to perform towards the Creation. In this sense, Baba once remarked that the *Jivanmukta* is a "real *rajah*" who has all-power with unclouded luminous awareness, but he is not duty-bound. According to Baba, Telugu Swami was a *Jivanmukta*.

Telugu Swami lived at Tumkur, a village a few miles from the railway station at Yadgiri. To reach there the party had to wade across a knee-deep river. On the way Baba had an acute pain in His chest and so He had to walk very slowly. Again, in spite of the cold weather, Baba perspired to such an extent that His clothes were drenched and they had to be dried in the sun when they reached Tumkur. Perhaps this was due to some special work in relation to His impending contact with the *Jivanmukta*. Telugu Swami was a tall, stout person with half-closed, bright eyes. When Baba went near him, the *Jivanmukta* appeared exceptionally radiant and "embraced Baba with an amazing fervor that astounded those who witnessed it."²⁵ Baba, too, felt immensely happy and after a short while, without any exchange

²⁵ William Donkin, *The Wayfarers*, p. 369.

of words, left on foot for Yadgiri. Now there was neither pain in the chest nor perspiration, which had vanished as suddenly as they had appeared.

A Rare Occasion of Spiritual Working

This reminds me of a similar happening at Meherabad during the Meher Ashram days, back in January 1928. One day Abdulla Ruknuddin Ahwazi, a boy from Iran who had recently joined the *ashram*, had a unique experience. He was sitting on his knees, as is the custom of Muslims, while listening to a lecture on some spiritual subject that was approved by Baba. All of a sudden he screamed aloud and all wondered what had happened to him. The *mandali* found that Abdulla had fallen down on the ground unconscious. It was January and the days were very cold and windy. This news was conveyed to Baba, who had confined Himself to the crypt, His final resting place. At that time He was wearing His patched black woolen coat which is now treasured at Meherabad. He took off this coat and was seen sweating profusely for a while. He instructed that Abdulla should be removed to the hospital. The boy was deeply unconscious of the gross world and was experiencing a state of bliss. Abdulla, who was once a fanatic Sunni Muslim and who did not even bow down to Baba for days after his arrival at Meherabad, was seeing Baba and His divine glory.

While vouchsafing an experience of such a high order, perhaps Baba's delicate frame was so exerted that the physical body perspired profusely. Hence I had a thought, maybe right or wrong, that on certain occasions of His spiritual working the flame within His frame burned so brightly that the flesh-form sweated immensely. Baba's meeting with the *Jivanmukta* of Tumkur was a similar rare occasion, though of a different kind than the one described

above. When Baba's spiritual work with Telugu Swami was over He was His lovely radiant self, a picture of good health, on the way back to Yadgiri. Sometimes such external signs were noticed as a result of Baba's intense internal spiritual working.

An Instructive Wayward Wading

In addition, I have one more point to relate about my own personal visit to Tumkur. It happened some years later. Meher Baba often warned His lovers against visiting *masts* and saints. After meeting the God-Man in person such special visits were not only unnecessary but could be confusing. If such contacts happened in the course of natural events, Baba had advised us to pay due respect to the personalities but *never* to get entangled in their affairs. To be frank, in spite of this warning my mind sometimes craved meeting such persons. In this case the mind argued, "Telugu Swami is neither a *mast* nor a saint. So why can't I visit him? It cannot be a breach of Baba's instruction."

As a result of this I visited Yadgiri with one of my elderly friends, Kakasaheb Ghatnekar. It was the rainy season. Someone from Yadgiri suggested a shortcut to Tumkur, the village a few miles away where Telugu Swami lived. The shortcut proved a wayward march and I had to wade through a water-logged paddy. I learned that I should not have interpreted Baba's instruction in the way I did. There and then I decided not to make any more trips of this kind.

As I reached Tumkur I saw the great Jivanmukta lying on his bed, nonchalant about being naked in spite of a group of persons around him. His tall, stately stature, sparkling eyes and shining skin made a great impression upon me, but it was far beyond me to understand anything about his spiritual status. I just bowed down to him, and after a while I left with an understanding that to judge the spiritual state

of a person from external signs was extremely unwise. What business had I to adjudicate the spiritual standing of others?

A Mast Contacted in a Bank

In the latter part of July Baba visited Madras, where He contacted about nineteen *masts*. The first one wore a peculiar coat and long, loose trousers. He never cared to fasten the belt and so the trousers would often drop down. This was due to the state of *majzoobiyat* that he was experiencing. Another *mast* named Ram Swarup Swami was completely naked. He ate whatever was given to him. Baba fed him near Korrukpettai railway station (a suburb of Madras) and Baba sat with him happily for an hour. Maulvi Saheb Mastan, the chargeman of Madras, was contacted in the part known as Triplicane. A tireless "scribbler" named Nadan Swami was contacted in the fruit market. He begged people only for pieces of chalk, which he stored in abundance.

Mohammed Mastan was a tireless "stitcher." He sewed pieces of cloth, tore them up and sewed them together again. Baidul noticed him in the back lane of Anderson Street, and Baba wished to contact him. So Eruch went into an office, which happened to be that of a private bank. He told the banker that his "elder brother" wished to be all alone with Mastan for a short while. He inquired whether he would permit them to use the room for this purpose. The banker agreed without argument and ordered the clerks and the cashier to vacate the room. "Baba contacted Mastan in the bank office, which was strewn with money left lying about by the banker and his employees."²⁶ Quite unbelievable, but all the more true. Baba alone could create such an atmosphere of confidence!

²⁶ *The Wayfarers*, p. 294.

En route to Hyderabad Baba left the train at Raichur. There He washed the feet of a group of poor persons and gave money as *prasad* to each. He returned to Hyderabad by the end of July 1945. With this visit to the southern part of India, Baba's work with the *masts* from His headquarters at Hyderabad neared a close.

Baba Collects Toffees

The villa in Jubilee Hills had a nice swimming pool. It was here that Margaret and Kitty taught diving to the Indian women *mandali*. Each stay of Baba's at different places had some striking incidents, and Hyderabad was not an exception. Baba's everyday life was, in fact, an expression of His divine *lila*. I wish to narrate two such events, obviously simple yet intrinsically profound.

Rano Gayley had been staying with Meher Baba in India since 1937. Once in Hyderabad she had gone out on work with Dr. Donkin. While returning to Jubilee Hills, Dr. Donkin casually gave Rano some sweets (toffees) and also gave some to the men *mandali* living in the other bungalow. Rano incidentally asked for some more toffees for Margaret Craske, who shared a room with her in the villa. With toffees in one hand, Rano was in the room about to give them to Margaret when Baba appeared at the door and casually asked Rano what she held in her hand. Like a guilty schoolgirl, Rano held out her hand to Baba and told Him that Don had given these to her for Margaret. Baba gestured, "Did you not think of giving me the toffees first? Give what you have to me." He put the sweets into His pocket and walked ahead. He also instructed Rano to collect all the toffees that were left with the men *mandali* by Dr. Donkin. A jealous God! In fact, Baba was fond of distributing toffees and chocolates, not collecting them. Then why this collection?

This was the only occasion during the entire stay at

Hyderabad that Baba visited Rano's room, and quite at an unusual time. In those days there were many restrictions to be observed by the *mandali* living with Baba. One of them was that the "indwellers" of the villa were not allowed to accept or eat anything given by "outsiders" without Baba's permission. Why Baba had such injunctions we do not know, but one way or the other He always showed that He knew well if anyone failed to abide by His standing instructions. How can one ever hide anything from His omnipresence — His most natural state? Such simple incidents helped Baba people to deepen their faith in Him. In *lila*, which means a divine sport, there is nothing spectacular, yet it touches the deeper layers of the heart inaccessible to sermons and discourses. And was not Meher Baba the master sportsman?

A Joke Reveals Baba's Omnipresence

The second anecdote was narrated to me by one of my friends. It is one of the significant events in his life with Baba. It is of a private nature, so I refrain from mentioning his name. This young Hindu Maharashtrian met Baba in 1943. From his childhood he had had a passion for God. In his few minutes' interview with Baba he told Him that the world and worldly achievements held no charm for him and that he craved illumination. He also expressed his preparedness to leave his home and join Baba for any work whatsoever. Baba looked pleased and blessed him. Baba told him to come to Ahmednagar if and when he should receive a letter to that effect.

After some months Baba did call him to stay near Him, and later he accompanied the *mandali* to Hyderabad. Short and well built, he was fond of having regular kinds of exercise every day. Some of the *mandali* nicknamed him "Hanuman" after the deity of strength and celibacy worshiped

in the village gymnasiums. He was given the duty of keeping a watch at the gate of the villa in Jubilee Hills.

One day when Baba was sitting with the *mandali* in the villa, all of a sudden He inquired about this young cadet. He was not at the gate, so someone asked Baba about the message to be conveyed to the youth. With a smile that always seemed to fill the heavens, Baba joked, "Nothing special. I wish someone to perform his *khatna* (circumcision). Have we a sharp *teeth* (knife) here?" This made the *mandali* laugh and Baba changed the subject.

When the young man returned he was told that Baba had inquired regarding his whereabouts. When he heard Baba's joke about circumcision, which is one of the essential religious ceremonies for any Muslim, he turned uncommonly solemn and silent. It had a specific meaning for him.

Baba had asked this young lover to observe celibacy. That morning as he was having a walk, on the way to the villa he saw the young, fair daughter of a wealthy Muslim *Nawab* riding on horseback. That particular area formed the locale of the wealthy knights and nobles of Hyderabad State. As he looked at the elegant damsel he had a thought, "Would that I had such a partner in life! What if she be a Muslim and I a Hindu. What harm! I can . . ." When in love, the young mind knows no impossibilities. Nevertheless, he controlled himself and made his way to the villa. It seemed that about this time Baba had made the above joke. It made him feel deep down in his heart the omnipresence of Meher Baba. To live with Baba was to go through the constant marvel of being ever exposed to His divine presence.

Pasarani to Angarishi Pahad, 1945

The Passing Away of Narayan Maharaj

MEHER Baba's work with the *masts* of Hyderabad and southern India for the year 1945 was over in August. By the first week of September the six-month lease of the villa in Jubilee Hills at Hyderabad was to expire so Baba wished to change His headquarters. The area indicated by Him was Wai-Mahabaleshwar (District of Satara). Vishnu was deputized for house hunting. He visited many vacant bungalows, some small, some big — each had its specialties and defects. The main condition laid down by Baba was that the residence had to be in a secluded spot, neither too far from nor too close to the city. After a good search, Baba approved of the "great gate palace" of a *Nawab* at Pasarani. This was about two miles away from Wai, located on the Poona-Mahabaleshwar road. This was Baba's residence for about three months. With the *mandali*, He stayed there from September 8 through December 15, 1945.

During Baba's stay at Pasarani a circular was sent to His dear ones, and Baba gave the following information about the passing away of Narayan Maharaj:

“The timely recent physical death of Narayan Maharaj (the last of my five *Sadgurus* connected with my work) and my going away to some special far-off place in India, away from the men and women *mandali*, during October, November and December 1945 are the leading signs of fulfilling

all that has been promised to the signatories.” This tour to far-off places, however, lasted for fifty-two days.

Before giving any information about the momentous and memorable tour to a secluded virgin area, I feel it worthwhile and rather imperative to give a short account of the life of Sadguru Narayan Maharaj. Meher Baba once stated, "What I am, what I was and what I will be as the Ancient One is always due to the five Perfect Masters of the Age. Sai Baba, Upasni Maharaj, Babajan, Tajuddin Baba and Narayan Maharaj — these are the five Perfect Masters of this Age for me."²⁷

Each cycle consists of eleven ages. The *Avatar's* Advent is in the eleventh age of a cycle (yuga). Narayan Maharaj, whom Baba referred to last in the above, was coincidentally the last to drop the physical body — on September 3, 1945 at Bangalore (Mysore State).²⁸

Narayan Becomes God-Realized

Narayan Maharaj was born in June 1885 to a Brahmin family in the district of Karwar, Mysore State. In his infancy he lost his parents, Bhimrao and Laxmidevi, so he had to live with his maternal uncle at Nargund. At an early age, he left the house on some pretext and his whereabouts remained unknown to his relatives for about seven years. During this period he visited Arvi, District of Poona, where he met his "spiritual mother." Narayan told her that he was her son, and she intuitively felt the truth of these words. She performed his "thread ceremony." During his boyhood, adherence to rigorous spiritual practices and the power of performing a good many miracles were the two

²⁷ Charles Purdom and Malcolm Schloss, "Three Incredible Weeks with Meher Baba," *The Awakener*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1955, p. 75.

²⁸ The name of this site has been changed to Karnatak.

outstanding traits of Narayan's life. Nevertheless these miracles, like the pranks of an innocent child, were never harmful.

Narayan was the devotee of Shri Dattatraya. Once he felt impelled to visit Gangapur, a place about 250 miles away from Poona. It is a great center of pilgrimage for the devotees of Shri Dattatraya. There he coincidentally met a stranger, an old man with an exquisitely radiant face. Inwardly Narayan accepted him as his master, as he would accept sunlight or rain. The master initiated him into Divinity. Later he asked Narayan to bring *bhiksha* — food received at the doors of householders after chanting the name of God. When Narayan returned, to his great surprise he found that the master, whose eyes seemed wide with compassion for the whole human race, had deserted him. He was so impressed with the love of his master that he resolved neither to eat nor drink until he met him again.

For three days Narayan sat under a tree, waiting and waiting, wholeheartedly calling his *guru*. It is said that on the third night Narayan had a distinct vision in which the heavenly stranger expressed his perfect happiness at Narayan's devotion, accepted the *bhiksha*, bade him eat the rest as *guru-prasad*, and blessed him. As he obeyed the command of his master, he felt that the stranger could be none else but Lord Dattatraya himself. This final touch brought a matchless mutation of the finite with the Infinite in Narayan's life. Lord Dattatraya is regarded by the Hindus as the one ever-present *Sadguru* who guides earnest devotees by appearing before them in different forms and bestows even God-realization on the deserving ones. This reminds me of Baba's explanation of such an entity known as *Khwaja Kisser* in Sufi terminology.

Henceforth Narayan's previous life of devotion, where the duality of the Deity and the devotee existed, was over. He became One with God. Baba once explained, "When

the aspirant (*rahrav*) enters the seventh plane he takes duality into Unity. When he comes down again he brings Unity into duality." In Narayan's case it was ordained that he had to lead the life of God, as God, and be one of the five-in-one personalities to play the unique role of placing the "veil" with which the *Avataric* consciousness descends in human form. While clarifying this divine descent, Meher Baba stated the following:

In the *Avataric* periods, the five Masters always put this veil upon the infinite consciousness of the *Avatar*, because if he were to be brought without such a veil into the world of forms, the existing balance between reality and illusion would be profoundly disturbed. However, when the five Masters think that the moment is ripe, they remove this veil which they have placed on the *Avataric* consciousness. From that moment the Avatar consciously starts his role as the *Avatar*.

The incarnation of the *Avatar* does not take place unless it is precipitated by the five Perfect Masters of the cycle.²⁹

A Sadguru Plays a Double Role

When a Perfect Master assumes his office he generally selects a place where he resides most of his life — Sai Baba chose Shirdi; Upasni Maharaj, Sakori; Babajan, Poona; and Tajuddin Baba, Nagpur. Narayan Maharaj decided to settle at Kedgaon, which is about thirty-four miles from Poona. There he built a fine temple to Shri Dattatraya, a deity with three heads in one, representing Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. People began to revere and hail Narayan as Sadguru Narayan Maharaj and he commenced guiding them in their

²⁹ Meher Baba, *Beams from Meher Baba on the Spiritual Panorama*, p.30.

devotion to God. Aspirants began to stay near him and a small colony sprang up in that barren land. It thrived and flourished as years passed by. Cleanliness and quietude were the marked features of this colony, known as Kedgaon-Bet. *Bet* literally means an island — and this place is surrounded by a rivulet.

To me it seems that Narayan Maharaj played a perfect double role of Perfect Master and perfect devotee at one and the same time. Hundreds of religious functions were arranged at Kedgaon and meticulously performed, quite in contrast with the activities around Hazrat Babajan and Tajuddin Baba. People worshipped Narayan as *Maharaj*; Man-God (*Sadguru*). With divine authority he would accept the homage of the devotees, his own selves; another time he would be seen invoking and worshipping the Lord like an ardent devotee. Here was the *Sadguru* demonstrating the roles of Lord and servant through divinity in action. *Sadgurus* are concerned only with awakening the hearts of the people and are entirely unconcerned with the outer forms of the activities that are carried out. To them conventional ceremonies or unconventional programs are just the same; they are ever beyond both.

In one of His discourses Meher Baba has made this point clear:

In the performance of his universal work the Man-God has infinite adaptability. He is not attached to any one method of helping others; he does not follow rules or precedents, but is a law unto himself. He can rise to any occasion and play the role which is necessary under the circumstances without being bound by it ... To show the way to Divinity, the Man-God may often play the role of a devotee ... even after realization, in order that others may know the way. He is not bound to any particular

role ... For him there is nothing worth obtaining, because he has become everything.³⁰

Owing to the atmosphere of ceremonial worship, some regarded Narayan Maharaj as an orthodox person. But it was he who first discerned the spiritual potentiality of Upasni Maharaj and directed him to Sai Baba, who was extremely unorthodox and unconventional in his relationship with his devotees. How true are Meher Baba's words that *Sadgurus* are One in consciousness and differ only in functions.

Life as One Whole

Narayan Maharaj was a slim, delicate figure. Outwardly he seemed to lead a princely life, but there was an air of utter detachment about him in anything and everything he did. There was a routine of programs to be followed at Kedgaon. To begin with, Narayan Maharaj himself would get up as early as 4:00 A.M. He would sit for some hours in an underground room all alone, immersed in his work.

Meher Baba, too, used to get up fairly early. In the early days, at Manzil-e-Meem, He had enjoined His disciples to get up before dawn and meditate regularly. He also explained to the *mandali* the special significance of the early hours. In the course of a talk He once remarked, "It was between 4:00 and 5:00 A.M. that Babajan made me realize the infinite bliss of Self-realization, and it was the same time when Upasni Maharaj brought me down to normal human consciousness of the gross world." In passing I may add here that Meher Baba was born around 5:00 A.M., so for Baba people this particular period shall ever hold an unfading fragrance.

³⁰ Meher Baba, *Discourses*, 3:38, 39

In the morning hours, after taking Shri Dattatraya's *darshan*, Narayan Maharaj would see his devotees. He had quite a large correspondence to which he personally attended. His words of blessing had worked wonders, but to relate them would be a different story altogether. After this he would have his lunch, which consisted of buttermilk and half-ground boiled *jowar*, quite in contrast with the costly clothes he wore. At noon he would retire from all the activities of the *ashram* for an hour or two. In the evenings he would attend the *bhajan* programs. On Thursdays, when the procession of Shri Dattatraya was taken round the temple, Narayan Maharaj would join in singing *bhajans*. He had an exquisitely sweet voice, they said. On some occasions he would join the devotees in indoor games. At times he would explain the spiritual facts apparently based on the games played. He often brought home to his devotees that playing games, shouldering family responsibilities and devoting oneself to the daily *sadhana* were not only interrelated but that they formed part and parcel of life as one indivisible whole. In summer, he followed a regular practice of offering with his own hands a delicious cold drink called *panhe*, prepared from boiled mangoes, to his devotees.

As one reads about the lives of Meher Baba's Masters, one is tempted to ask whether Baba derived His love for games and practice of distributing *sharbat* to His lovers from Narayan Maharaj, as His love for *qavvali* from Hazrat Babajan. Baba had once conveyed, "The five Masters have brought me down. Naturally, therefore, the qualities of all the five are in me."

The All-Consuming Fire of Sacrifice

A number of miracles are attributed to Narayan Maharaj. Some revere him for his demonstration of divine powers,

while a few criticize him for the use of powers. Narayan Maharaj never attached any importance either to miracles or to the comments of the people. Use of *siddhis* binds a *sadhak* to illusion, but through the *Sadguru* it helps the unbinding of *karma* of the persons concerned. In the hands of a *sadhak*, *siddhis* suppress Divinity, but in the hands of Masters they express Divinity. In one of His messages Meher Baba stated: "Miracles are justified ... when they are performed for the purpose of drawing humanity ... towards the final goal of realizing God; otherwise they are definitely an interference with the natural evolutionary process ... Miracles, in the last analysis, are illusory ... There can be no special point in producing some petty imitation illusions in the mighty infinite illusion already created by God."³¹ Like Sai Baba, Narayan Maharaj had drawn many people towards spirituality through the numberless miracles that "happened" about him, for which his divine presence was a passive agent.

Narayan Maharaj always instructed his devotees not to pay any heed to the supernatural events around him; he insisted, through simple talks to them, on the importance of *Nam Smaran* - wholehearted repetition of the name of God. He was not used to giving long sermons or spiritual explanations, but in the words he spoke there was an unearthly flavor which appealed deeply to the hearts of his devotees. He advised people to lead a spiritual life, an honest life based on what little understanding they had, and "the necessary guidance will definitely follow," he assured.

After coming in contact with Meher Baba, out of inquisitiveness I once wrote to Narayan Maharaj and received a

³¹ Meher Baba, *Meher Baba on the Fiery Free Life and Seven Other Messages* (Ahmednagar, India: Adi K. Irani, 1952), p.13.

prompt reply. He asked me to remain happy in the remembrance of the Lord. Perhaps this was his cardinal message to all who came into his contact.

In August 1945 Narayan Maharaj left Kedgaon for Bangalore, where special arrangements were made for the grand performance of most of the religious ceremonies mentioned in Hindu scriptures, all at one and the same time, but at different places on the same premises. It was an all-inclusive *yajna* — a sacrifice. The programs continued for three weeks, during which hundreds of people from all parts of India participated in various ways. Thousands of people were fed and received *dakshina* at the hands of Narayan Maharaj. As soon as this grand function was over in all respects, Narayan Maharaj most peacefully dropped his physical body on September 3, 1945, as the culminating act of offering himself on the fire of sacrifice. Was it an emblematic indication that the life of a *Sadguru* is the all-consuming fire of sacrifice?

Search for a Secluded Spot

There was a brief break in Baba's *mast* tours, and within a few days the *mandali* felt settled at Pasarani. Vishnu was busy with his daily visits to Wai for marketing and other necessities. Dr. Nilu was active in looking after the health of all. In His own way, Baba had kept everyone engaged in one work or the other. For His universal work, He was planning for a tour to far-off places and for finding a secluded spot to use in connection with a special type of work in seclusion. Prior to this tour He wished to visit Meherabad. He left Wai on September 18 and stayed for some days at Meherabad. He made some visits to Pimpalgaon to look at the reconstruction work on the rest house (Meherazad). On the twenty-third He was entertained with a singing

program wherein Adi Sr. and Sidu sang selected *ghazals*. It was good relaxation for Baba. In the last week of September He returned to Wai.

Just after His arrival at Pasarani Baba sent a telegram to Eruch at Poona, instructing him to see Kaka Baria at Bombay. Accordingly, Eruch met Kaka and received a typed copy of instructions. Baba had asked him to visit Darjeeling in West Bengal and find a perfect, virgin spot in the Himalayas for Baba's seclusion work. On the way to Calcutta, Eruch stopped at Raipur, where Jal D. Kerawala was working as the Divisional Commissioner. Jal had just returned from Sinhawa, situated in a mountainous part, and was enthralled by the majestic wilderness and grandeur of that place. It struck Eruch that this particular part, yet untrodden by man, might appeal to Baba for His work. A telegram was sent to Pasarani informing Baba of the dense forest area and the possibility of acquiring an interior virgin hilltop for Baba's work. Baba approved this proposal and sent a reply telegram to that effect to Jal Kerawala. Thus, instead of a place in the Himalayas, a small hilltop in the mountainous region of Madhya Pradesh (Central India) was selected for Baba's work. After making the necessary inquiries Eruch returned to Pasarani, as there was no need for him to proceed to Darjeeling.

"Wax-like" Body of Bansi Baba

On October 2, 1945 Baba left Wai for Raipur in a motor car with Kaka, Baidul, Gustadji and Pendu, and with Eruch driving. Baba thus commenced His tour to far-off places, and He was away from Pasarani for a period of fifty-two days. The first three weeks were devoted to contacting *masts* in Bengal and Orissa. From Raipur Baba went to Calcutta, where He did His work with the poor. Pendu and Eruch

were to select 1,001 lower middle-class people and assemble them at a central place to receive Baba's touch and *prasad*. Baidul was to find the *masts* wandering in different suburbs of Calcutta. Kaka and Gustadji used to accompany Baba and attend to His personal needs.

On October 11, in a *dharmashala* at Kalighat, Calcutta, the 1,001 persons desired by Baba were brought together. Printed tickets had been issued to them in advance, to avoid confusion. The crowd was divided into two groups — men and women. Baba washed the feet of each person and gave him some money as *dakshina*, unseen by anyone. He had His own reason for this. He had ordered the *mandali* to observe a complete fast until this program was over. They were not allowed even to drink water.

In Calcutta Baba heard of an adept pilgrim named Bansi Baba. According to Meher Baba, an adept pilgrim is one who is on the fifth plane, between the fifth and the sixth, or on the sixth plane of consciousness. The village of Bansi is to the north of Calcutta, a bit into the interior region. On October 14 Baba and His party proceeded to Bansi via Midnapore, Vishnupur and Bankura. From Midnapore and Bankura, Baba sent telegrams to Jal Kerawala about the construction work at the "secluded spot." It seemed that all the time Baba was occupied with His impending work in deeper seclusion.

Bansi Baba was living a few miles away from Bansi. This adept pilgrim was believed to be a double centenarian. Age had reduced his body to skin and bones but had not affected his spirit, so the spiritual splendor of the place was overpowering.³² Baba was happy to contact this soul, in a dimly lit room where Bansi Baba was reclining on a throne-like seat. He was wearing a brown turban, a short *dhoti* and

³² See: William Donkin, *The Wayfarers*, p. 204.

costly sandals. With eyes that shone like the morning light and a fair, unwrinkled skin, he looked like a polished statue. Baba later gestured that the body of the pilgrim resembled a model of wax. Because of the peace that permeated the room Baba remarked that the trouble to reach that out-of-the-way place, heavy going through flooded rice fields, was amply justified.

Validity of Illusion Challenged!

The party now made an about-turn to Orissa on the east coast of India. Baba visited Balasore, Bhadrakh, Cuttack and Bilaspur to contact *masts*. Baba got wet to the skin by unexpected showers of rain while contacting a *mast* at Bhadrakh, though in fact His love had drenched the soul of the *mast* with His radiating presence. At Cuttack, a key city of Orissa, nine *mast* contacts were made — one worth mentioning was a sixth plane *jalali mast* named Mohammed Baba. He wore dirty clothes and would not allow anyone to remove his treasure-bundles of filthy rags piled on the shelves. He had been sitting in a tea shop for over two decades. It was difficult to contact him in his happy mood, but Baba's tender love made this possible on the third attempt.

In contrast to this, Pagla Baba, a *mast* of a high type, raised his innocent eyes and welcomed Baba at first sight. After paying his respects to Baba he offered Him sweetmeats, too. But do outward responses of the *masts* necessarily indicate their relationship with Baba on the inner planes of consciousness? Whether they respond well or not, it was just the game of Divinity, played through the *Avataric* presence of Meher Baba. Again, one may ask how it is that the *masts* trespass against the laws of nature known to us? Perhaps to relieve the rigidity of the law of Illusion, Providence itself expresses, through the lives of the *masts*, these vagaries which challenge the validity of Illusion

and reflect the transcendental beauty of eternal creativity.

The Arrangements on Angarishi Pahad

The most significant of Baba's secluded activities was to commence soon on a hilltop a hundred miles from Raipur, near a village named Ratwa in Madhya Pradesh (Central India). This area was formerly known as Tapowan, for in ancient days four illustrious sages named Shringi, Mnchakund, Kumang and Angiras had undergone severe penance in this area in their search for God. The hill connected with Angiras, known as Angarishi Pahad, was selected for Baba's work. The necessary orders to the Forest Range Officer at Sitamandi were issued by the District Forest Officer, with instructions to make the essential repairs to small bridges and mountain roads. This helped Jal Kerawala to attend to the needs of the party expected to stay on the hilltop. In that dense forest infested with wild animals, a special hut was built on the top of this *pahad* for Baba. A small natural cave from which the enchanting beauty of nature could be seen to the heart's content was by the side of the hut. There was also another cave with a different approach. When seated in it one felt cut off entirely from the rest of the world.

In addition to the main hut, two more huts were constructed. One was for the *mandali* living with Baba and the other for the *mast* who was to be brought from Ahmednagar. To ward off wild animals the campfires were kept burning night and day, but the real protection from them, and also from snakes, was Baba's divine name. Baba wished to contact 101 *masts* before going to this secluded spot. The desired number of *masts* was not contacted, so to complete the work, for the "identical cosmic results," Baba decided to bring Ali Shah, a *mast* from Ahmednagar. He wished to

work with him before He began His seclusion in earnest. By the time Baba reached Raipur, all the arrangements had been implemented in accordance with His instructions sent through telegrams.

A Severe Seclusion Period

On October 31, 1945, Baba and His companions — Kaka, Baidul, Pendu, Adi Sr., Gustadji, Eruch, Jal Kerawala and Ali Shah, the fifth plane *mast* — reached the top of Angarishi Pahad. Baba was happy to find His hut so ingeniously built on the top of a rock by the side of the two caves. He worked here daily for some hours with Ali Shah until November 4 and then sent him back to Ahmednagar with Eruch.

On November 5 the seclusion commenced in earnest. Baba was in the hut all alone from 7:00 A.M. until late in the evening, immersed in His spiritual activity, which He pronounced to be very severe and serious. Adi Sr., Gustadji and Kaka kept watch outside the hut, in turns. The next day, the sixth, Jal Kerawala managed to bring fifty-one poor persons to Baba on this *pahad*. Baba washed their feet and gave them some money as *prasad*, as was His usual procedure. On the seventh, after having a cup of tea in the morning, Baba closed Himself alone in the hut for the whole day. The eighth was perhaps the severest "working day." Returning to normal body-consciousness was extremely strenuous. Adi wrote, "Were it not for the perfect mastery of the Spirit, His (Baba's) body would have fallen into bits."

On one of these days, as described in *The Wayfarers*:

Baba emerged, after having sat for many hours in complete seclusion, his face more drawn and weary than Adi ever remembered having seen it, and said that a gigantic disaster would overwhelm the world that would wipe out

three-quarters of mankind. Adi was deeply stirred, not only by the anguish on Baba's face, but also because he spontaneously dictated these words immediately on emerging from his seclusion, as if the work done during that seclusion had been specifically related to the world ..."³³

Here I wish to bring to the notice of my readers that Baba later explained that some of His remarks were made in "His own language" and not ours. So the literal meaning that we are tempted to derive from such remarks might be misleading. More about this when we come to that particular circular regarding clarification of "His own language."

November 12 was the final day of seclusion. Two nights previously it had started raining. In the words of Adi: "This (rain) added to the discomforts of camp life. The six campfires were put out and Baidul, who kept a watch at night, suffered from severe cold. Beds turned wet, snakes popped out, and the roaring of the tigers that was silenced only during rainy nights was adversely compensated by the swarms of monkeys the next morning." What a sojourn with the Saviour! Baba, however, was pleased with the work done in seclusion. On the evening of the thirteenth the party began the return journey to Raipur. On the way the cars got stuck and had to be pulled out by buffaloes. At midnight one of the cars stalled in the middle of the forest road. What a plight!

By the evening of November 14 the party reached Raipur. After such an arduous journey Baba did not agree to resting at Raipur. Practically, He knew no "rest" until His body was laid in its final resting place at Meherabad. Jal Kerawala, who had arranged everything so well on the top of the hill in the dense forest, could have provided anything and everything to make Baba's stay comfortable at Raipur.

³³ *The Wayfarers*, p. 81.

But Baba seemed to be in some incredible hurry, at least outwardly, and decided to leave for Pasarani (Wai) that same night.

Baba's Return to Pasarani

On the way to Nagpur by train Baba stopped at Jhansi, where He preferred to pass the night on the railway platform. The irregularities of the *mast* tour thus continued. At Mathura Baba contacted Oriababa, a good *mast*. Then He extended His trip to Bina and Sagar. At Sagar Baba and the *mandali* were reminded of a remarkable *mast* whom Baba had nicknamed "Magar-Mast" — a crocodile-skinned *mast*. He had been contacted five years before when Baba had a *mast ashram* at Jabalpur. Because of utter negligence of hygienic rules, the skin of that *mast* became so scaly that it resembled that of a crocodile. Out of His love for *masts*, Baba brought him to Jabalpur. Ample application of oil for some days made his body shine brightly. Mother knows that the baby is sure to soil his body in his playful pranks, yet how lovingly she washes the baby clean! Baba, the Divine Mother, took utmost care of the *masts*, His dear ones, whenever they were brought to Him. He knew that it was, in a way, only a temporary relief to the body, but love responds perfectly to every need and Baba was Divine Love personified.

Reaching Lalitpur, the party left the luggage in the cloak-room and visited Tikamgarh by bus. An old *mast* on the other side of a century old was spotted. This contact made Baba very happy. On the return journey the bus failed, the party got stranded, and they reached Lalitpur by midnight. Baba was in His best of moods, for whenever He met a real God-intoxicated soul He felt highly delighted — but those accompanying Him looked fatigued and tired. From Lalitpur Baba went directly to Wai, which He reached by

November 24, 1945. Thus the year's journey by trains and buses, over 9,000 miles to contact about 200 *mandals*, was finished. The *mandali* living at Pasarani felt exceedingly happy to have Baba in their midst after such a long time.

One-Month Meeting Postponed *Sine Die*

Baba did not wish to continue His stay at Pasarani. In the first week of December He was at Meherabad, and after a short meeting with the *mandali* a circular was issued on December 4, 1945. Through it Baba conveyed the following information to all His devotees in general, and to the signatories in particular:

- 1) During my stay at Hyderabad I told the *mandali* that I shall die spiritually in November 1945. (During this period Baba was in deep seclusion.)
- 2) At Angarishi Pahad I suffered so much that it almost threatened my physical existence.
- 3) I have decided to culminate the momentum of my working at my original place, Meherabad.
- 4) From 1 January 1946 I am going to retire for an indefinite period in the crypt under the dome on the (Meherabad) Hill for spiritual relaxation. Hence the oft-postponed one-month meeting of the signatories is hereby finally postponed *sine die*.
- 5) I may, however, call this meeting at any time. The signatories will be informed about it ten days in advance. They should be ready to join the rally, unreservedly, at any cost or under any circumstances.

Owing to the above decisions, all the men and women *mandali* left Pasarani by December 15, 1945 and arrived at Meherabad for a stay with Baba, but with no definite plans for the year 1946. To live with Meher Baba one had to try

one's best to live in the present. In life with Baba one had to be ready for any change, at any moment, for in the life of the God-Man every moment has a marvelous beginning and ending in Divinity, free and complete.

8

A Few Months of Spiritual Relaxation, 1946

A Mystery Year!

"1946, a mystery year!" remarked one of the women *mandali* as I asked her for some information about this year, and this comment had a sound reason. From January 1, 1946, Baba was to retire from His external activities for an indefinite period. It was a sort of spiritual relaxation. With Baba the time factor was always unpredictable. Perhaps it was difficult for the Timeless One to fit His activities into time, so the duration of this relaxation could be a day or a decade — none knew! There were no whispers about *mast* tours or reconsideration of the meeting of the signatories. What next? Such an atmosphere of uncertainty prevailed, more or less, throughout the year, even among most of those who stayed with Baba.

During the latter part of this year, Baba moved to a place of seclusion near Dehra Dun. All correspondence received at Ahmednagar from the East and West was sent to B. D. (Papa) Jessawala (Eruch's father), who redirected it to Baba's address. This address was not disclosed to his disciples and devotees, so knowing about Baba's activities was out of the question. The form of God has great significance indeed, but through the periods of seclusion Baba stressed the greater significance of His formless presence. Since I

was a new acquaintance to Baba people, the only news I received was that Baba was immensely busy and *darshan* was not possible. I tried to make good use of this time by reading and rereading the elucidations and expositions given by Meher Baba on various topics of a spiritual nature. In addition to this, just the words "God" or "Truth" scattered here and there were enough to tempt me to read a number of books.

"What Is Philosophy?"

Reading is a risky game of absorbing interest — sometimes clarifying, sometimes confusing. Mere reading, with nose against the pages, leads one astray. Perhaps it is like moving vigorously through a dense fog from anywhere to nowhere. But if the drive is from an urgency of conscience, it is a different matter. Then it becomes a sport and one is not ashamed to admit one's failures. I failed to be an average, much less a good, sportsman. The arena of philosophy is very slippery. Certain words have such a dubious meaning that understanding becomes extremely difficult, while through the charm of some set phrases philosophy entails a peril to take away truth! In this sense one has to guard against the conclusions at which one has arrived, for the ever-creative nature of Reality can never be touched through words. That is why when one learned professor asked Baba, "What is philosophy?" there was a smile on Baba's face for a moment, and with a twinkle of gay mischief in His eyes, He answered, "A simple thing made difficult!" How true! Truth is strangely obvious and yet mysteriously imperceptible. Yet I must confess that reading books on philosophy and the lives of Masters, mostly in my mother tongue, Marathi, had helped me a great deal. Nevertheless, I found myself in a state of conflict, not so much

about Baba but about His words. Words meant more to me than His silence!

A Reply from Adi Sr.

Determined to change my way of life, I made many experiments with my "self" but the results were far from satisfactory. I became a bit cynical, though Baba never wanted anyone to strangle his love of life. I withdrew from the world of entertainment, which did not appeal to me very much, and would not join my friends and colleagues on picnics or visits to the movies. I asked them to leave me alone, and they did. Of course some poked fun at my misty and mysterious views, but that did not disturb me in the least. With all my lack of tact, I felt that mine was not a wrong track. The more I tried to experiment with life, the more aware I became of my weaknesses. I felt confused. It was difficult to clarify my position to myself. I wished to break away from many of my selfish responses but couldn't.

I was not well acquainted with Adi Sr., Meher Baba's secretary; however, I took the liberty of writing a long letter to him portraying my state of mind. Part of his reply is given below:

... Problems are always multiplied and magnified by the mind when a sincere soul tries to transcend the *mayavic* weaknesses. Facing these problems is not a weakness. Inferiority complex, lack of concentration, waves of egoistic failings, lack of confidence in spiritual attainment and in spiritual poise, in following a particular line of action in life, is all the play of *Maya*; and it is bound to come up in its intensity when one tries to overcome it. ...

According to Baba's teachings, the more a person is

infested with thoughts and promptings of weaknesses, the better an opportunity he gets to spend his past *sanskaras*. Impressions could be spent, without future accumulation in their trend, only if the thoughts of weaknesses are not deliberately indulged in or put into action. So far as the body is kept pure from bad motives put into action, man is saved

Leave the rest to Baba — His grace, His benign benediction and His blessings. You do not know how it works. You do not know how it transforms you from inside out. . . .

With blessings of Baba ever on you.

I am very grateful to Adi Sr. for sending me such timely replies and also for helping me in many other ways to come into closer contact with Meher Baba.

"Tell That Fool It Is My Will"

Confusion has to cease voluntarily. This requires grace, or call it what you may. Mere words on a verbal level do not quiet or slow down the mind. One in confusion gets steeped in it unless he gives up all effort of his own and lets God flood his being. The following anecdote, which Adi Sr. told me later, appealed to me very much.

One of Baba's closer ones was very earnest in trying to get over his weaknesses. In spite of his sincere efforts he failed to act according to his expectations. It was like the forgetful professor who, while drowning in a swimming pool, failed to remember that he could swim! When pulled out by his pupils standing nearby, he lectured on the importance of swimming! Unlike the professor, this Baba lover was really keen to live what he believed to be true, but he became very disappointed and exasperated. In the end he requested Adi Sr. to ask Baba the reason for such repeated failings.

Adi related the question to Baba. Because of His intimate relationship with this person, Baba remarked, "Tell that fool it is my will." This answer is as baffling as it is potent with spiritual significance. Does it not point out the limits of one's efforts and the necessity for deeper, unmotivated surrender to the Master? Getting the opposite answer expected from the Master may shock one at first, but as it is quietly absorbed, without self-resistance, there is an awakening which enlightens the way of the seeker.

Baba's Words Cheer and Heal

During this year I continued writing letters to Baba directly, but without any mention of this phase of confusion. My short letters would end by conveying my *pranams* at His holy feet and a request for *darshan* if He was pleased enough to grant it. Baba was in semiseclusion and the letters were read to Him. He was gracious enough to direct the replies, which conveyed that He knew well the state of my mind. The following two extracts from letters received through Adi Sr. brought messages to me from Baba that filled my heart with courage and comforted me to a greater extent. Adi wrote:

"Baba is happy and says that He appreciates your love and longing. He is with you, and you will feel it more and more in your thoughts and acts. He sends you His profound love and blessings."

In the other letter he wrote:

"Baba says He has His Nazar always on you, so you should not worry about anything. Just remember Him always at heart and do your daily duties, leaving the rest to Him who is all-knowing and all-pervading. He sends His love blessings to you."

Baba's messages or replies, conveyed through His gestures, sent forth miraculous vibrations, I think. Received

through letters, they acted as a balm that healed deep wounds of the mind and heart. The process was sometimes gradual, sometimes surprisingly quick, but it never missed the mark, for love never fails. Every time I received a letter from Baba it filled me with joy, and sometimes I felt like dancing around like a madman.

"Could You Not Find a Hindu Master?"

I would like to conclude my narration of this phase of discomposure by relating an amusing incident which I still remember well. In my attempt to get out of this web of indiscrimination, I thought it might help me to talk to the elderly and religious-minded persons of my locale. I also wished to tell them something about Baba. It was the first time that I spoke openly to a group about Baba's divinity. After my first contact with Baba, the books by and about Him were carried at the bottom of my bag, for I feared that someone might argue with me or criticize me for following a Parsi! The group I had invited corroborated my assumption, but thank God this did not affect me adversely. On the other hand, the meeting helped me realize that such persons are generally dogmatic and keep all mental doors closed against any genuine inquiry. They are, of their own making, the prisoners of their thoughts and experiences.

The meeting had its climax at the end when I expressed a desire to perform Baba's *arti*. One of my friends, a lawyer, got very annoyed at this suggestion. He got up from his seat and a look of distress crossed his face as he said, "I can't stay here when the *arti* of Meher Baba, a non-Hindu, is being sung." He also added, "Could you not find any better person from the scores of Hindu saints as your master?" He would not have objected to my consulting Dr. K., a famous Parsi doctor in Poona, for troubles of the heart,

but he had serious objection to my following Meher Baba, the Enlightened One, born to a Parsi family at Poona, for the awakening of the heart!

The man was my guest, so I did not argue but pleaded with him to sit outside the room for a few minutes till the *arti* was over. This was accepted, and later I persuaded him to partake of the refreshments. Good Heavens! He did not object on either legal or spiritual grounds! While leaving, however, he advised me to reconsider my choice of masters. He did not know that my going to Meher Baba was "choiceless." Mind builds high walls of prejudices that imprison man, but heart does not recognize such artificial barriers created by human folly, and Baba's presence had touched my heart.

Contact with the Master

Every phase in life brings in its wake typical experiences of pain and pleasure that help us to understand it deeply and thoroughly, and there are innumerable phases. Baba in His infinite patience is not in a hurry to speed up the journey, though one finds His helping hand lovingly stretched out here and there. Now and then His grace opens a window to the beyond, and that divine breeze is always heartening. As one comes in contact with the Master, life is quickened. Sometimes one feels inspired and secure, at others dejected and nervous.

As far as I remember, Kabir, a Perfect Master of the fifteenth century, wrote that one's coming in contact with the God-Man can be likened to the application of soap to clothes dipped in water. Wholehearted remembrance of the God-Man is like washing the clothes. Naturally the dirt comes out, and one wonders if the clothes could have been so dirty! Kabir has also warned aspirants not to be afraid of such discomforting and disturbing phases in life. Meher

Baba, also, has remarked, "As you come in my contact (personal or impersonal) the good and bad buried deep within you come out in flashes." It was only with the inner help of Baba that I could face in myself desires which I had not known I possessed. Whenever the flashes of "good" and "bad" made their appearance, it was not smooth sailing. It was delving deep below the surface as life raced overhead, around and within me. But is there any depth where Baba's grace cannot reach and help?

Mast Work at Meherabad

According to a circular issued to His devotees, Meher Baba's spiritual relaxation commenced on January 1, 1946, but after just four days He wished to begin His work with the *masts*, though moderately. On January 5 Ali Shah, who was ever available at Ahmednagar and who had previously shared Baba's manifold spiritual burdens, was brought to Meherabad. Baba worked with him from nine in the morning until midday for seven days.

Ali Shah was a perfect type of *jamali mast*. His simplicity resembled that of a child. Sitting quietly in a room, he loved to smoke and smoke, day in and day out. He would smoke cigarettes down to the very end and so his fingers had big scars from burns, but he did not mind that. He had never refused to come to Baba for work. The only drawback he had, remarked Baba, was that Ali Shah had a sleepy and sluggish temperament. In other respects he was a jewel among the *masts*.

After Ali Shah was sent back to Ahmednagar, three *masts* were brought to Meherabad from Bhaindar, Kurla and Mahim, suburbs of Bombay. Baba kept each of them at Meherabad for four days. Bhaindar is on the seacoast, and the *mast* from there lived near the salt pans. Immersed in his *masti*, once he did not even leave his hut when it was

inundated with flood waters. Upon seeing this, people built a new hut on higher ground and the *mast* agreed to live there. The *mast* brought from Kurla had a habit of moving his fingers unceasingly and shaking his head continuously, a peculiar restlessness. The one from Mahim was lame and exceptionally fat. "All these three *masts* were moderate," remarked Baba, and hence the work done was not a strain on Him. He worked with each in His own way and they were sent back to their respective towns with care and comfort. Perhaps Baba was not in a mood to contact *jalali masts* of a high order during this period of relaxation, but this was only a lull before a stormy program of *mast* contacts in the latter part of the year.

Meher Baba's Birthday Message

By the beginning of February the repairs to the rest house near Pimpalgaon were nearly completed. To avail themselves of that quiet atmosphere Baba and the *mandali* left Meherabad for a stay at Meherazad. Baba stayed in the rest house from February 3 through April 15, 1946. Visitors were not permitted and the phase of spiritual relaxation continued. In the early years Baba's birthday was celebrated according to the Zoroastrian calendar, and this year it was on February 15. Baba lovers from Bombay, Poona and Ahmednagar celebrated the day with joy and also with the expectation of having Baba's *darshan* soon. Baba did not permit anyone from the outstations to see Him at Meherazad; however, He released a special message for this occasion:

Your love, your devotion, your steadfastness amidst storms of oppositions, self-created or real, is commendable. Your allegiance to the cause of Truth, for which alone I stand, is unique.

Every year that passes brings fulfillment to the tremendous task of the spiritual uplift of the world, which I work up dynamically through humanity in their intense suffering, joy and vigor, because I am the One in all. Amongst all my previous birthdays, the present one represents the end of a year full of great upheavals outstretching from rigorous spiritual activity performed during my fast, travels, hardships, seclusions and contact of the poor suffering people and spiritually advanced *masts*.

Suffering comes and goes, joy comes and goes, pleasure comes and goes — they will demand your utmost patience, courage, poise, and above all, your love and obedience to me. Whoever stands for me stands for the Truth, the eternal light that is forever illumining the hearts of you all.

Through darkness to light, through suffering to happiness, through chaos to harmony will be the end of the journey. All sufferings have an end. Spiritual happiness has no end. It is perennial.

“Giving over your goodness, your strength and your weakness in entire submission to me, you will share my treasure of happiness. My love and blessings to you all.”

Work with the Poor in the Relaxation Period

It being winter, the climate at Meherazad was cool and bracing. The fields nearby were not under much cultivation then. Only a man here or a woman there would be seen passing by, so all around the atmosphere was quiet and peaceful. Meherazad is encircled by low hills and so it has a glorious sunrise and a beautiful sunset. Baba would take a stroll, mostly in the mornings, along the slopes of Tembi Hill. He was fond of watching for pebbles of varied colors and shapes. As they walked with Baba, the women mandali used to collect these pebbles, and Baba looked as delighted as an innocent child and showed great interest in some of

them. Sometimes Baba's pockets would even bulge with this "treasure." Within a few weeks there was a heap of shining little stones lying near the rest house. Later this treasured collection was placed in the foundation of Baba's house — the most adequate use, indeed.

In the month of March there was no special work with *masts*, but Baba contacted about 4,000 poor people on March 16 and 17 at Jamgaon, Kolegaon and Mirajgaon, all in the district of Ahmednagar. Baba took His seat in a specially prepared room, secluded from the gathering. As the poor people entered this room in a queue, Baba personally contacted each individual with love, compassion flooding His luminous eyes. He gave each person sixteen pounds of groundnuts wrapped up in two yards of white cloth. In addition, they were blessed with the look of sympathy that He gave to each. It filled their hearts with cheer. Some were lame and it was not easy for them to walk the distance, and they did not know that this pilgrimage was worth all the pains. There were some blind ones, too. They who were denied the sight of the blue sky stretching to the horizon, the moon, the stars and the lovely rose, felt unawares the tender touch of the Rose of humanity, the *Avatar*, as they were led to Baba. As they came out, the joy on their blank faces was clearly visible. About the lame, the lepers, the blind and the beggars living in dire poverty, Baba once remarked, "India is inextricably mingled with the noblest and the saddest to be seen on earth."

Aside from the distribution of groundnuts to the poor, there were practically no external activities at Meherazad. Sometimes it appeared to some of the resident *mandali* that Baba would continue this relaxation period indefinitely, for days or even for months. But one of the *mandali*, Papa Jessawala, was sent by Baba to Dehra Dun in northern India, to find a suitable place for His stay and from which He could contact the *masts* in Sind (now in Pakistan), Punjab

and Uttar Pradesh — areas spiritually rich, with a number of *masts* of a high order. Most of the *mandali* had no idea of this proposed change of residence nor were they concerned with it. As one lived with Baba, uncalled-for inquisitiveness dwindled by itself and one felt happy just to live and obey Baba. What better state could one aspire to than this, when one had the unique opportunity of living with the God-Man?

By the end of March, Baba received the news of the passing away of a dear soul, the mother of Elizabeth Patterson. Baba cabled His dear Elizabeth, "Your mother has come to the divine Universal Mother." It is a fact that all the relatives of Baba people indirectly establish a contact with Baba and are benefited spiritually. So compassionate is the divine Universal Mother, Baba!

Niranjanpur, the Place of Seclusion, 1946

A Signal for a New Phase

MARCH 1946 passed off quietly at Meherazad. In the first week of April, Baba received a letter from Jal D. Kerawala, Deputy Commissioner at Raipur. He wrote that the hut on the Angarishi Pahad, where Baba did His intense spiritual work the previous winter, had been completely burned in a forest fire. Baba smiled meaningfully as this was read to Him, as if the last stage of the work in hand was entirely over and it was a signal for a new phase of spiritual activity. By this time Baba had also received news from Papa Jessawala about the bungalow leased for His stay in seclusion in the north of India, over a thousand miles from Ahmednagar.

Meher Baba decided to leave Meherazad for intensified external activities in connection with His *mast* work in Punjab, Sind and Uttar Pradesh. The six months from mid-April to mid-October 1946 was a period of constant travel by rail, bus or any other vehicle at hand, to contact souls who were divinely mad in their search for eternal values. *Masts* are God-intoxicated souls, and during this period Baba seemed to be mast-intoxicated! He did not rest well or eat well, but He moved on and on ceaselessly in different directions to find these wayfarers, to serve them and to feed them spiritually.

While explaining the importance of *mast* work Meher Baba once stated:

“When a *mast* gets walled-in by his own self-sufficiency and desirelessness, only the Master can draw him out of the isolation of his choice, by awakening within him an expansive love that breaks through all limitations, and prepares him for shouldering the important responsibility of rendering true service to others who are in need of spiritual help.

“Because of his being stationed on the inner planes, which are free from the limitations and handicaps of the gross world, a *mast* can be, and often is, in contact with a far greater number of souls than is possible for an ordinary person ... A *mast* can therefore be a more effective agent for spiritual work than the most able persons of the gross world ...

“... In a thousand ways, the Master makes an irresistible appeal to the inmost being of *masts*, and awakens in them the undying spring of creative action.”³⁴

In the light of these statements one can in a way sense the magnanimity of Baba's earnestness in contacting scores of *masts* in Sind, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, described hereunder.

The Passing Away of Countess Tolstoy

Just before Baba's departure for the place of seclusion, He had news from the United States about the passing away of Countess Nadine Tolstoy. She was one of Baba's dearest disciples. After a protracted illness, she died in Roosevelt Hospital in New York on April 14, 1946. Baba cabled to Princess Norina Matchabelli: "Tell Elizabeth [Patterson]

³⁴ William Donkin, *The Wayfarers*, pp. 10-11.

Nadine now lives in me, with me and for me more than ever." Adele Wolkin, a nurse, had been caring for Nadine in the hospital. In a letter to beloved Baba, Adele wrote: "Tomorrow (April 17) Nadine will be cremated and her ashes sent to you in India, her true home. Finally her torture has been dissolved in you ... Many times it gave me great joy to serve her. And, as Elizabeth said, Nadine rendered greater service to me by bringing me closer to you." So radiating was Nadine's love for beloved Baba, even in her serious illness.

As for me, since hearing about Baba in 1943 and reading about Him, I felt deeply impressed by the articles of Countess Tolstoy. They expressed her intense devotion to God in human form, the *Avatar*, which I had not expected of a person brought up in western culture. Would that I had met her! As time has rolled on I have realized that such distinctions as "East" and "West" do not exist between Baba people in expressing their love for the God-Man. Articles by Nadine Tolstoy such as "The Happiness of Suffering," "Meher Baba and My Spiritual Path," and "Who Is That Man?" were published in the *Meher Baba Journal*. As one reads these commentaries on the divine life of the God-Man, they reveal the depth of her understanding and her unshakable faith in Meher Baba as the *Avatar*. At the end of the articles, explaining why she followed Meher Baba, Nadine very aptly quoted the following short message from Meher Baba that served as a beacon in her life with Him:

"Serve Him who serves the whole Universe; obey Him who commands the whole creation; love Him who is love Itself. Follow Him in every walk of Life."³⁵

Fortunate was Nadine to love, serve and follow Meher Baba "more than ever," even after dropping the body.

³⁵ Countess Nadine Tolstoy, "Meher Baba and My Spiritual Path," *Meher Baba Journal*, October 1941, p. 685

The Dream Come True

Countess Nadine Tolstoy met Baba during His first visit to America in 1931. A Russian, she attended the University of Petrograd, studying psychology, logic and philosophy. Afterwards she continued her studies at Lausanne University in Switzerland and also studied piano, later entering the Moscow Conservatory. She had mystical inclinations. She had not met Count Leo Tolstoy, the world-famous Russian writer, and she was astonished that she saw him in dreams three times though he was at that time dead. In the third dream a man resembling Leo appeared to her. He was in a big boat that was approaching the shore as if to take her along. She later met Count Ilya, Leo's eldest son, at a friend's house, and the significance of the dream became evident when she realized he was the man in the boat. They left Russia in 1917 to live permanently in the United States, where they were married. Count Ilya, also, met Meher Baba in New York. About this meeting he remarked to Nadine, "It is the first time in my life that I meet a man who *has* Divine Love."³⁶ Before his death he experienced a greater spiritual transformation. In her article appearing in the *Meher Baba Journal* in July 1941, Nadine expressed how sorry she felt that Count Leo Tolstoy had not had the unique opportunity of being helped by a living Perfect Master.

Meher Baba Revealed as Krishna

Because of deep insight and subtle sensitivity, Countess Tolstoy had some unique experiences of Meher Baba's divinity during her first two contacts with Him in the West.

³⁶ Countess Nadine Tolstoy, "Those Who Follow the Master," *Meher Baba Journal*, May 1940, p. 435.

In her series of articles, "Meher Baba and My Spiritual Path," she gave a graphic account of her first meeting with Baba:

A letter came from a friend of mine, Mr. Schloss, who had an occult bookshop in New York, asking me to come and meet a Perfect Master who had just come for the first time to America [November 1931] and was in Harmon in New York ... The Perfect Master! Immediately I was there at the appointed time ... My intuition was unquestioning and sure ... I dragged my broken wings though my feet had swiftly lifted me up the steps into his upper room. I remember chanting, "Om." I entered the room.

Deep in the rear, stretched on the couch was that mysterious, long expected Being, the Divine Enigma — the True One!

Simple, light, thin, small, sparkling and youthful, so unpretentious but strangely mysterious and clear. So different from certain scenic appearances of ascetics . . .

He reminded me of something — of somebody I knew far off, but could not catch the vision. I felt as if he were challenging my inner memory, and his whole posture and atmosphere was asking, "Can't you remember? Don't you remember me in the past?"

One of the first things he spelled out on the board (as he was silent for years): "It is long since you are waiting for me. I will help you" — beamed at last the saving promise! . . .

Immediate recognition of my soul created a feeling of absolute confidence. Comforted, I already knew that he is the True One . . . He was like the shining sun, that we do not question. He simply and naturally entered into my life and into my hidden being. Exalted feeling of happiness, uplift and security lifted "my wings." I was so happy and so unhappy at the same time. For, as I was then, it was not given me to enter the closest sanctuary

of his being. As I left him, suddenly it became clear that he was Krishna. All the time the image of Krishna was before me . . .³⁷

"I Saw" Christ Before Me

About Meher Baba's second visit to America, in May 1932, Countess Nadine wrote:

Meher Baba returned to New York. This time it was the greatest feast of my heart ... Unforgettable will ever remain the divine experience of seeing and contacting him again. I came in the early morning, hoping to appear at any time of his calling. I had to wait long hours; but they seemed to me a granted blessing for I could sit in stillness seeking deeper communion with him, attuning my whole being for the sacred moment ... It is very difficult to speak of one's most sacred moments of life. And it is still more difficult to express the deep impression of Baba, as I saw and felt him this time.

I saw Christ before me, as he was seated on the couch in the expression of all his figure and his divinely lit up face, in his eyes, beaming love, that no words can describe as they radiate the flame of his mystical power! ... The climax of my life, for now I was conscious what his guidance meant to me. His Christ-like luminous and healing power brought me to his feet; on my knees, I sobbed in tears of repentance, joy and gratitude ... As I was all in tears, blood rushed from my nose, which he instantaneously stopped. He was more a Christ and a God-Man than a human, so etheric and luminous as he patted me, comforting and giving peace ...

As the Master gave me the sign to leave, I immediately stood up and in profound respect to his divinity and in order to prolong the precious moments so short and so

³⁷ Countess Nadine Tolstoy, "Meher Baba and My Spiritual Path," *Meher Baba Journal*, July 1941, pp. 507-509.

eternal, I began to leave backwards, looking in his eyes which were flaming love and light, reaching the deepest recesses of my being ... He smiled, revealing himself as Christ. As I was going out, all of a sudden I stopped and with a great force of inner recognition, spontaneously, unaware to my own intent, I declared as loud as I could: "Jesus Christ!" with all the solemnity of those great words. Something within me recognized in this dear shape of Meher Baba the incarnation of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. So, the unbelievable became a revealed fact . . .³⁸

Aren't these experiences exceptionally sublime? Formerly, as I used to read or hear about such revelations, my immediate reaction would be to crave them. But later, with Baba's grace, I realized that nothing could be more wrong than this. Those who deserve and are prepared receive such glimpses of divine grace unasked. Just to desire them vehemently is a sickness of mind and an insult to God. Life is a mysterious sport of the "Lawless Infinite." The attempt to narrow it down to suit one's own thoughts and theories would be folly. Yet life is too strange to accommodate just any theory or philosophy. Baffling indeed is the mighty beauty of this game! It is all-inclusive, and more, too. Perhaps such an attitude could be a healthy opening for appreciating the sublimity of such exalted revelations, and Countess Nadine Tolstoy was a noble soul with profound understanding who gracefully participated in the *lila* of Meher Baba.

Meher Baba Reached Niranjapur

On April 16, 1946 Baba left Ahmednagar to go to the place of seclusion in Uttar Pradesh. This particular place was not known to Baba people. Only after Baba dropped the body

³⁸ *Meher Baba Journal*, July 1941, pp. 510-511

did I learn that it was Niranjapur, a small village near Dehra Dun, where a small bungalow with a fairly good garden was hired for Baba's stay. The women *mandali* who lived in Niranjapur with Baba were Mehera, Mani, Meheru, Naja, Kitty, Rano and a few others. It was about this time that Margaret Craske and Irene Billo were permitted by Baba to leave India for America and Switzerland, respectively. They had had the good fortune to live with Baba for over seven years. The men *mandali* who accompanied Baba were Vishnu, Dr. Nilu, Kaka, Baidul, Jal (Baba's brother) and Eruch. The first two looked after the requirements and comforts of the women *mandali* at Niranjapur. The latter four accompanied Baba on His *mast* tours. Soon Jal was replaced by Adi Sr. By the end of September 1946, Pendu, also, was called by Baba for the concluding part of His strenuous *mast* work.

Baba wished to remain absolutely undisturbed during this period of six months. Those moving with Him were spellbound by His love for *masts* and the extraordinary responses given by the *masts* in recognition of Baba's divinity. As Baba instructed, in the beginning of May 1946 Adi Sr. issued the following note to Baba people in India:

"As Baba is traveling for His work and is not likely to be stationed at one place, do not correspond with Him till further notice."

In spite of this outward restriction, calling on Him inwardly for help was not disallowed. Perhaps such restrictions were occasions to invoke Baba's guidance, ever so close within one's heart. In May, Adi Sr. joined Baba at Niranjapur. In spite of Adi's note, whatever mail from India that was received at Ahmednagar, and also the letters and cables which arrived from the West, was sent to Papa Jessawala at Poona. He redirected all correspondence in a single bundle to Baba's residence at Niranjapur. Thus, every precaution was taken to keep Baba's activities a

guarded secret from all His disciples and devotees in the East and in the West.

Baba Grinds Food Grain

On April 20, 1946, Baba commenced his momentous work with the *masts*. Baidul, Eruch, Kaka and Jal accompanied Him. By the end of April He had visited Hardwar, Rishikesh and Panipat. The first two places abound with *sadhus* and seekers, and Baba visited them several times. At Panipat He contacted ten *masts*. There was a naked *mast* near the shrine of Bu Ali Shah Qalandar. He was blind and Baba was observing silence — a peculiar situation! Yet to ensure the privacy of His work Baba had a curtain raised at the time of contact. Perhaps with the light of His presence Baba had lighted the entire being of that blind *mast*.

Physical blindness is not a drawback in spiritual advancement. An old *mast* named Harihar Baba lived in Benares. In January 1939 during Baba's stay there He sent Kaka and Princess Norina to deliver a special message to this *mast*. In reply, he very affectionately uttered the word "Meher" three times. He was completely blind and yet he was the head of the *masts* at Benares — in Baba's words, the chargeman.

At Panipat two *masts* aged ten and twenty were of the *madar-zad* type, meaning born as *masts*. The party then proceeded to Ludhiana in Punjab. Here an adept pilgrim had an *ashram*, and after *arti* he was contacted all alone in his room by Baba. To meet Dandi Swami, Baba and the *mandali* had to remove *chappals*, shoes, belts, wallets — anything of leather that was about their persons.

At Amritsar, which is famous for the Golden Temple of Sikhs, Baba met a *mast* from the Khoja community. In the eyes of this *mast*, gold was just a metal. To him "the reed was as the oak." It made no difference to him whether he

was lying in a gutter or whether his body was anointed with the *attar* (perfume) called *hina*. Near Phillaur, at Bhatia, lived an old initiate pilgrim named Amir Ali Shah. He always sat outside the tomb which he had built for his own interment. Pointing to the tomb, he would often repeat the words that meant: "Do good; be good in your short sojourn in this transitory world. Death is inevitable. It is the end of all things."

At Sangatpura, a village near Phagwara, Baba contacted Nekishah Baba and gave him food-grain (wheat) and sugar. The *mast* asked Baba to grind it on the grinding wheel and then mix it with water. Baba often complied with the whims of the *masts*, so on that day, with the help of Baidul, Baba did this job quite lovingly. Perhaps He had to repeat this gesture of service after a period of about twenty-two years, for He did grind the food-grain in the early years of His stay at Meherabad. Baba added sugar to the paste and fed Nekishah. In the end the *mast* offered Baba a part of it, which He accepted. In the other village nearby, Khorrampura, a very high *mast* named Khudai Baba offered Meher Baba a chair and a cup of tea. In short, Baba's *mast* work commenced with a warm, welcome response from the *masts*.

The Youngest *Mastani* and a God-mad *Hakeem*

Baba reached Lahore on May 7. This was the only place that could compete with Hyderabad, Andhra, in the number of its *masts*. All of them, as many as fifty, were contacted by Baba, mainly between the years 1943 through 1946. This time about twelve were contacted. Some *masts* with a lust for wandering in their veins were rag collectors, too. Baba Hyat Mast was contacted under a tree in a public garden — it had been his seat for over two decades. Jaffar Shah had a passion for flying kites, so at every contact Baba

would present him with some fine ones. This made the *mast* quite happy, but Baba was even happier, for then His work could be accomplished satisfactorily.

Baba contacted a young *mastani*, perhaps the youngest God-intoxicated woman met during Baba's *mast* tours in India. Baba remarked that in spite of her youth and the locality, where she lived all alone, she was pure at heart and was a good *mastani*, too. Moti Baba, another *mast*, had many bundles beside him containing almost any nonsense to be found on earth — that was his treasure. He was an adept pilgrim and was much revered by the people of the town, especially the prostitutes.

About two miles from Sialkot, Baba contacted Kaka Mastan Shah, who had the habit of piling up *chappatis* in addition to collecting bundles of rags and bits of paper. Sometimes he was *majzooob*-like and sometimes *salik*-like. In his *majzooobiyat*, which is a state of overpowering passive awareness of God's presence, Kaka Mastan Shah did not pay any heed to the regular activities and cleanliness of the body.

Another *mast* named Kaka Saiyid Mastan was spotted in a village called Saidanwali. Many people visited him to pay homage, so a *dharmashala* was built to house the visitors. After visiting Jammu and Wazirabad, Baba reached Saharanpur to contact a few *masts*. Among them was Behra Sufi, a God-mad one who used to prescribe Unani medicines as a *hakeem* (doctor). And people believed in his diagnoses! An old *mast* with very long hair lived in a small tent pitched right in the street, but people did not object to this. If given food, he ate a little and threw away the rest. Baba remarked that he was a *mast* of the sixth plane.

From Saharanpur, via Lucknow, Kanpur, Deoband and Chhachhrauli, the party returned to Niranjapur. After His return to this place of seclusion Baba did not go out on extensive tours for some weeks. He visited only nearby places for His *mast* work.

He Danced with Joy Around Baba

Baba paid a special visit to Batala to contact Lahori Baba on May 29, 1946. This *mast* was almost naked and lived in a sweeper colony (a slum). He once had been a first-class officer, a commissioner, but because of certain revelations vouchsafed to him, he later preferred to be an humble servant of God. In the beginning he evaded Baba's contact but "was eventually run to earth at an octroi. There he sat with Baba for a few minutes, and then burst out crying and walked away."³⁹ On Baba's second visit to Batala the chase went on for about ten miles, but at the end Baba did contact him in a field and felt immensely pleased about it. This was indeed a wonderful pursuit by the Master to overtake a *mast*!

Among the *masts* contacted in the bungalow at Niranjapur there was an old man not known in that area. The incident was remarkable, for while two of the *mandali* were returning to the bungalow in a *tonga*, this old man followed them in an appealing way. This made the *mandali* accommodate him in the same *tonga*, and as they neared the gate of the bungalow where Baba resided the *mast* remarked, " '*Gulistan men agaye*,...' meaning ... 'We have come to Paradise.' "⁴⁰ The place where the God-Man stays is no less than the real Paradise.

As Baba came out of the room, the old man approached Him and began to gaze lovingly at His face. They exchanged smiling glances. Looking at Baba, the *mast* felt completely happy and his happiness seemed genuine and unforced. With tears of joy welling up in his eyes, he turned to those standing nearby and said aloud, "Look at this man's face and forehead, they shine as if the sun were there; can't you recognize who he is?"⁴¹

³⁹ *The Wayfarers*, p.207.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.354.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.354

Baba took him by the hand to the gardener's hut and remained with him for about fifteen minutes, and the *mandali* heard the *mast* give some hearty, jolly laughs. As they came out and made their way to the bungalow, the old man picked up a bell that was used for calling persons from the other wing. He began to ring it rhythmically and danced in a circle around Baba to express his deep reverence and joy. After spending some time inside the bungalow, Baba again sat with the old man for half an hour. The *mast* was persuaded, but with difficulty, to accept ten rupees as Baba's *prasad* when he departed. Strangely enough, he asked one of Baba's men to jot down His address for him, but he never turned up again. Baba did not inquire of him a second time, and the *mandali* had not asked him his name. Perhaps that first and last contact with the God-Man was sufficient for the *mast* to be insured guidance on the spiritual path. With Baba, this was quite possible. Whatever it was, Baba looked very pleased and remarked that the old *mast* was a rare mixture of *jamali* and *mahabubi* types and was on the fifth plane.

Chacha Was Laughing All the Time

Baba did not go out of Dehra Dun during June except when He visited the lovely valley of Kulu to reach Baragran. There He contacted a yogi. At the very first sight, this advanced pilgrim gave Baba an incredible, affectionate look and the two sat quietly for a contact of half an hour in a hut on the bank of the Beas River.

In July, Baba visited Ajmer, accompanied by Kaka and Eruch. This spiritually important place is situated by the Arawali Hills in Rajasthan and is famous for the shrine of Khwaja Moeinuddin Chishti. Chacha, the seventh plane *Majzooob-e-Kamil*, was residing there in a tiny hovel of a room. *Chacha* means "uncle" in Urdu, but it seems that he derived this name from the constant repetition of "*cha, cha*" ("tea,

tea"), for he was extremely fond of tea. His real name was Nur Ali Shah Pathan. He was first contacted in 1939, and people said that Chacha had his first bath in about thirty years at Baba's hands. It is not known whether he was bathed again later, so perhaps this was his first and last bath after attaining the state of a Perfect *Majzoo*b. Being drowned in Infinite Bliss, he was oblivious of hygienic needs.

Knowing full well Chacha's fondness for tea, Baba, the Perfect Master and Servant, approached this great *Majzoo*b "with a cup and saucer in one hand, and a kettle full of hot tea in the other."⁴² But this time Chacha played a trick! He refused to have tea and instead insisted on having mutton and bread. It was given to him. Baba sat alone with Chacha for an hour and a half while Eruch and Kaka, who were standing outside the room, heard Chacha "laughing all the time." Baba alone knew what transpired in this meeting, but as He came out of the room He looked exceptionally radiant.

With this visit to Ajmer, the first part of Baba's work with the *masts* commencing from the place of seclusion was over. But this was only a prelude to the strenuous tours that lay ahead, beginning the last week of July 1946.

⁴² *The Wayfarers*, p. 89.

Mast Tours of North India, 1946*Mast* Contact, a Mutual Help

BESIDES being a "mystery year," 1946 was through and through a "*mast* year." From January to December 1946, Baba seemed absorbed in *mast* work alone. There were no *darshan* or *sahavas* programs, not even a meeting with the *mandali*. His only instruction to those near Him was to collect information about God-intoxicated souls so this year's account could not be anything but a chain of *mast* contacts, whether in a remote village or a crowded town.

Outwardly the procedure of contacting a *mast* was mostly the same, but inwardly it had various significant results. Some years earlier, in January 1939, Baba had visited Benares. During His stay in the city, He gave a coin to one of the pilgrims and later remarked that through the medium of that contact He had raised the consciousness of that pilgrim from the first to the second plane. This does not mean that every time Baba gave money as *prasad* the person was raised to a plane higher. It was quite possible that by giving a coin He just gave a slight push, or might even have snatched away some powers of the *mast* which were impediments in the spiritual Path. This much was sure, that whenever Baba contacted the *masts* it meant help, a mutual help. Once Baba remarked that the *masts* helped Him in His spiritual work as He helped them in their spiritual unfoldment.

This particular phase of *mast* work is not very well known in the spiritual history of either the East or the West. Only the *Avatar*, the God-Man, undertakes this work — to awaken the heart of humanity and to quicken spiritual vibrations. The following remarks of Meher Baba will help us understand His relationships with *masts* and saints: "Nothing makes me so happy as the sight of these real heroes — the *masts*. They are very useful media for me to work through on higher planes." During Baba's visit to Spain in 1933, standing in the Cathedral of St. Teresa in the city of Avila, Baba spelled on His board: "The saints are like the nerves of my body; they work for me and I guide their lives." The journeys that commenced from Niranjapur in July and August 1946 and spread over the states of Sind (now in Pakistan), Punjab and Uttar Pradesh were occasions for Baba to render such help on a large scale.

Talli Sain of Verka

In the last week of July 1946 Baba stayed for some days on the fourth floor of a small hotel in Hardwar. Many times the *mandali* had to go up and down, scraping their sides against the walls on the narrow staircase. In heavy rains, Baba visited Rishikesh and contacted many holy men. Two of the *mandali* were sent to gather information about the *Mela*, the fair for which *sadhus* gather on the banks of the Ganges. Baba wished to contact Nanga Baba, who was in the *Paramhansa* state, but his residence or whereabouts could not be found. Because of dangerous breaches on the road Baba had to abandon the plan of visiting Uttar Kashi, situated at a higher elevation in the Himalayas. After contacting some *sadhus* at Hardwar, He decided to visit Punjab again.

At Amritsar Baba stayed for about a week in the travelers' bungalow. From this place a period of continual travels

began that had to its credit some most exhausting excursions. At Verka, a village near Amritsar, Baba contacted a *wali* of the fifth plane named Talli Sain. It was quite a sight to see him walking on the village roads. He would put a slipper on one foot and keep the other bare. In one hand he would hold a tree branch and in the other the Holy Koran, covered with rags. Irrespective of this eccentric behavior he was much respected by all the villagers. What a joke — this soul, who regarded the riches of the world as trash, was pestered by gamblers for some hints in laying their bets! He would advise them to lead a chaste life. If they continued to tease him for "figures and futures," he would threaten them with a stick and push them into a *tonga* bound for Amritsar.

At the first contact, Baba offered Talli Sain some plums but the *wali* returned them. This was perhaps a sign that the contact was not to Baba's satisfaction. Baba contacted him four times in all. The night prior to the last contact it rained heavily, and as Baba arrived He found the *wali* happily sitting in a small pool. Soon the attendant came and cleared away the water. Baba found Talli Sain in a good mood and remained alone with him for half an hour. As they emerged from the hut, both looked very pleased and the *wali* led Baba to His seat in a *tonga*. Baba remarked that His work with Talli Sain was accomplished to His satisfaction.

"Don't You Know Who He Is?"

Another day Baba visited Bulandshahar. He had been given information about an advanced pilgrim living there who was a married man and worked in the Survey Office. Eruch found him in his office wearing a torn shirt and an old pair of slacks. He did not see visitors in the office, but by coaxing he was persuaded to treat Baba's visit as an exception.

Baba visited Saharanpur again, a place rich in the number of its *masts*. He went to Simla, where the party stayed for three days. Here Baba met a good Muslim *mast* who was formerly of a high *jalali* type. This time there was a marked change in his characteristics, for now he demonstrated a *jamali* temperament. Baba remarked that such a change in the traits of a *mast* was exceptional.

Baba also contacted Aghori Baba at Simla, an impressive figure with fiery eyes who lived on the veranda of a house owned by a Sikh. He had piled it up with innumerable bundles of dirty, frayed pieces of cloth. The Sikh, out of respect for Aghori Baba, did not dare remove that mass of rags, and he even set up a ladder to cross this "charged" veranda which led to one of the rooms of his house. After the contact was made, the *mast* looked intently at Baba, who was standing in His usual pose with feet planted rather wide apart. Baba, too, with eyes set on the *mast*, commenced a close and tender observation of his movements and quaint expressions. The *mast* smiled trustfully, for Divinity in human form was standing in front of him. Aghori Baba remarked to the *mandali* "Don't you know who He is? One day you will know who He really is!"

A Mystical Code-Language of Gestures

After returning to Ambala, Baba and His party started on August 8 for Nahan, via Sidhaura. The only regular conveyance was one bus a day, for Nahan is a small state. The journey was through a picturesque valley, but the bus was overcrowded and the mountainous road was strewn with a number of bridgeless rivulets, so on that uncomfortable journey there was very little time to appreciate the beauty of nature. However, that was not expected on a *mast* tour with Baba. Near Nahan an adept pilgrim was sitting naked in a cemetery situated in an awkward place down in a valley.

It was raining as Baba climbed down the muddy footpath, but He was not ready to wait until the rain stopped. He looked cheerful and at ease only when the contact with the *mast* was over, so eager was Baba to meet His dear children, the *masts*.

By afternoon the party had returned to Sidhaura. From this town two remarkable contacts were made. Dinasha was a good *mast*, and to find him, Baba and the *mandali* had to search in different directions. He was spotted at last, but the contact was not to Baba's satisfaction. The party returned to their residence by 11:00 P.M., but before resting for the night Baba gave a peculiar order. It was nearly midnight, and He instructed two of the *mandali* to visit Dinasha at 4:00 A.M. Baba specifically asked them to observe whether the *mast* would turn his head to the right or to the left, or whether he gazed fixedly at them. Being overtired, the two could not get up before five o'clock in spite of their good intentions. Baba pardoned them and canceled their visit to Dinasha. He did not explain the special meaning contained in the gesture of that *mast*, but it clearly appeared that every gesture had a definite significance in relation to Baba's work. Perhaps it was a mystical code language that expressed wider communications.

Lord Krishna Served as a Guard

Another advanced pilgrim whose name was Krishna was contacted near Sidhaura. He was an ex-employee of the North-Western Railway and had voluntarily retired from his service as a guard. This early retirement was for a specific reason. He was a great lover of Lord Krishna, and once while enraptured in his meditations he failed to report for duty. The next day he approached his superior to apologize for his laxity. He was told that his regular signature of attendance was on the duty register and the railway servants

saw him working on the train, as per the roster. The guard was overwhelmed with joy and gratitude to hear that none else but Lord Krishna had served as a guard for him. He fought hard to keep back his tears, but it was futile. The more he tried to check them, the more they rolled down. A little later he controlled his sobs and tears, and with a choked voice he said, "Lord Krishna looked after my worldly duties while I was busy praying to Him."

At the same time, he intuitively felt that Lord Krishna revealed to him that if one was wholehearted in one's devotion, the compassionate Lord ever looked after his household and worldly necessities. The natural outcome of this event was that he left his employment then and there, and he also left his house to spend the rest of his life in devotion to Krishna. It was for this singular devotion that Baba liked him very much. After contacting this advanced soul, Baba returned to the rest house at Sidhaura. With only a few hours' rest the party left by the early morning train for Hardwar, which they reached by late evening.

Prediction of Jal Tapaswi

Baba stayed at Rishikesh for six days from August 12 to 17, 1946. He had long walks with Baidul, Eruch and Adi Sr. in the hot sun and the rains to meet *masts*. Baba visited most of the *ashrams* and huts within a radius of twenty miles, because He contacted *sadhus* and holy men in addition to *masts*. Every day the holy Ganges had to be crossed. Once a trained elephant offered a timely crossing, otherwise the party would have been forced to stay overnight on the other bank because of the rising waters.

The remarkable contact at Rishikesh was Jal Tapaswi. Although he was over seventy, his hair was still black. A *sadhu* generally wears an ochre-colored robe, but Jal

Tapaswi had put on a green *kafni*. Before contacting this adept pilgrim, Baba sent Kaka and Eruch to see him and they told him that they had come from Bombay. He inquired how things were in that city, and they told him of the riots and disturbances then prevailing there. He remarked that it was all inevitable, the result of the working of the *Avatar*, and that when He will manifest He will not be accepted in the beginning — later, many will accept Him. Jal Tapaswi also added that three-fourths of the world population would be wiped out. *Jal Tapaswi* literally means "one who practices penance in water." For several years this adept pilgrim sat on the roof of a temple that was standing in a river. When the temple crumbled he continued to sit on the ruins, which were submerged in water. Baba was very happy to meet Jal Tapaswi, and this adept pilgrim felt drenched in His splendor and got thoroughly renewed in the depths of his being.

Meher Baba, the Master of the Universe

Jal Tapaswi's severe penance and his remarks about the *Avatar* remind me of another adept pilgrim of Rishikesh named Keshavanandji. His body looked like a statue in bronze. Standing naked except for a loincloth and holding a bamboo staff in his hand, he used to gaze meditatively at the sun most of the day. In April 1934 Baba had asked one of His disciples named Pleader to visit holy places and meet the saints of India. At Rishikesh, Pleader had Keshavanandji's attendant show the *mast* a picture of Baba. Seeing it, he raised his luminous eyes, which were aflame with the longing for union with the Infinite, and gestured for Pleader to come close. In a soft voice he told Pleader that generally he did not allow anyone to come near him, but because of the divinity of Meher Baba, who is the Master of the Universe and who bears the burden of Creation,

he had to call Pleader near. In Keshavanandji's lifetime, Baba did not contact him personally. From such events it seems that some adept pilgrims knew Meher Baba's divinity without His physical contact.

There was a seeker who had lived on leaves and roots for years in his younger days and had a very emaciated body. After settling in Rishikesh, he locked himself in a room by the riverside and ate only one *chapati* and a little *dal* each day. Eruch met him after much difficulty and told him that his (Eruch's) "Father," Baba, wanted to see him. At the time of Baba's contact, the seeker turned a quizzical gaze upon Him and harped on one question: "How many sons have you besides Eruch?" This spoiled the quietness and depth of the spiritual contact.

Heavily Garmented Rehmatulla and Naked Bhagwan Nath

Baba intended to visit Uttar Kashi, but it was reported that the track was in very bad condition so this visit had to be canceled. (It was delayed until April 1948.) The group's "roving *mast* trip, without adequate rest and food, proved to be telling upon the health of all," so Baba consented to hire a house between Hardwar and Jwalapur for a temporary stay. The house was disinfected with D.D.T. spray, yet the bugs survived to tease the *mandali* and deny them even minimum comfort. It was Kaka's duty to cook rice and *dal* once a day for the *mandali*. Baba was observing a fast and would sit all alone in seclusion for three hours every day.

On August 23, Eruch and Baidul brought a heavily garmented *mast* named Rehmatulla to Baba. His clothes were hanging loosely over his frame and they looked torn and dirty, for he rarely cared to change them. Yet he looked perpetually happy and his unfading smile was the smile of

a soul lost in vision of God. He was on the sixth plane of consciousness, and about the state of such a soul Baba once remarked, "He is merged not in God but in 'seeing' God." Knowingly or unknowingly the *mast* touched Baba's feet, but Baba did not like this gesture of reverence. It seems that such an act adversely affected His spiritual work, so the *mast* was soon sent back to Saharanpur.

The next *mast*, called Bhagwan Nath Kone Baba, was brought to the bungalow from Pinjaur. He was an *avadhoot*, an almost naked *mast*. He was of a very restless disposition and it was difficult to ascertain the expressions in his eyes. It was the occasion of a fair and the trains were overcrowded, but Eruch and Baidul accommodated themselves with the *mast* in a first-class compartment in spite of the "rumblings" and comments of the passengers. It was an ordeal to get him to Baba's residence, but Baba was glad to contact Bhagwan and later instructed the *mandali* to keep a watch over the *mast* at night, in turns. In the morning when everyone was busy with his respective duties, the *mast* left the bungalow. He was found again nine miles from Hardwar, and Baba told Adi Sr. to take him to Pinjaur. Adi was well versed in correspondence but not in handling *masts*, and Bhagwan was so unmanageable that Adi could not escort him to his destination. Baidul, the *sardar* of *masts*, was deputed by Baba, and upon returning he remarked that it was one of his most trying journeys. Some *masts* were more full of pranks than mischievous children.

Baba Contacts the Poor

On August 27 Baba reached Saharanpur. The next day He visited a public library with a big hall, which was filled with men and women of different castes and creeds. In a private room near the hall Meher Baba contacted fifteen hundred middle-class and poor people, but His identity was not

disclosed to them. At the time of contact He gave each person some money as *prasad*. Dr. William Donkin wrote about this occasion:

"At such times, Baba does some spiritual work of inner and universal significance, and it is for this reason that private contact with each one is essential. It is, of course, this inner work that is important, for giving of charity to a few hundred souls amongst the millions of India's poor is not of much material significance."⁴³

In the last week of August Baba sent Adi Sr. to Bangalore and Ahmednagar for some work. He also instructed Baidul to visit Hyderabad (Sind), Sukkur, Lyallpur and a few other places to collect information about *masts*.

For a period of two weeks commencing from August 29, Baba maintained a fortnight of strict seclusion at Niranjanpur. The next two weeks, ending with September 24, was a period of semi-seclusion. A few *masts* were brought for Baba's contact at His residence. Pendu and Adi Sr. arrived at Niranjanpur by the second week of September, and both of them were sent by Baba to collect more information about the *masts* in Punjab and to wait at Lahore for Baba's arrival, as He planned to visit Sind.

Lal Sain, the Fattest Mast of India

On September 29, Baba, Eruch and Baidul joined those who were at Lahore. After a sleepless night and an exhausting train journey by third class the party reached Hyderabad (Sind). During the two days they spent in the city Baba met eight *masts* of high order. Near the main gate of the Old Fort a *mast* was seen sitting on a bed, all the time muttering something to himself. It was learned that he had been occupying the same bed for the last fifteen years and

⁴³ William Donkin, *The Wayfarers*, p. 350.

had practically not left his seat. The other *mast*, Zinda Wali, lived inside the Fort and had not come out of it for the past thirty years. He was fond of keeping all kinds of pet animals. *Masts* are in fact strangers to this world and so their ways appear strange to us. Mama Mast had a fancy for stitching pieces of cloth all the time. The fancy of Pir Shah Saiyed was to dye his hair with *hina*.

Baba Gokulananda, an advanced pilgrim, was a centenarian and the oldest *mast* contacted at Hyderabad. Then there was Lal Sain Mast, the fattest of all the *masts* in India. One of the *mandali* remarked that his tummy could contain a Baby Austin car. Dr. Donkin wrote that Lal Sain was so obese that he slept with his head dropped upon his chest, for he could not lie down, nor did he ever move from his place, for his size prohibited walking. He was the last *mast* Baba met at Hyderabad, and the contacts made in this great city pleased Baba. He was seen in a delightfully good mood, and from His cheerful face it appeared that the strain of contacting *masts* seemed to Him more play than work. He perceived the real worth of the souls beneath those ragged and dirty exteriors.

A Game of Patience and of "Spiritual Chess"

On October 1 Baba visited Sehwan, where He contacted Nadir Ali Shah, an adept pilgrim, a very good *mast* of the fifth plane. Nadir Ali once stood on one foot in a ditch for two years, a remarkable feat of penance indeed.

His comrade in the same city, Nur Ali Shah Pathan, made the *mandali* perform penance, in a different way. From noon until night the Baba party patiently waited near the *mast*. It was very hot and there was a scarcity of good drinking water. Nur Ali was a famous figure and was usually surrounded by visitors, and Baba wanted to meet him alone. Baba was not in a mood to leave and come again, so perhaps that was

a pretext for silent communication with that *mast* on a higher plane. And cannot silence be a meaningful conversation? Frequently the quick glances that passed between the mast and Baba had in them a deep, intimate understanding. By ten that night Baba was able to personally contact Nur Ali all alone. He left Sehwan by the midnight train for Sukkur, where they arrived the next morning.

After a hasty breakfast the party started out to find the *masts* residing in Sukkur. Adi Sr. wrote about life with Baba on the *mast* tours:

"Baba was observed to have known the process of physical contact (with a *mast*) effective for His universal work. That is why He contacted *masts* by going through the most uncomfortable journeys to towns, cities and villages, utterly heedless of sleep, food, rest and baths. No consideration of any of these was made if one good *mast* was to be contacted."

Kazi Saheb of Sukkur was surely a good *mast*. He had come from Afghanistan. He had a typical laugh and he seemed to enjoy singing programs, which was not a common trait in *masts*. Qazi Saheb tried to play a game with Baba. But in this game of "spiritual chess" Baba, by sending the *mandali* to different places, eventually "checkmated" him in a college building. There he agreed to have Baba's contact, which made both of them happy, and thus ended this game of spiritual chess.

The same day Baba crossed the Indus in a ferryboat to reach Satbela Island, where He met the fair-faced Swami Hari Ram.

Baba Is "*Shahenshah*," the Emperor

Baba's visit to Sukkar (Pakistan) brings to my mind an incident that happened in June 1924 concerning a *mastani* named Mai Saheb. She was not directly contacted by Baba,

but like Keshavanandji of Rishikesh, she knew Meher Baba's spiritual authority as the *Avatar*. The spiritual link with her was indirectly revitalized through one of the *mandali*, Ramjoo. He has described this episode very well in one of his articles:

During the first two years of my "field-service" with Baba ... I happened to be in Sukkur, before it became famous for one of the largest barrage schemes in the world. It is one of the hottest cities in Sind, wherein Hazrat Bachal Shah, a Muslim Master, lived his earthly life and died ... When I went there to pay my respects, the cool and shady spot was tempting enough, in the sweltering heat, to make me lie down for a while under one of the trees in the garden . . . But before I could doze off I had to open wide my eyes for an old woman moving about the grounds who appeared, from a distance, to be an exact double of Hazrat Babajan of Poona. She was about the same height, the same build, with an identical crown of snow-white curly hair ... This ... similarity ... made me mark her very minutely from where I was lying down. All the time she was rapidly going here and there as if extremely busy ... It was not long before I could see that, unlike Hazrat Babajan, she had vacant dreamy eyes, darker complexion, constant restlessness and above all a habit of loudly muttering to herself. .

By the time ... the sun had gone down considerably, I preferred to take a stroll by the riverside ... At the end of a bend in the path, I came across the moving and muttering old lady. To my utter amazement I found I was looking down into a pair of most intelligent eyes, fixed in steadfast gaze into my own without a flicker ... She spoke in the challenging tone . . . of a sentry in clear Urdu: "*Tera Pir cown hai?*" ("Who is thy spiritual guide?") The only spontaneous word I could utter point blank was, "Meher Baba." The moment she heard this, she

said, "*Badshah*" ("King"), and then after a momentary pause added, "*Shahenshah*" ("Emperor"). With these two words, like a flash of lightning she shrank back in her vacant dreamy eyes and resumed moving about muttering incoherently. I followed her deliberately and managed to cross her path twice hoping to hear something more, but she ignored me completely. For the time being the immediate surroundings appeared to have passed out of existence for her.⁴⁴

Meher Baba's spiritual work with and through the God-intoxicated souls is indeed a mystery!

Masts Are Immune to Diseases

Rohri is a place near Sukkur and Baba contacted five *masts* there. Bhai Chowar Mast lived in the filthiest of surroundings. Such environment did not and does not affect the health of the *masts* because they are immune to all diseases. While clarifying this point of dirty and filthy surroundings Baba explained:

A God-mad has a clean, pure mind. A God-intoxicated has a mind, but no thoughts . . . A God-merged has no mind — he is fully merged in God . . .

When the mind does not pay attention to the body, the body, naturally, automatically survives and looks after itself. Now because of a kind of universal working on the gross plane, a sort of automatic attraction takes place, which causes a man who is indifferent to cleanliness to be attracted to place himself in dirty surroundings. He does not purposely choose an unclean place, but tends to gravitate towards it ... For those who are God-mad, God-intoxicated, or God-merged, this dirtiness does not

⁴⁴ Abdul Kareem Abdulla, "How I Met Them and What They Told Me," *Meher Baba Journal*, January 1939, pp. 73-74.

affect their health, because the mind is not attached to the body.⁴⁵

When Baba visited Bhai Chowar, for a moment His eyes were filled with overwhelming concern for the dirty surroundings. Baba spent some time with that filthiest *mast* in that "Augean Stable," while the *mast* looked at Him with appreciative glances. People did not dare stand near this *mast*. They preferred to invite Sant Tukaram, a *mast* in a *majzoob*-like state, to their houses and felt blessed. Alla Bakhsh Mast had a childlike disposition; Sant Ram was born a *mast*. Baba met them all with love in His heart. The last contact in Rohri worth mentioning was Master Nemraji. He was a *majzoob*-like *mast* between the sixth and seventh planes. Sometimes his eyes looked visionary. He was so hot-tempered people feared him, yet because of his saintly personality they revered him, too. His face resembled that of Chacha of Ajmer, the *Majzoob-e-Kamil*. These visits to Sukkur and Rohri completed Baba's work in Sind and the party journeyed towards Punjab State to contact more *masts*.

The life of the God-Man is the creative flame that has set afire many God-intoxicated souls, in various ways, to be the Light unto themselves.

⁴⁵ *The Wayfarers*, pp. 33-34.

Those Who Bear Witness, 1946

Mast Work, a Vital Phase

THE phase of Meher Baba's work with *masts*, the God-intoxicated souls, needs patient and serious study to appreciate its depth and dimensions. From the late thirties this phase had been an inseparable part of His work. Meher Baba served the *masts* in many ways. He bathed them, clothed them, fed them, and He did not mind pressing their feet, an humble gesture by the Highest of the High. He sat alone with them to give His spiritual touch. He even cleaned their latrines. This was the visible and external part of His work, but Meher Baba was mainly concerned with their states of consciousness. He gave them a lift, a push, through personal contact.

Once someone asked Meher Baba, "Why, as you are a Master and they are so advanced or saints, need you trouble to contact them in person?" The Master explained: "They already know me, but it is for my work that it is needed."⁴⁶

The phase of *mast* work was in fact an important and vital aspect of Meher Baba's inner spiritual work. It ushered new perspectives into the consciousness of the *masts* and

⁴⁶ Elizabeth C. Patterson, "Spiritual Journey with a Modern *Guru* ," *Meher Baba Journal*, June 1939, p.52

quicken enlightenment and spiritual transformation. Baba did this by activating latent tender resources in their hearts. At every Advent of the God-Man this is the pressing need of the time. It seemed that Baba wanted to marshal these "soldiers of God" for the gradual awakening of humanity from slumber. And every time He comes this has been accomplished after a period of physical and mental suffering, both man-made and natural.

Once Baba remarked: "I love these Lovers of God [*masts*]; ... they know nothing of the world; they are so blissfully indifferent even to their bodily needs ... all for their Love of God, when the whole world craves and cries for *Maya* (lust, greed, etc.) and rushes to each other's throats for its gratification."⁴⁷ So mad are the *masts* in their love for God! About such God-intoxicated souls one saintly person in India stated, "If all greatness is lunacy, these are the apostles of Divine lunacy." By recharging the vital incentives in consciousness, Meher Baba intensified their "madness" for God.

Kindling a Spark into a Flame

Let us now return to the account of Baba's *mast* tours. He left Sukkur (Pakistan) on October 3, 1946, accompanied by Baidul, Adi Sr., Pendu and Eruch, and they reached Multan (Punjab) the next day. Baba contacted four good souls. An adept pilgrim named Hazrat Shadrudin Shah Salik had arranged for the daily feeding of the poor in the town. He himself subsisted only on *sharbat*, a sweet cold drink. Tapaswi Puran Das Mahatma lived on a fruit diet. In the case of seekers and pilgrims, it was noticed that some maintained strict rules about diet. Most of them were vegetarians, but in the case of *masts* it was

⁴⁷ F. H. Dadachanji, "Notes From My Diary," *Meher Baba Journal*, May 1939, p.55.

found that they were not particular about the type of food they ate. They remained absorbed in their love for God and generally accepted whatever was given to them. Data Fakir Mast was a good *mast* who accepted nothing from anyone except his daily food. In contrast to this, Chup Shah, a religious-minded person and seeker, collected money from people for the maintenance of a mosque.

On October 5 Baba was at Lyallpur. Prem Chand was a Sikh *mast*. He lived in a dirty room filled with all sorts of rubbish. As Baba visited this place, His shining eyes swept the entire room with His warm blessings and then He blessed the *mast* with His personal sanctifying contact. Faqir Chand Mast, another *mast*, willful in his fancies, rambled about in different localities of the town and Baba had to rove about Lyallpur to find him. Hundreds of people have journeyed hundreds of miles to have a glimpse of Baba, and here He was searching the town to find a *mast!*

An Indian Christian *mast* was very elusive. He resided in a Christian cemetery in Govindpur. Baba approached him twice, but each time the *mast* pretended to be fast asleep. The *mandali* asked the devotees of the *mast* to request him to at least open his eyes, but he paid no heed. One of them reported that just before Baba's arrival this blessed soul would suddenly lie down to sleep. Finding the *mast* quite reticent, Baba did not contact him against his will. Baba's contact was a joy for most of the *masts*, but it also meant the sharing of some additional spiritual responsibilities. During Baba's personal contacts with the *masts* the deeper levels of consciousness were made to function. It was like kindling a spark into a flame. With some *masts* the flame became unbearable. After Baba's contact a *mast* living near Aurangabad cried aloud, "Oh! You have set me aflame. The burning is intense!" It may be that some *masts* evaded Baba's contact for this reason. This particular *mast*,

in his childlike whim, was not willing to share extra spiritual liability and, like a loving mother, Baba catered to his vagary.

In the case of Nadir Ali Shah a greater degree of mental reservation was noticed. In March 1941 Baba was staying in Quetta. He sent Baidul and Eruch to meet Nadir Ali and get his consent for Baba's personal contact. The *mast* lived in a tent which was always full of smoke coming from the *dhuni*.⁴⁸ Several times they both emerged from the tent with smoky tears rolling down their cheeks, but they could only convey a clear "No!" from Nadir Ali to Baba. The *mast* would often say, in a mood of abstraction and in a symbolic language, "If He visits, my boat would be drowned in that Ocean (Meher Baba's physical presence)." In the end Baba circled round his tent in a motor car, so perhaps a flame glowed inside the smoky tent and in the heart of the *mast*, too.

A Camel Ride to Mitri

By the evening of October 5 Baba reached Khushab and stayed for the night in a rest house. In the morning He made a seven-mile journey in a *tonga* to reach Jalalpur. The *tonga* jolted on the stony and sandy track and stuck half a dozen times in the mud of unbridged streams. The *mast* Kasim Ali Baba was quite an old man and was credited with having occult powers. It was not known whether or not he continued to possess them after Baba's contact. Baba once remarked that *masts* do not misuse their powers, though at times, like children, they make a display of them. As the *Avatar* contacts a *mast*, if the situation so demands, such

⁴⁸ A fire of a few logs of wood, wet or dry, which some *masts* and pilgrims in India are in the habit of keeping burning by their seats day and night.

powers automatically merge into His Being, and the "toys" are taken away from the child for his own benefit.

The journey to the second village visited, Pail, was equally uncomfortable, about twenty-eight miles in a cramped and crowded bus. A *mast* named Sain Fazl lived atop a small hill two miles off the road. He was naked but usually kept a blanket on his person. He had renounced his house and had been living there for four decades. He was honored by Hindus and Muslims alike.

After meeting these two God-intoxicated souls, Baba left for Bikaner via Lahore and Bhatinda. The railroad ran through a sandy desert in Rajasthan and no good food was available at the stations. On October 10 Baba reached Bikaner and moved through the city to contact about ten moderate *masts*.

By evening the next day Baba and His *mandali* arrived at a small railway station named Narayanpura, four miles from a village called Mitri. Baba permitted the hire of a camel to cross this stretch of desert. He rode the camel for a very short period and then asked the *mandali* to ride in turns. They hesitated to take a seat on the camel's back when their Master was walking along by its side, but Baba told them to ride and they had to obey Him. It can well be imagined how much they enjoyed that ride! Lakshman Das, an adept pilgrim, lived in a temple at Mitri — he had been staying there for about fifty years. In spite of his age, his eyes had retained the luster of youth. With fair face and a fairer heart, he welcomed most cordially the fairest flower of humanity, the God-Man, to his residence. The *mandali* moved aside as Baba entered the room of the saint. Lakshman Das felt overjoyed and a sudden rush of tears filled his eyes. He reverently responded to the personal touch of the Master. Baba immediately left Mitri — no stop, no rest. The strength contained in His delicate frame was a constant source of wonder.

Fazl Shah Acclaims Meher Baba's Avatarhood

Bharatpur was visited to contact a *salik* of a high order, Pir Fazl Shah, but it was learned that he had left for Kotah. Baba told the *mandali* that this *salik*, like Lakshman Das, was an adept pilgrim. At Kotah, Fazl Shah greeted the party with much warmth and respect. He shot a delighted glance in Baba's direction and seemed really pleased. Baba smiled back at him with his compassionate eyes. Fazl Shah only offered Baba a chair, a spontaneous recognition of divinity in human form. He seemed emotionally overwhelmed and could not conceal his feelings. Within a short time Baba and the *salik* entered another room which was spotlessly clean. At the end of the contact, as they came out of the room Fazl Shah's eyes were filled with unshed tears of joy and he said to Meher Baba:

"No one, until you came, has touched my heart with the arrow of Divine Love. You have the power to destroy and flood the world; no one fully knows the limits of your greatness; you are the spiritual authority of the time, and if I were to die I would take another body to be close to you."⁴⁹

He insisted that Baba should drop him a letter after He reached His headquarters safely. How strange! He asked one of his devotees to write down his address and handed it to Baba. What do the extemporaneous remarks of an advanced soul like Fazl Shah indicate? Perhaps these can be treated in general as the audible signs of Meher Baba's working with the *masts*, and in particular as the unreserved response given to Him as the *Avatar* of the Age.

Baba then proceeded to Etah by bus, via Kashganj. One of the *masts* at Etah was extremely fond of *pan* (betel leaves). His face was stained with red lines made by the juice of chewed *pan*. He roamed the city constantly and contacting

⁴⁹ William Donkin, *The Wayfarers*, pp. 281-282

him was not easy. With much difficulty, he was finally spotted and was cordially coaxed to Baba's contact. It was a happy meeting. Shah Saheb Maqbul Mian Budaunwala, a good *mast*, was typically indifferent to his bodily comforts. Once he met with a car accident, but he did not allow anyone to treat his fractured limbs. Later one of the wounds turned septic and was filled with maggots. When Baba contacted him the wound was still there, unhealed, haphazardly covered with a dirty bandage, but the *mast* appeared to be unaffected by it.

I would like to mention here two more incidents of this type. A majzoob-like *mast* at Quetta used to chew stale bones and his body was covered with innumerable lice. He would neither try to get them off nor even kill a single one. There was another *mast* at Rajkot (Gujarat) whose body was swarming with millions of flies and it was difficult to even have a look at his face. These two *masts* seemed entirely unconcerned either by the lice or the flies. Does it not show that the flame of love within the *masts* was an antidote for all disease? True, the life of a *mast* is a challenge to our hygienic conceptions and perhaps to medical knowledge! Every time Baba passed by the tent of the *mast* at Quetta in 1924, the *mast* would gaze vacantly at Him. When Baba entered the tent once the lice-covered *mast* embraced Baba with startling ferocity. Was this not a matchless meeting?

The Perfect Master Procured from Nowhere

Mathura was the last place visited during this *mast* tour which had commenced on September 29 and ended on October 14, 1946. At Mathura there was a *mast* named Inayatulla. He was an old, dwarfish person but quite "tall" spiritually, for he was the head of the *masts* there. During every visit to this holy city Baba invariably contacted him.

Recognition of Meher Baba's divinity by one spiritually

advanced soul named Brahmanandji was a striking affair. In his youth this adept pilgrim was on a high rung of the ladder of learning. Now he was to be seen sitting on top of bundles of filthy rags. Far beyond the riches of the world, he now held in his heart a peerless treasure, love for the Lord. He lived in the stable of a *dharmashala* by the side of the river Jumna. As Baba approached him for personal contact, Brahmanandji looked at Him intently in great reverence and love, as if his whole being went out to Him. His face beaming with ecstatic delight, he opened his heart, saying, "Behold, how devoted love draws the Lord Krishna to me, the Perfect Master is here."⁵⁰ And then what a surprise! He put his hand below the filthy pillow and produced a new copy of the book *The Perfect Master* by the late Purdom, first published in England in 1937. How on earth he could conjure up such a spotlessly clean copy remains an enigma to this day!

"Here Comes the Flute Player"

Brahmanandji's reference to Meher Baba as Lord Krishna and to His divine love reminds me of a similar amazing event. In January 1939 at Agra, Baba stayed in a bungalow near the Taj Mahal. From Agra Baba and His group of eastern and western disciples visited Brindavan, near Mathura. This particular place is very closely connected with the *lila* of Lord Krishna. While going from place to place in *tongas* the group came across a tiny, happy-looking fellow who outwardly appeared to be mad. Baba deeply enjoyed and appreciated the graceful response of this queer-looking fellow. Elizabeth Patterson wrote a fine account of the episode in one of her articles:

⁵⁰ *The Wayfarers*, p. 307.

The quaint town of Brindavan seems in harmony with ancient pastoral times, and even today cowherds are plentiful, while the traditional monkeys roam about the streets. As we approached the place along the river where Krishna had played with His *gopis*, a youngish man wearing what resembled a fool's cap sat on the steps playing his flute. So sweetly he played that one was attracted to this court's jester, and the ancient "Flute Song of Krishna." ... The moment the man noticed Baba, he stopped his playing, and in a voice loud enough for those with the Master to hear, he said, "Here comes the Flute Player," which is the other name for Krishna.

All the time we went around the small town, this mendicant followed Baba or ran ahead and, just around the bend of the street, we would hear his flute sounds. It was like a haunting melody. He didn't want money, he didn't want anything, and when he passed, several people smiled, thinking him to be a "fool," with his dancing steps and flute. Towards the end, he seemed to become almost ecstatic, and the attendant with us, thinking he was annoying us, tried to drive him away with his stick. Upon this Baba immediately protected the flute player and gave the attendant to understand that he liked it. ... Baba informed us that this was the man for whom He had come that day and that he was a highly evolved soul ... Just before returning to the bus, extraordinary greetings, or, how to describe it, signals went on between Baba and this mendicant ... As Baba drove away in the bus, we saw the ecstatic figure dancing on tip-toe, like the "Pied Piper of Hamelin," and waving his flute in the most rapturous manner.⁵¹

During this "move-together" Meher Baba allowed this little *mast* to hold His hand and walk with Him some distance. A very natural and lively contact. Baba also remarked

⁵¹ Elizabeth C. Patterson, "Spiritual Journey with a Modern *Guru*," *Meher Baba Journal*, June 1939, pp. 54-55.

that he was one of His real lovers. Marvelous are the ways of Baba in meeting and helping the lovers of God in their merry march to see Him as He really is, their own Self.

Azim Khan's Explicit Proclamation

Azim Khan's recognition of Baba's divinity was of a direct nature. He was the only *mast* who wore *khaddar* — hand-spun cotton cloth. In India in those days *khaddar* was worn mostly by the political workers of the Indian National Congress. Formerly Azim used to move about naked in the streets. He was a *mast* of a high order. As per Baba's instructions Baidul found out where he resided. Upon seeing Baidul, the *mast* welcomed him, saying: "Come. What can I do for you?" Baidul felt quite happy to hear this so he openly put forth the request: "My elder brother (meaning Baba) wants to see you. Should he come here?" To this Azim Khan immediately replied, "He is my Father. It does not behoove me to call Him here." Baidul reported this to Baba, but He decided to visit Azim Khan. No sooner did the *mast* see Meher Baba than he spontaneously called out, "You are Allah, you have brought forth the creation, and once in a thousand years you come down to see the play of what you have created."⁵² The sincerity of his voice and the urgency with which he spoke were deeply striking. They smiled at each other, an intimate and affectionate smile, and the contact was over.

This particular *mast* tour came to a close with this unique contact of Azim Khan on October 14, 1946, and Baba returned to Niranjapur. Baidul, Eruch, Adi Sr. and Pendu, the four witnesses to the extraordinary declarations of Pir Fazal Shah, Brahmanandji and Azam Khan, were sent back to Poona and Ahmednagar for some other work entrusted

⁵² *The Wayfarers*, p. 307.

to them. Adi Sr. later wrote an account of these *mast* tours which was circulated among Baba people. I quote a few lines from Adi's report:

The history of different *masts* and adept pilgrims with regard to their age, confinement and austerity may sound exaggerated. Achievements such as long life, without its care, and regular and prolonged confinement at one place are a matter of secondary importance. The *masts* get these as a matter of course in their spiritual unfoldment ... The momentous *mast* contacts are brought about by Baba with hurried and speedy movements. The process seems like drawing out the whole being of the *mast* and wielding it into a course of humanised and harmonised action. It is too baffling a sight to see and too complicated a process to imagine. Who but Baba can know why He contacts *masts* and what the results are? Our descriptive attempts are too feeble to depict the truth.

Christmas Gift of "*Silent Revelations*"

Meher Baba stayed at Niranjapur till the end of November 1946. From mid-October onwards there were no special tours, but some *masts*, mad persons and the poor were brought to His residence for His contact. Ali Shah of Ahmednagar was taken to Niranjapur for four days, from the second to the fifth of November. On November fourth Baba bathed and clothed seven lunatics, and the next day He contacted seven poor persons and gave *prasad* of fifty rupees to each. It was noticed that Baba generally concluded some of the important phases of His *mast* work by serving and feeding the poor.

From May 1946 on, correspondence with Baba from His disciples and devotees in India had practically stopped. Those in the West were only permitted to write to Him

about important matters in connection with the work He had entrusted to them, and during the last part of His stay at Niranjapur Baba attended to this correspondence. There was a cable that stated: "Norina's condition is crucial. Needs your guidance." Baba dictated the reply: "My eternal love and infinite blessings." As this message reached Princess Norina she began to feel better, and one of His dear ones cabled back to Baba: "Received needed advice. Love." Baba's cables and telegrams have helped hundreds of His lovers, each in a different way.

There was a letter from Jean Adriel. She wrote that she was sending fifty copies of *Silent Revelations*. This was a pocket-sized book containing excerpts from the silent discourses of Meher Baba, compiled in love by Alexander Markey. In the forward Markey stated:

The age of the intellect has had its day. The greater age of the heart is at hand; and the Master of Silence is its *Avatar*. He brings to mankind, at the moment of its deepest despair, the divine certainty of redemption.

To partake of it, all we need do is to remove the sandals of materialistic taint from our unsteady feet, discard the garment of intellectual conceit, robe our feeble shoulders in the mantle of penitence, and enter the sanctuary of spiritual readiness in childlike humility and gratitude.⁵³

An appropriate comment on Baba's discourses, for Meher Baba's words awaken the heart by illumining the intellect. These books were expected to reach India by December 1946 by sea mail. Jean and Alexander had especially sent them in advance as a Christmas gift for Baba and the *mandali*. The books were duly received, and Baba was quite

⁵³ Alexander Markey, *Silent Revelations of Meher Baba* (Hollywood: The New Life Foundation, 1944), p. 12.

pleased with the work done by His two dear ones in the West.

The Aga Khan's Bungalow at Mahabaleshwar

On November 24, 1946 a letter of instructions was sent to the following nine persons: Kaka Baria, Papa Jessawala, Baidul, Khak Saheb, Pandoba, Vibhuti, Babadas, Sadashiv Patel and Pophali. They were each to find one *mast* or saint living in whichever area was allotted to them, and to ascertain if he would be ready to stay near Baba for forty days from December 15 on. The lease on the bungalow at Niranjapur was to expire by the end of November, and Baba also wished to change the locale of His work with the *masts*. With this plan in view Baba instructed Eruch, who was in Poona, to hire a bungalow in the district of Poona or Satara. Through Adurjee, a house agent in Poona, Eruch acquired the Aga Khan's bungalow at Mahabaleshwar as Baba's next headquarters. Mahabaleshwar is a hill station, 4,500 feet above sea level in the district of Satara, Maharashtra State. The estate had a very spacious compound and was surrounded by tall, massive trees that echoed all day long with the singing of birds. On some occasions jackals or even panthers would be seen slinking by on the jungle side.

Baba had visited many, many places to meet *masts*, but after a few years He wished to keep some near Him for special spiritual work. This brought forth the idea of having a *mast ashram*. In a way this phase had its origin in the late thirties at Rahuri, near Ahmednagar. Rahuri *ashram* was mainly for lunatics, hence it was called the "Mad Ashram," but one or two God-intoxicated souls were also inmates. The first *mast ashram*, however, was at Ajmer and was set up in February in 1939. During a later period similar *ashrams* of long or short duration were established at Jabalpur,

Bangalore, Meherabad and Ranchi. Baba wished to continue the same type of activity at Mahabaleshwar. There was also a *mast ashram* at Satara for two months in 1947, thus in the phase of Baba's work with *masts* there were these seven *ashrams*.

Meher Baba and His *mandali* left Niranjapur by the end of November 1946 and reached Mahabaleshwar on December 4, where He stayed for about six months. Mahabaleshwar being a hill station, the climate was extremely cold. It was often noticed that Baba's visits to the best of the hill stations were out-of-season, and the major portion of His stay at Mahabaleshwar was no exception. Baba's life was a movement of the Spirit to fulfill the spiritual need of the time — physical comforts were no urgent consideration. None of the nine persons who received the circular letter mentioned above found a *mast* or a saint to bring to Mahabaleshwar by December 14. A fresh attempt had to be made, so the work of the *mast ashram* did not in fact commence until the end of December.

The Promise of the God-Man

By way of concluding the account of this year I will relate a small incident with regard to a letter received in the last week of December. It was from a schoolteacher about Baba's assurance for a stay near Him.

In 1945 Baba had stayed at Pasarani, a village near Wai. At that time a schoolteacher named Bhave had been there for Baba's *darshan*. At the time of parting Baba gave him some fruit as *prasad* and gestured: "These are for you. Share these with my love. I will call you someday to Meherabad for a short stay."

Bhave had had no news about Baba for over a year. When he heard of His being at Mahabaleshwar, quite close to Wai, he wrote a letter to one of the *mandali*: "Shri Meher

Baba was to call me for a short stay near Him at Meherabad. Some say that He does not keep His promise! Apart from this, will I be permitted to have at least a glimpse of Him, in the near future?"

Bhave's desire to have Baba's *darshan* had a specific reason — it was reverence, and gratitude, too. After his first meeting with Baba in 1945 he was stricken by plague. He had a very high fever and there was a big tumor in his armpit. There had been some fatal cases in the neighboring area, but somehow Bhave felt sure of his recovery. He had a strong feeling that since Meher Baba was to call him to Meherabad, he must survive, and he did! Perhaps Baba's promise was meant to give Bhave strength to bear the forthcoming personal calamity. Words and gestures of the God-Man constitute mystical symbols. They vaguely express to us the descent of His infinitely patient compassion and help us in all aspects of life. To interpret a gesture of love this way or that is to distort it in its totality.

Bhave was and is a student of hypnotism. In the late sixties he published a book on this subject in Marathi. In the book he mentioned how he had been successful in helping some students in his school to develop a sharp memory. This was achieved through the suggestions given by him, based on his experiments with hypnotism. He gave me a copy of this book to present to Baba. It was my thought that Meher Baba, being the Master of all such "isms," gave Bhave a suggestion and a push in that very first meeting at Pasarani, concealed in a rosy promise! It all happened in the natural course of *darshan* and in full wakefulness. The God-Man helps, heals and redeems all those who come to Him, not through conditioned influence but through the unbounded spontaneity of life Divine. The promise of *sahavas* made to Bhave was only the outermost expression of His love. Meher Baba's one promise to all mankind is the promise of Self-realization. It is for the

fulfillment of this promise that He comes amongst us age after age.

Meher Baba, however, did give Bhave a chance to be at Meherabad for a short stay in September 1954, as promised, but only after a long period of eight years. His words come true, but in His own way and in His own time!

Mast Ashram at Mahabaleshwar, 1947

The Unpredictable Whim of God

GOD is unpredictable, but the God-Man is even more so. I had had no opportunity to be near to Meher Baba since December 1944. The Baba circulars of 1945-1946 brought no hopes of meeting Him, but all of a sudden in the year 1947 the tidings of joy came. Unfathomable and concealed are His ways! Baba awakens by giving *darshan*, but He awakens as much by delaying or even denying it. Life is strange and will ever be so. Unexpectedly a cloud of sorrow looms, and unawares a delightful sunshine disperses it. Happiness seems to stand on one bank of the river of life, and as we reach there, it mysteriously jumps to the other bank with a mischievous smile, signaling and cheering us to a fresh bid!

Life is pain, life is pleasure, but it is never static, never stale. It continually moves between the two opposites, and through life, the law of *karma* works. It is the outcome of the original Whim of God to achieve perfect balance in this mighty Illusion. In its perfection, life would express creative beauty and ever-renewing freshness. Meher Baba once remarked that it is all implied in that beginningless, unpredictable Whim. How well one knows it! How miserably one fails to live up to it!

The Human Form, the "Scion of Light"

Meher Baba has specifically stated that it is only in human form, on this planet, that one can step onto the spiritual Path. Could this be an achievement of a single lifetime? I had quite strong doubts about life after death, but living scepticism is better than dead presumptions born of fear and traditions. It was not good just to lose myself in some kind of philosophy and wordy, logical and metaphysical exhortations regarding different scriptures which failed to satisfy me. I neither allowed myself to be bound by set themes and theories, nor did I condemn any. For me, that was a welcome release, so I read with an open mind the series in Meher Baba's *Discourses*, "Reincarnation and Karma." It added to my understanding a bit, which, I must confess, was quite shallow. However, I had vaguely felt that the human form is the "Scion of Light" or the "Priceless Pearl."

The words of the God-Man have a magnetic effect. He has no opinions — He *knows*. He is the incomprehensible Beyond, the non-inferable Sentience. He reveals the limits of words, and as they graciously come from Him with natural ease they emit the perfume of His wisdom. They stir something within you, and the awakened heart releases an intelligence which is superior to calculating and bargaining reason. A free meditation on the words of the God-Man is a tie that links you to Him.

But is it as easy as that? Not for me. I must admit that the weaknesses in me did not leave, particularly the emotional part of me. Nevertheless, the heart and the mind were geared to a new level. Heart leaped forth to love Baba, not so concerned with the interpretations of His discourses; mind with its computing strategy was after the survival of life and proofs of Baba's divinity. The tussle

reminds me of two lines composed by one of Baba's dearest disciples, Francis Brabazon — a *ghazal* read to Baba three times successively — and the lines as far as I remember them are:

Love delights in poetry and parables, of itself it is sure;
Mind demands the prose of logic, because it is insecure.

And I, being more mind than heart, read with great interest and many mental comments Meher Baba's *Discourses*, including those on reincarnation.

Reincarnation and Karma

Karma means the continuity of the action of cause and effect, arising from the impressions deposited in the mind by any thought, feeling or action. The working of the law of *karma*, as explained in detail by Meher Baba, helped me to maintain poise and peace, not only on the intellectual level but also on a much deeper one. In those days I would often ask myself, "Why should I suffer? And why so severely?" The study of the *Discourses* made me put a counter question: "Would it be just, to have favors throughout my life?" God shakes one, through pleasures and pains, until one submits to His will voluntarily and happily, as a sunflower turns towards the sun. This delicate performance is gracefully achieved through the ingenuity of the law of *karma*. The time at which this fact begins to be appreciated varies widely with different individuals according to their spiritual needs, which are not necessarily similar.

Meher Baba stated the following about reincarnation and *karma*:

In the successive incarnations of an individual soul, there is not only a thread of continuity and identity ... but there is also an uninterrupted reign of the law of cause and effect through the persistence and operation of *Karma* . . .

The intermittent incarnations in the gross world are only apparently disconnected. "Karma persists as a connecting link and determining factor through the mental body [mind], which remains a permanent and constant factor through all the lives of the soul ..." ⁵⁴

"... Before Karma is created the individual has a sort of freedom to choose what it shall be; but after it has been delineated it becomes a factor which cannot be ignored and which either has to be expended through the results which it invites, or counteracted by fresh and appropriate Karma."

...Fate, however, is not some foreign and oppressive principle. Fate is man's own creation pursuing him from past lives; and just as it has been shaped by past *Karma*, it can also be modified, remoulded and even undone through *Karma* in the present life. ⁵⁵

A Dive into Life Divine

I did not accept Meher Baba's words as mere comforting answers to my questions; they were and are entirely different from armchair rationalizing opinions. Mind is often tempted to withdraw from the immediate present and gets lost in the hope-land of "future." The words of Meher Baba help one to have alert acceptance of things and events as they are. One accepts oneself for what one is, whatever it be. And therein lies the never-fading glory and strength of His statements. About the law of *karma* that directs each and all to the "Purposelessness in Infinite Existence," Meher Baba said:

The law of Karma is, in the world of values, the counterpart of the law of cause and effect which operates in the physical world. ⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Meher Baba, *Discourses*, 3:83-84

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.89.

If a person has done an evil turn to someone he must accept the penalty for it and welcome the evil rebounding upon himself. If he has done a good turn to someone he must also receive the reward for it ... *What he does for another he has also done for himself although it may take time for him to realise that this is exactly so. The law of Karma might be said to be an expression of justice or a reflection of the unity of life in the world of duality.*⁵⁷

The life of the reincarnating individual has many events and phases. The wheel of life makes its ceaseless rounds, lifting the individual to the heights or bringing him down from high positions. It thus contributes to the enrichment of his experience. Ideals left unattained in one life are pursued further in the next life; things left undone are finished; the edges left by incomplete endeavour are rounded up; wrongs are eventually set right. The accounts of give and take between persons receive renewed adjustment by the repayment of *Karmic* debts and the recovery of *Karmic* dues. At last, *out of the ripeness of experience and through the dissolution of the ego-mind, the soul enters into the sole unity of Divine Life.*⁵⁸

Baba Gestured a "Lie"!

While dealing with the topic of reincarnation I shall mention a remark made by Meher Baba and a short explanation given by Him in later years.

In the summer of 1959 Baba was staying at Guruprasad in Poona. My school had a long vacation, and Baba permitted me to stay with Him for six weeks. On some afternoons He visited Bindra House, where the Jessawalas resided, and the *mandali* used to accompany Him. Previously Baba had advised a maidservant of the Jessawalas to give up the habit of petty thefts. Finding that she had again succumbed to

⁵⁷ *Discourses*, 3:90-91.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.

the same weakness, He called her near. The delightful expression on His face vanished and with a stern look, He gestured: "If you commit a theft again, you will be born as a pig in your next life!" In India pigs are regarded as the filthiest of animals. The very thought of becoming a pig greatly upset her, and with an expression full of remorse she promised never to repeat her old habit.

As soon as the girl left to do some household work, Baba's face looked aglow, with a glitter of delight about it. He turned to the *mandali* standing near Him, including Francis Brabazon, who had recently come from Australia for an indefinite stay with Baba. With a sparkle in His eyes, He quickly gestured, "Once you get a human body, there is no retrogression, no returning to the animal form." Without any further comment He changed the subject.

I gathered it was only to help the maidservant that Baba had gestured a "lie"! His life ever functioned beyond the conventional ideas of good and bad, right and wrong. In the literature of Hindu saints and masters I had come across some stories of animals and birds having been human in past lives, and vice versa. Devoid of its proper context a remark from the Master, particularly with a view to personal application, may not be taken literally, aside from its immense personal appeal!

Mind, Its Appearance and Total Disappearance

On an earlier occasion Meher Baba had explained:

Hindus believe in the process of reincarnation; Christians and Muslims do not. Hindus exaggerated and over-emphasized this theme; others treated the subject as blasphemous. When Krishna explained reincarnation, it was in context with the gross body. When Jesus and Muhammad remarked, "There is only one birth and one

death," it was in reference to the mind. The very first separate appearance of the mind is the birth of an individual, and its total disappearance, rather annihilation, is death. Mind is born once and it dies once. In the light of this understanding, what the Hindus, Christians and Muslims believe is true.

Meher Baba has skillfully blended Vedantism, Mysticism and Sufism like "beads on one string." With inimitable grace He has linked the aspects of Truth revealed in His past *Avataric* forms.

In His series of discourses on reincarnation and in the *Divine Theme*⁵⁹ Meher Baba has explained in an appealing way, with the help of charts, the journey of the soul to the Over-Soul. At the occurrence of the Whim (*Lahar*) in the beginningless beginning, the one indivisible Over-Soul gets seemingly divided into an infinite number of souls. This commences the first process — evolution of consciousness and the simultaneous collection of impressions (*sanskaras*). The evolution of forms — pre-stone forms to human form — is the by-product. The evolution of consciousness is complete when the soul attains human form. Henceforth the soul has to reincarnate again and again to spend the impressions (*sanskaras*) gathered in the process of evolution. The same soul is born as man or woman, belonging to different races, nations and religions. This is the second process, or reincarnation. As the tight twists of impressions become loosened, there begins the third process, realization, or the involution of consciousness. When all the impressions have been spent or wiped out, the impressionless consciousness gives the soul the experience of its unity and identity with the Over-Soul. From the outset, the soul *exists* in the Over-Soul, unconsciously; now it experiences the

⁵⁹ See: Meher Baba, *God Speaks*, 2d. ed., pp. 234-243.

Over-Soul consciously. In fact, the *lila* (divine sport) of evolution, reincarnation and realization is a three-in-one process in the eternal Now.

Thus the birth, the life and the passing away of a being is a marvelous voyage of the soul from the unborn to the unknown. And during the visible part of this enigmatic sojourn, the law of *karma* is the compass and wheel that steers the soul on the uncharted ocean of life. Of course I do not wish to force my findings on others. It is left to readers to perceive the truths revealed through Meher Baba's *Discourses*. I will close this topic with a remark from Meher Baba:

"The so-many deaths during the one whole life, from the beginning of evolution of consciousness to the end of involution of consciousness, are like so many sleeps during one lifetime."⁶⁰

A Stable Turned into a Mast Ashram

Now I turn to some of the events in Meher Baba's life during the year 1947. From Niranjapur, the place of seclusion near Dehra Dun, Baba and the *mandali* went to Mahabaleshwar in December 1946. There He stayed in the Aga Khan's bungalow, Florence Hall, which had a very large compound. By the side of the main building there was a big square stable with a corrugated roof. A huge teak door was its only entrance. Baba asked His *mandali* to repair and clean the stable. Utilizing *tattya* and bamboos, He then had it partitioned into about eighteen small rooms. Baba wished to continue His work with the *masts* in this stable, and He commenced this phase in the last week of December 1946.

The first *mast* whom Baba contacted was Ali Shah, one

⁶⁰ *God Speaks*, Chart III facing p. 102.

of His favorites, ever smoking, ever smiling. In addition, Baba had other *masts* and also some mad persons and destitutes in this *ashram*. So this was a triple *ashram* — for *masts* and mad and disabled elderly persons. The main work with them was done in January 1947.

For the first two weeks Baidul was in charge of the *ashram* management, looking after the various requirements of the *ashramites*. Next came Kaka Baria and B. D. (Papa) Jessawala. Baba's work with these inmates would begin at 8:00 A.M. First He would bathe some of the *masts*. Then He would closet Himself with some of them for the silent conferences. The big door would be closed and none of the *mandali* would be allowed to remain inside the stable. At 11:00 A.M. Baba Himself would distribute food to all these "guests." Some *masts* He fed with His own hands. He once remarked, "In bathing them I bathe myself; in feeding them I feed myself." This outward routine continued, more or less, until the last week of January 1947. After this Baba closed this *mast ashram*.

By the way, I would like to mention that this particular stable has a special importance for many Baba people. On October 16, 1950, when Baba was in the New Life, He allowed His disciples and devotees to assemble at Mahabaleshwar for His *sahas*. The gathering was held in this very stable, and here Meher Baba delivered the unforgettable "Baba's Sermon." He personally handed over a copy of the sermon to everyone present and instructed each one to meditate on it daily.

Silent Dhondi Bua and Laughing Kabir

The mad and the destitute in the *ashram* need no special mention, but some of the *masts* were noteworthy. One was Dhondi Bua, a *mast* of the fifth plane brought from Wai, a nearby township. He was of a *jamali* nature. Occasionally

the ripple of a frown would cross his face, though there was "the light of a smile in his eyes," and at the corners of his eyes there were delicate crow's feet. One would often notice a puzzled look on his wrinkled face. His voice was exquisitely sweet and inviting. He wore a loose long coat with sleeves that reached below his fingers. It looked queer, and the pockets often bulged with sundry odd things. Baba liked him very much and remarked that Dhondi Bua was on the verge of entering a majzoob-like state. He was kept in the *ashram* for over three weeks.

Kabir was another interesting *mast*. He was from Kurduwadi, and I used to see him rolling in the streets or lying near the urinals with a peculiar delight about his face. Baidul took him to Mahabaleshwar. Kabir had the loudest laughter! When outside of the stable, he laughed and laughed so loudly that the leaves on the trees around were drowned in it. It seemed that he laughed whenever there was a welling up of his love for the Beloved, God. On the other hand, his skin, or rather his entire body, looked very dirty. Two uneven rows of misshapen yellow teeth added to his exterior ugliness, but in spite of this "there was a sense of some inner luminosity to which his outer shell did the poorest justice."⁶¹

Kabir had a habit of making signs in the air. While having his meals, he would roar with laughter at each morsel. It was said that at Pandharpur, as he lived near a cemetery, he ate even the remains of corpses! So oblivious was he of the things he consumed! He had a strange, ecstatic look. Dr. Donkin wrote, "Kabir was a source of amazement to all, for never had one seen quite so strange an intermingling of an inner brilliance with so repellent and bestial a shell."⁶² Kabir was kept in the *ashram* for ten days.

⁶¹ William Donkin, *The Wayfarers*, p. 143.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 143.

Shah Saheb, the Smoker, and Jumma, the Docile

Shah Saheb was perhaps an emigrant *mast* from Africa. He had almond-shaped eyes and muttered incomprehensible phrases to himself. At first he was seen either sitting quietly, gazing absentmindedly at almost anything, or resting flat on the ground swathed in a blanket. He was such a chain smoker that even his body had the peculiar rank smell of tobacco. Sometimes he looked dazed and sometimes he seemed quite happy with himself and his life in the *ashram*. When the *ashram* was closed he was very reluctant to leave Baba's atmosphere, and as an exception Meher Baba allowed Shah Saheb to stay on until He shifted His headquarters to Satara.

Jumma was born a *mast*. He was from Baramati, a prosperous township in the district of Poona. In a *mast* of such a type, *madar-zad*, the love for God is an untutored and inherent flowering. Jumma had some traits of a *jamali mast*, too. He was very docile and seldom spoke unless spoken to. Tall and slim, with very supple joints in his arms and hands, his movements resembled "the writhings of a snake." He was in the *ashram* for about ten days. Incidentally, I will mention here that after over a decade and a half, without giving me the name of this *mast* but just a bit of a description, Meher Baba sent me a message to contact Jumma, feed him and then report on the matter to Baba. This was my only direct participation in Baba's work with the *masts*. More about this when I come to that incident.

An Adept Pilgrim from Bhor

The other two *masts* brought to this *ashram* were Pahlwan and Vasudev Swami. "Pahlwan" means a wrestler. He was quite young and would perform physical exercises at the slightest suggestion. He had a very good physique indeed,

but worldly things least interested his mind. As regards the physical body, Vasudev Swami was his opposite. He cut a pathetic figure — he could not walk and had to be lifted by someone for the calls of nature. He had a plaintive voice, the result of the agonies he bore. In spite of these tribulations, he had a child's great liking for toys. He also showed great delight in wearing valuable rings. The villagers of Ale, where he lived, respected him and looked after his needs because his "madness" had a divine touch about it. He was God-mad. His delicate physical frame could not bear the cold of Mahabaleshwar and so he was sent back within a few days. Pahlwan, however, stayed on for a period of three weeks. Through different types of *masts*, and the mad, Meher Baba carried on His work on different levels of consciousness. Perhaps it was for this that He had such varied types in the *ashram*.

The visit of an adept pilgrim to Mahabaleshwar in January 1947 is worth mentioning. Eruch brought him from Bhor, about forty miles distant. He told this pilgrim that he was being taken to his (Eruch's) elder brother. To this the adept pilgrim promptly replied, "Not to your elder brother but to Meher Baba, who has in Him the whole universe." He further remarked, "He is this world, that which is above it, and below it; He is in me and in everyone."⁶³ After reaching Mahabaleshwar, Eruch told Baba about this incident and He decided not to keep him in the *ashram*. Baba did not even see him personally — that was not necessary. The next morning after breakfast he was taken back to Bhor, where he was known to the people as Bhorwala Baba. He left the *ashram* in a delightful mood. Perhaps in his higher state of consciousness he was "seeing" Meher Baba all the time. Sometimes Baba personally contacted the adept pilgrims who had recognized His divinity as the

⁶³ See: *The Wayfarers*, p. 144.

Avatar of the Age, but in some cases He declined to meet them. This much we know, and nothing more.

Meher Baba kept Himself busy the whole day with the activities of the *mast ashram*. The schedule during such phases of His work was of clock-like precision. When He was in the company of the *masts*, one could almost sense the vibrations of compassion and peace flowing from Him into their dazed beings. For about a month He personally fed them with His own hands and also from His inexhaustible spiritual granary. On January 28, 1947 Baba offered His services to a score of poor people, and the *ashram* at Mahabaleshwar for the *masts*, the mad and the destitute was closed.

Avatar, by Jean Adriel

Being engaged in *mast* work, Baba was not in a mood to give a special birthday message for the year. According to the Zoroastrian calendar it was on February 15 in 1947. Baba lovers at different places in India and abroad celebrated the day as a private function. The following two cables from the West were received by Meher Baba:

Our hearts sing "Happy Birthday to You." Beloved, in Spirit with You, [we are] always longing [for] reunion with You.

Glad You were born that we may be reborn in Love.

Malcolm Schloss celebrated Meher Baba's birthday in San Francisco, California. It was a lovely evening, and the small group that gathered there felt Baba's presence.

It was in this blessed month that Jean Adriel published *Avatar, The Life Story of the Perfect Master, Meher Baba*. She dedicated the book "To the living Christ Whose beauty the

very heavens cannot contain, but Whose presence may be found in every humble, loving heart." Jean Adriel very skillfully propounded the advent of the Avatar, Meher Baba, and a few phases of His work. In India the book was well received by Baba people. Keshav N. Nigam, editor of Meher Pukar, was so impressed that he translated Avatar into Hindi. In casual talks some Baba lovers, particularly from Andhra Pradesh, expressed to me with a feeling of gratitude the spiritual debt they owe to Jean Adriel for writing Avatar. With apt references to her personal experiences, she has very frankly and lovingly presented some of Meher Baba's ways of cleansing the heart of its blemishes and filling it with subsequent ecstasies. I, too, read the book with great interest. It was delightful and creative reading. Her writing reminded me of Meher Baba's words addressed to her one day in 1937. While explaining to Jean about the "inner drawing and withdrawal" of the divine presence, Baba dictated on His board:

It is my way of working. I draw you to me, and I push you away; then I draw you closer and push you farther away, until, at last, I draw you so close that you become one with me, forever.⁶⁴

Meher Baba in His omnipresence plays the game of hide and seek with every individual, through triumphs and through tragedies, in a fascinating way!

On a Mission to the West

In December 1936 Meher Baba invited about fifteen Westerners, mostly from America and England, for a stay in India, for five years if He so desired. Princess Norina Matchabelli, Countess Nadine Tolstoy and Mrs. Elizabeth

⁶⁴ Jean [Adriel] Schloss, "The Master at Work," *Meher Baba Journal*, October 1939, p. 17.

Patterson were among those invited. In June 1941 these three devoted disciples were sent to the United States on an important mission to establish a Meher Center there and to prepare the ground for Baba's fourth visit to America. After reaching the States, Norina felt a deep and definite call from within to speak to people about Meher Baba and His mission. Through her stirring appeals some spiritually minded persons were greatly touched and felt convinced of Meher Baba's divinity, and some had wonderful experiences as they listened to her talk. Adi K. Irani wrote: "For five years, Norina Matchabelli carried on this ... mission, until she got the Master's order to cease to work through the spiritual light-motion, since it had fulfilled its purpose; and she was summoned back to India in 1947."⁶⁵

Nadine Tolstoy was observing silence during the last period of her stay in India. After her return to the West she became ill and later passed away in April 1946, to live "more than ever" in Baba's Being. Elizabeth Patterson successfully established Meher Center-on-the-Lakes at Myrtle Beach in South Carolina.

Some Baba people in America had not seen their beloved Master since January 1935. They were anxiously awaiting His next visit, which was overdue. There were also those on the West Coast who had heard of Meher Baba through Norina, Elizabeth and other Baba people. They were eagerly looking forward to their first meeting with Baba in 1947; however, as Baba was deeply engaged in His special *mast* work in India, He postponed His visit until 1948.

A Special Message for the Westerners

In March 1947, Meher Baba conveyed through a special message His decision to postpone His visit to the West. He

⁶⁵ Princess Norina Matchabelli, *Fragments from a Spiritual Diary* (New York: Circle Production, Inc., 1949) pp. 14-15.

called Elizabeth and Norina back to India after circulating this message to His dear ones in the West:

The world is now drawing very close to the great upheaval . . . This upheaval will entail great suffering to humanity, but this suffering will work a profound change of heart and will sweep the world clean for the new and vital phase that must follow . . .

I know how patiently many of you who have not seen me for several years have been awaiting a reunion, and I know there are also many devoted souls who are eagerly looking forward to meeting me for the first time.

I want all of you dear ones to endure the extra period of separation with a courageous patience and in spite of your disappointment, to continue and persevere in your present work and faith until I come. You must rest assured that I shall come and should always remember that in spite of this temporary separation from my physical presence, my real and infinite presence is eternally with you.⁶⁶

There were more changes in the above plan, and Meher Baba visited the United States not in 1948 but in April 1952.

"May God Save Us from This Soul!"

In addition to the foregoing message, the following two cables were sent in March 1947 to some of Baba's disciples in the West. Whenever Baba was not in seclusion, He would attend to the correspondence received from His followers spread over the world and would dictate replies to guide them. To one of them He cabled: "Wait, see and decide as you think best. Love." To another: "Try to overcome

⁶⁶ Kitty Davy, "Recollections," *The Awakener*, vol. 6, no. 2, Summer 1959, p. 12.

the possessive instinct which predominates lust and greed." Except for a few standing orders, Meher Baba encouraged His followers to exercise the dictates of their conscience and His help consisted in its unfoldment. The words sent would be instrumental in this vital functioning of the heart, backed by reason.

One of Baba's devotees in Madhya Pradesh (India) was repeatedly writing, rather pestering Baba with a number of letters requesting Him to relieve him of his financial burden. In such matters Baba had directed his followers to face the situation bravely with all honest efforts humanly possible, and then to allow the will of God to take its course. It is also a fact that if one remembers Meher Baba wholeheartedly in the darkest hours of his life, one receives help from the most unexpected quarters. In reply to the volley of letters sent by this devotee, Baba, whose humor was like a whiff of fresh air, joked: "May God save us from this soul!" He, however, directed a cheering reply and sent him His love-blessings. And Baba's blessings, aglow with His love, have been a tower of strength to His devotees.

By this time I had learned from Pandoba about Baba's forthcoming visit to Madras, on the southeast coast of India. "At last, after a period of two years, Baba has graciously condescended to see His devotees — good news! Shouldn't I try to be present at Madras?" I thought. It was a slender chance, no doubt, but it *was* a chance, and I could not afford to miss it. The very thought offered partial comfort. But it did not remain partial, for by the end of the month I received a letter containing permission for me to attend the *darshan* programs at Madras. It was the blessed beginning of recurrent contacts with the Master in the year 1947.

First Day of *Darshan* at Madras, 1947

Meher Ashramam, a Flashback

IN April 1947, I visited Madras with Meher Baba. It was quite a long journey by mail train. A fair number of years have rolled by, yet a few of the recollections are surprisingly vivid. They generate a marvelous power that magically bridges the span of time, helping to bring back those lovely moments of divine companionship, so fresh, so living! But before I begin that account, I must mention the Baba work done in that area by one of His near and dear disciples, C. V. Sampath Aiyangar of the Madras Judicial Service.

The city of Madras gave Meher Baba a resounding ovation for the first time in the early thirties. It was a spontaneous gesture on the part of the public. After this visit on March 1 and 2, 1930, the atmosphere of the city vibrated with Baba's name. The entire visit was a glorious success, mainly due to the devoted efforts of Sampath Aiyangar, and it was during this time that Meher Ashramam had its inception, in Baba's presence. Meher League had the objective of promoting universal brotherhood and had Baba's sanction. K. J. Dastur and Aiyangar were the presidents. Baba asked His devotees to meet together at least once a week for meditation and a free mutual exchange of thoughts and feelings.

A decision to publish the *Meher Gazette* as a quarterly from Madras had Baba's approval. Sister V. T. Laxmi was to be the editor. During Baba's short visit to the city, a cosmopolitan dinner was arranged and there were some house visits, too. Baba also paid a visit to the Baby Welcome Centre, bathed a child and distributed sweets to all. On the way to Saidapet where the Aiyangars resided, Baba sanctified an area named Paracheri (a slum for the so-called depressed class) where the pariahs lived. Baba had a chat with some through gestures, and He tasted rice water in one of the huts. He did not ignore meeting an ailing devotee named Pankaja Ammal. He consoled her and gave her some flowers as *prasad*. Later she passed away peacefully with Baba's name on her lips, offering her heart as a flower at His holy feet. After a public meeting in Goschen which was very well attended, Baba left Madras the next morning.

The first issue of the *Meher Gazette* was published in June 1930. Meher Ashramam continued to render services to the depressed classes. From the very beginning Baba upheld that no particular caste or religion is exclusively superior. In a special message to the *Meher Gazette* He stated:

"Though creeds and theologies are many, religion is, strictly speaking, One; and this one religion includes ... love for God and longing to realize the Truth. In order that this religion may be applicable to all, class-caste tyranny and priestcraft must be eradicated root and branch."

Sampath Aiyangar did his best to live his life according to Baba's message. But by 1947 when Baba visited Madras again, Aiyangar had dropped his body to rest eternally in his Master's Being. Yet Mrs. Aiyangar and their two daughters, V. T. Laxmi and K. Janakey, tried their utmost to make Baba's stay at Meher Bhavan quite comfortable for Him and creative for His devotees.

"Bhagwan (God) Is Never Lost"

After closing the *mast ashram* at Mahabaleshwar in January 1947, Meher Baba broke His long spell of public withdrawal by giving *darshan* to His devotees and the people at Madras. The request of the southerners was strong and intense and Baba asked them to fix a date in the near future. Just as the planning was going along well, some disturbances broke out in the city. In March V. T. Laxmi sent Baba a telegram stating that the holding of a public meeting or congregation in the city of Madras was prohibited by order of the Police Commissioner. Baba was on the point of canceling His visit when a second telegram arrived indicating that Baba's visit would be considered most timely in those troubled days. The situation in the city was returning to normal, and Meher Baba agreed to visit Madras. The people were to be allowed to have His *darshan* at the place of His residence, Meher Bhavan, 27 Brahmin Street, Saidapet. When this decision was conveyed to the Baba people at Madras, in a telegram of welcome to Baba they stated: "Delighted. Deeply grateful to you. Awaiting your august arrival on April 2, 1947."

Baba left Poona on the Bombay-Madras Express on April 1. Kaka Baria, Jal (Baba's brother), Dr. Ghani, Dr. Donkin, Adi Sr., Ramjoo, Meherjee, Pendu and Sidu accompanied Him. The train arrived at Kurduwadi at nine that night. It was the first time that the people of this place had Meher Baba's *darshan* — rather, just a look through the window at that radiant figure as they folded their hands in *namaskars*. Two devotees from Barsi named Bhagat and Bhagwan had come to Kurduwadi to join Baba's party, but Bhagwan was found to be missing. We searched for him in the waiting room, along the railway lines and the platforms, shouting aloud, "Bhagwan, Bhagwan," but in vain. When this news

was conveyed to Baba, He remarked, "Don't worry. *Bhagwan* (the word literally means 'God') is never lost!" The second devotee, Bhagat, was asked to return to Barsi. Later it was learned that when Bhagat came to my house to take me to the station, Bhagwan, who was an illiterate streetcobbler, inadvertently got into an earlier train heading towards Sholapur (Madras side). At the next stop Bhagwan realized his mistake and got off the train at Sholapur. He, too, was asked to return to Barsi.

At Kurduwadi I managed to get across the crowded platform and sneak into a compartment near to Baba's. The annual examination of the school was drawing near but the Headmaster kindly sanctioned the leave; and my colleagues perhaps sanctioned my madness in "running after" Meher Baba. At Sholapur, Limkar joined me as a compartment companion. Bubbling with Baba's love, he was good company though at times it was boring to hear him talking excessively. Again I had to give a patient ear to the poems he had composed on Baba.

When the train reached Adoni, it was a delightful morning with a soft blue sky and it was pleasant to get out onto the platform. Limkar and I moved towards Baba's compartment and stood at a distance where we could just have a look at Baba's radiant face, so tender, so compassionate! The sun had peeped above the horizon and poured in through His window, joining us in this morning marvel. By nightfall the train reached Madras. As per previous instructions, no special reception like the one at Nagpur in November 1944 was held at Madras Central station. Only the host received the divine guest.

Under the Same Roof with Baba

Soon we found ourselves in Meher Bhavan. There was a big hall on the second floor for the *mandali*, and the adjacent

room was reserved for Baba. Within a few minutes Baba arrived in the *darshan* hall on the first floor. He stopped there and met His dear ones who had come from outstations. Minoo Kharas and Adi Dubash from Karachi were also present. Baba asked them to attend all the programs, but for their lodging He remarked: "Only those who have come with me are to stay in Meher Bhavan." They happily obeyed Him and made the necessary arrangements.

About Limkar, Baba joked: "The number of his relatives in Madras exceeds the number of my devotees! " He warned Limkar that if he had come especially for Baba's programs, he should not go to see his relatives. Limkar could not overcome the temptation. He visited his relatives, had a bad fall and limped for days. Maybe it was a warning for him to be more careful about the words of the Master, even a casual remark.

My turn was last. "Must I leave this place?" — a wave of doubt came rolling in. But before I could say anything Adi Sr. intervened and said something in Gujarati, and Baba signaled me to stay on. My heart chuckled at the prospect of living under the same roof with the Master. The next day Baba asked Minoo Kharas and Adi Dubash to bring back their baggage for a stay in Meher Bhavan. Baba showered, and still showers, His grace on us, but not necessarily when we expect it!

Darshan in Meher Bhavan

By morning on April 3 a band squad was in attendance at the gate of Meher Bhavan. They played sweet music to announce the commencement of the Baba program in Madras. Here are some of the details as far as I remember them. A difference here or there in the sequence of events is possible.

Darshan was to commence at 8:30 A.M. in the well-decorated hall on the ground floor. Baba's seat was in a corner facing the main door, and *darshan* was permitted from a little distance. No one was allowed to touch Baba's person, so to avoid such a disturbance a special seat had been designed. I do not recall that Baba embraced any of His devotees during those two days. Regarding the *darshan* program, Dr. Donkin wrote:

People streamed through the room in thousands — Baba sitting in the corner on a monstrous throne with a sort of seven-headed cobra over Him and a peacock at either side. This weird and wonderful throne was covered by silver paper of various colors, and Baba had to amble in and out of it at the beginning and close of each *darshan* session.

. . . People really were moved by Baba; people would stand with rapt expressions on their faces, looking quite lost to everything and some would stand with eyes closed and tears tumbling down their cheeks.⁶⁷

Manek Mehta had come from Bombay with a large group, and he stayed in one of the suburbs of Madras. This group of men and women would sit before Baba's seat and sing *bhajans* during *darshan* hours. Some of the songs were composed by Manek on Meher Baba's divinity. I remember the following two songs:

"Meher muze pyara duniyame tuhi hamara" meaning, "Meher is my loved one. In the world You are the only One, all in all." The second song, in Gujarati, was: *"Sadgurabahu bhayo chhe, Tuasam bijo na koi,"* meaning, "There have been many Masters, but You are the One without a second."

As the songs continued, one after another people passed in a line before Baba's seat, taking His *darshan*. Sometimes

⁶⁷ Kitty Davy, "Thirty Years in the Service of Meher Baba," *The Awakener*, vol. 9, no. 3, 1963, p. 15.

Baba would cast a glance of appreciation at the singer or gesture a sign of approval. A few songs of Mirabai and Kabir were also sung.

I had a short but instructive talk with Minoo Kharas. In a small bag he had all the five volumes of Meher Baba's *Discourses*, also a few booklets on Meher Baba which had been published. His study of Baba's literature, including statements made by Baba at different times, had been intense. He told me that when one was in Meher Baba's *sahavas* (company), one should concentrate exclusively on Him. It was he who first suggested to me that I write my impressions of my visits and meetings with Meher Baba in diary form. Minoo first met Baba at Nasik in January 1932. No sooner did he see Meher Baba than his heart acclaimed, "Here is God in human form for whom I have been searching all these years. Now my search for the Master is over." From that very first meeting Minoo inwardly dedicated his very being at the holy feet of his beloved Master, Meher Baba. Minoo's rock-like faith in Baba's divinity is remarkable. He had flown from Bombay to Madras to be in time for the *darshan*. Malcolm Schloss from California was also given permission by Baba to attend the programs in Madras, but somehow he could not get "on the wing."

Spirituality Cannot Be a Monopoly

When the rush of people had lessened, Baba moved to the premises of Meher Ashramam. There a pipal tree grew which had been planted in commemoration of His visit to Madras in March 1930. By this time it had grown into a huge tree. Baba sat under it and some beautiful pictures were taken. Baba-work under the auspices of Meher Ashramam, including services to the poor and depressed class people, formerly was carried on in this compound. Baba had appreciated selfless social service of this type. His

message for the "oppressed and the depressed" was as follows:

To believe today in birth and profession to be necessarily the basis of any difference as between man and man is to insist upon living in the past and remaining dead to the present. Cleanliness of mind and body, which is practical spirituality, has never been and can never be the monopoly of any one particular class or creed. It should be aspired to by everyone and could be acquired by anyone — man or woman.

Man-made differences, like all other things made by man, take no time to change with the changing times. Rights must be restored and will be restored, but responsibilities have also to be shouldered. It is indeed great to be a man, but it is far greater to be man to man.

Irrespective of the birth-labels and belief-tables, I give my blessings to all those who feel themselves to be oppressed, depressed or suppressed, from any cause whatsoever.

During the two days' visit to Madras, Meher Baba gave a message to a small group, a part of which is given below:

The institution of slavery in the Middle Ages was already bad enough, but the irresponsible slavery of the Industrial Age is worse. The most cruel and destructive form of slavery is an intellectual bigotry of possessing the monopoly of Truth, exclusive of others.

Intellect is, so to say, reserved by nature for man, but however keen and quick it may be, it will always remain just one of the stepping-stones to Knowledge. Like everything else, intellect can be used as much as misused or abused. The deeper the intelligence, the greater the responsibility for discrimination between essentials and non-essentials.

May you succeed in transcending the limitations of intellectual understanding . . . My blessings to all.

Meherjee's Meeting with Meher Baba

In Meher Bhavan my bedding was facing Dr. Ghani's in the opposite row, so I could hear or overhear many things, jokes and Baba anecdotes, that he told to those around him. Like Minoo Kharas, Meherjee Karkaria was a new acquaintance, though I had no personal talk with him then. I was told that he first saw Meher Baba at Meherabad in the Meher Ashram days, as far back as 1927. It was just a coincidence that he had accompanied Chanji (F. H. Dadachanji) on a weekend to Meherabad. Baba lovingly inquired about Meherjee. After getting his degree in science, Meherjee wanted to go to Germany to study pharmaceutical chemistry. Baba casually said, "If you pass this year, continue your studies; if not, come to me at Meherabad." Meherjee never expected a failure in the examination. But "luckily" he failed and did go to Meherabad, where he taught the boys in the *ashram* school. He was just twenty then. When the school was closed, at the request of Meherjee's father Baba permitted him to leave Meherabad but remarked to him: "You may leave Meherabad, but I will not leave you!" Meherjee has been one of Meher Baba's dear disciples ever since.

I also heard an unusual incident from Meherjee's life which revealed one of the aspects of Baba's all-inclusive knowledge. I wish to narrate it, for some may find it interesting. It is connected with horoscopes and the influence of stars.

The Master's Words Rule Out Prediction

In the early thirties Meherjee Karkaria left India for Iran on business. After over a decade, he visited India again in 1943. At that time Meher Baba's headquarters was at Lahore, hundreds of miles to the north of Bombay. Before

proceeding to Lahore, Meherjee met some of his acquaintances in business and there arose an amusing episode about astrological predictions. One of his friends asked Meherjee to check his "fortune" from his horoscope. He advised him not to speculate too much on war money — it was during World War II. Meherjee was impressed and got his horoscope from his father, who was residing at Navsari in Gujarat. After going through the birth chart, a famous old astrologer predicted that Meherjee should discontinue his particular line of business, and it would be best for him to sell all that he had at the market rate. Meherjee felt convinced and cabled his office in Iran to act accordingly, and then he left for Lahore (Pakistan).

Meherjee was meeting Meher Baba again after a period of eleven years. Baba very lovingly embraced him and inquired about his life and business in Iran. Meherjee concluded the whole account by relating how he sent the cable from Bombay about selling all his goods. Baba called him near, twisted his ear and remarked: "Do you believe in stars or in me as God?" Meherjee's prompt reply was: "I have full faith in you as God in human form." At that moment Baba asked him to send a fresh cable to his office, canceling the previous instructions. Later Meherjee reaped a considerable profit in that enterprise. After a few years he wound up his business in Iran and left that country for good. Just after his return to India he had the good fortune to join Meher Baba as one of the *mandali* on His visit to Madras.

Leaving aside whether or not Meherjee's horoscope was correct or incorrect, I personally do not feel that Meher Baba was either for or against any branch of science, for He is life itself in all its aspects. Perhaps He wanted us to understand the right place of various theories in formulating action in our lives. We have to guard against letting the supernatural element affect our daily lives. Such intrusion can tempt one to make a fetish out of anything, and gradually

one can lose self-confidence. Would you believe that one of my friends wore caps of different colors in response to the forewarning of the stars! To me, this incident in Meherjee's life indicates that in one's life with the Master, if one has an unswerving faith in His words it acts as a supervening law. I am not an adherent of astrology, but I do feel that no honest investigation of life should be treated either with undue prejudice or excessive enthusiasm.

We had a good chat among ourselves in Meher Bhavan about Meher Baba as the *Avatar* and His *lilas*. It seemed an unendingly delightful occupation, but to recount all of it would be an outright digression. Personally, I found that Dr. Ghani was a storehouse of many, many significant Baba events and that whenever possible I should not miss his company. The hall was quite close to Baba's room and word came that He had retired. It was a signal to switch off the lights, and we rested on our beds with the sweet memories of the day leading us to sleep. Thus ended the first day of our stay at Meher Bhavan, Madras.

Second Day of *Darshan* at Madras, 1947

A Stream Running Down the Mountain

THE second day of the *darshan* at Madras was, and still is, precious to me. It was breakfast time on Friday, April 4, and the *mandali* were going down the stairs. I saw Baba standing in the doorway, looking at us lovingly as we passed by. When I was about to start down, Adi Sr. called me. I entered Baba's room and found Him sitting in a chair. Without any introduction He gestured:

"You will have liberation (*Mukti*)."

This spontaneous assurance lifted me to a new dimension. A feeling of timelessness crept over me, perhaps for a few seconds. I was brought to my senses when Adi Sr. continued to convey Baba's "say":

"But let your love flow on ceaselessly, like a stream down the mountain on its way to the Ocean. Obstructions there will be, of pleasures, of pains. Pass by these as passing phases. There will be flowers and thorns by the bank and in the flow. Do not get attached; do not get affected. Go on and on and let the stream become a river. Doubts may assail you, self-complacency may lure you, but with love in the heart, roll on, flow on to me — the Ocean. Worry not, fear not. I am the Ocean of Love. Now, go and have tea."

The instruction about tea made me aware of the room I was in. It is difficult to say what I felt at that moment. It

is something beyond me and I cannot put it in black and white. The words, if expressed, might turn into barriers. It is too sacred to talk about. Perhaps everyone who came into Meher Baba's contact had such sublime moments. I wonder whether I had tea or nectar that day!

The morning *darshan* hours were crowded with eager faces clamoring to have a glimpse of Baba. Manek Mehta and his party from Bombay again entertained Baba with devotional songs. Behind me stood a painter trying to draw Meher Baba's picture, a vain attempt to portray Him as He looked. Baba signaled one person to come closer to His seat from the *darshan* queue. I felt a bit curious as to why this particular person should be called near. As he was leaving the hall I approached him and found that he was observing silence. I did not know Tamil and so no further conversation was possible. I just felt that his inward *sadhana* drew him even outwardly closer to Baba, the Indweller of all.

Love — the Finest Give and Take

After lunch and an hour's rest, the program of visiting a few places in Madras commenced. Baba, accompanied by us all, reached a Center which seemed to be a boarding school for girls. V. T. Laxmi, who was associated with vigilance and women's social welfare, was in charge of the Center. She placed on her dear Master a beautiful garland of gold embroidery, perhaps a specialty of South India. Baba, resting under a tree, looked very radiant as He blessed the girls who filed past Him in a queue. A part of His message is given below:

Love for God, love for fellow beings, love for service and sacrifice — in short, love in any shape and form is the finest give and take. Ultimately, it is love that will bring

about the much-desired leveling of human feelings all over the world, without necessarily disturbing the inherent diversities of details about mankind

It is infinitely better to hope for the best than to fear the worst. Time is as much made out of the nights as out of the days. The world is approaching a glorious dawn once again in its inevitable course of ups and downs. My blessings to all.

Meher Baba Remembered His Dear Archangels

Wearing that glittering garland, Baba got into a car and it sped to M. Vadivelu Mudliar's house. The whole family beamed with joy at Baba's arrival. While the *arti* was being performed, Baba held a skein of cotton yarn in His fingers. He looked deeply absorbed. When the *arti* was over, one of the devotees offered Baba a garland of sandalwood shavings and the fragrance filled the room. Calling Dr. Donkin, who was a bit late for *arti* near to Him, Baba took off the two garlands and handed them over to him, along with that skein of cotton yarn. Baba instructed Donkin to send these as His *prasad* to Mary and Will Backett in England. Mary had a special message from Meher Baba. She was to hold the skein of yarn in her hand "for a while when she gets it, and thereafter keep it in a safe place and not use it for anything, ever."

Baba used to refer to Mary and Will as His dear archangels. This "celestial" couple met the Master in London in April 1932 at the house of Kitty Davy's parents. Baba, in a way, celebrated at Madras the fifteenth anniversary of these meetings by remembering them and sending the gift of garlands. Strangely enough, by the end of the next fifteen years, after fulfilling the appointed task, they left their physical bodies to be with their dear Master "for all time." At the first contact, Will received *prasad* at the hands of

Meher Baba which healed him physically and mentally, and Mary had an uplifting touch. It is quite delightful to read in their own words the account of their first meeting with their beloved Master.

Healing Prasad and Uplifting Touch

In his diary for the year 1932, Will Backett wrote about this memorable event:

. . . I had felt that I wished to make Baba some offering as a greeting when meeting Him for the first time. I knew that flowers were often given in His own country, but had little means for a suitable offering after a journey from the country which left little time, before reaching the house. Almost impetuously, I stopped before a greengrocer and chose a few grapes — a mean enough offering truly, for the fruit was small and not attractive. In its little brown bag, it seemed meaner than ever, and quite unworthy, but I just poured my love into it by mental effort, for not yet had the wellsprings of love for Baba been opened in my heart, to flow spontaneously to Him of their own force.

Had Meher Baba shown me more at that time of His own inner nature, which the future has revealed, I could not have borne it, I know. Clumsily, it must have seemed, did I offer Him the fruit, while my friend was recounting my physical weakness to Him. Looking back, I can see how alert He was, though with quiet composure he detached a grape from the bunch and handed it to me before my eyes could follow the movement properly. My friend, who knew what was intended, told me that Baba wished me to eat it, saying that he had truly charged it with His healing power and love, and so I obediently followed His direction and ate the grape at once, slowly, almost like one in a dream, without comprehending fully that which the passage of years now makes plainer. With

that belessed fruit came the commencement of a return to health, which other methods up to then had failed to give. And gradually energy has returned, though perhaps of a different character than before.⁶⁸

Mary Backett wrote her impressions about her first meeting with Baba as follows:

We first met Baba at a friend's house in London. He was seated in a small room at the top of the house, surrounded by some close devotees. They did not hear me enter, but Baba sprang up, with the agility, power and grace that characterize all his movements, and came quickly forward. I was astonished and touched that he should rise to meet me, as I had intended to do homage as best I knew.

He looked at me earnestly and I at him, and I knew he was reading my very soul. He then signed to me to sit beside him on the low couch or bed and took my hand with that gentle touch we all know so well. Immediately I felt a great upliftment of consciousness, such as I had never experienced with anyone before. I had been searching and reading deeply for many years and knew that now I had found the Master, and that the long search was over ...

My whole being was raised and spiritualized, and filled with peace and joy. He gave me more, far more, in the space of three minutes, than I had gained in thirty years of earnest seeking . . .

I knew who Baba is. It was the great event of my life to meet Him.⁶⁹

After receiving the parcel of garlands, Will wrote to Baba: "Accept our devotion and love, with all their limitations, perfecting their imperfections with Thyself," and

⁶⁸ Kitty Davy, "Thirty Years in the Service of Meher Baba" *The Awakener*, vol. 9. no. 3, pp. 3-4.

⁶⁹ Mary Backett, "Impressions," *Meher Baba Journal*, May 1940, p. 421.

Mary expressed her feelings thus: "Keep us ever more close in Thy Heart and give us strength on all planes to be faithful and loving channels, for all Thou wouldst have us to do." Baba had indeed many, many ways of contacting His dear ones and many more means of retaining and recharging the link. His was the life of unbounded compassion.

Spirituality Covers All Life

From Vadivelu's house, on the way to Saidapet, we were taken to a matinee movie. All the seats in the balcony were reserved for Baba people. The owner of the theater had requested Baba to view this picture, a film based on the life of a lover of God, a mythological story. It was in Tamil and so we could not follow the conversation. After some time we left our seats in the balcony for the cars, which were waiting outside to take us to Meher Bhavan. When we arrived there we found that the arrangements for the public *darshan* program were complete. Soon the road was overcrowded with people — men, women and children. To pacify the *darshan*-hungry crowd Baba stood up, His regal face beaming with love. He folded His hands to the people — in a way, to His own selves in the crowd. He dictated on His alphabet board:

"I am very happy to see you all. Every one of you is in one form or the other of the Divine manifestation. You are all in me; I am in you all. The only way to realize God is through love."

For the public in general there was a special message, "Resuscitation of Religion," in which He stated:

The urgent need of today to resuscitate religion is to dig it out of its narrow and dark hidings and coverings and let the spirit of man shine out once again in its

pristine glory. The most practical thing to do in the world is to be spiritually minded. It needs no special time, place or circumstances. It is not necessarily concerned with anything out of the way in anyone's daily life and day-to-day routine. It is never too late or too early to be spiritual.

It is just a simple question of having a right attitude towards lasting values, changing circumstances, avoidable eventualities and a sense of the inevitable. Spirituality is neither restricted to nor can it be restricted by anyone or anything, anywhere, at any time. It covers all life for all time.

Today, from morning right up to late night, there was program after program. It was an unforgettable sight to see Baba, with that compassionate poise and delightful equanimity, accommodating Himself to the needs of various persons.

Significance of Washing the Master's Feet

We were to leave Madras on April 5, 1947 by the morning train, so we all got up pretty early. As the time for Baba to leave Meher Bhavan was drawing close, a few of the family members looked sad and were in tears. Generally Baba did not allow people to touch His feet, but as recognition of His love for the late C. V. Sampath Aiyangar, Baba even permitted the family members to wash His feet with milk and honey. A rare privilege! Meher Baba once explained the symbolic significance of this act of worship:

The feet, which are physically the lowest part of the body, are spiritually the highest. Physically, the feet go through everything, good and bad, beautiful and ugly, clean and dirty, yet they are above everything. So, spiritually, the feet of a Perfect Master are above everything in the universe, which is like dust to them.

When people come to a Perfect Master and touch his feet with their heads, they lay upon him the burden of their *sanskaras*, those subtle impressions of thought and emotion which bind the individual soul to recurrent earthly lives. This is the burden which Jesus meant he would assume when he said, "Come unto me all ye who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

A Perfect Master collects these *sanskaras* from all over the universe, just as an ordinary person, in walking, collects dust on his feet. Those who love him deeply ... wash his feet with honey, milk and water, representing different types of *sanskaras*, and place at his feet a coconut, which represents the mind and symbolizes their complete surrender.⁷⁰

Baba did not invite us to wash His feet so I was just a silent spectator to this hallowed act of worship. Baba looked delighted as well as solemn and seemed so absorbed and so alert to everything at one and the same time. Except for a few, the local Baba lovers were not asked to visit either Meher Bhavan or the railway station that morning. Baba's words of farewell to His dear ones in Madras were:

"I am always with you, still I have been very happy for the days you have been with me. You may feel that now I am going away but you should never find that I have gone away. It is for you to hold on to me now and forever. On My part, I and my love will never leave you here or hereafter."

Perfect Forgetfulness to Conscious Powerfulness

One bogie (carriage) was reserved for the Baba party on the Madras-Bombay Express, and in the morning we

⁷⁰ Manicollm Schloss, "The Feast Day of a Modern Christ," *Meher Baba Journal*, February 1942, p. 208.

boarded the train. It was a unique experience to travel with Baba, for now one felt more at home with Him and His moods. As the train left the station a basket of fruit was unpacked, and Baba began to throw the fruit as *prasad* to those in the compartment. Sometimes He looked in one direction and threw the fruit in another, so we had to be alert to catch it. If someone dropped the catch he had to go near Baba, return the fruit and wait for the next chance. It was indeed a fine indoor sport!

Limkar, who was traveling in the same compartment, tried two or three times to read some of his poems to Meher Baba — they were based on His divinity. Baba was busy with some other work so He gestured, "Limkar, I know the contents of the poems before they are composed." Looking at Dr. Donkin and pointing at Limkar, Baba remarked in a lighter vein of His inimitable humor, "Don, I have explained eight types of *masts* in *The Wayfarers*. Here is the ninth type!"

After some time Baba was in the mood to give a discourse through the means of His alphabet board. I was all ears and eyes, for it was the first time I ever saw and heard Baba giving a discourse. Jal was reading the board. Dr. Ghani repeated the sentences aloud in English, with an on-the-spot translation into Hindi so that all the members in the compartment could hear well and understand Baba's words. Mainly the discourse clarified the three states of consciousness:

- 1) The sound sleep state of perfect forgetfulness.
- 2) The awake-dream state of increasing helplessness.
- 3) The Real-awake state of All-powerfulness.

In the beginning Baba explained how natural is the pull within our consciousness to retire into deep sleep, and how vital is the drive to wake up and aspire for an expansion in consciousness. He lucidly explained how God, the incomprehensible, plays the indescribable game of waking

Himself to His own infinite wakefulness, latent in the original sound sleep state. This is effected through the process of increasing helplessness, which in the end becomes unlimited. This absolute helplessness of itself is turned into All-powerfulness.

Baba's gestures and facial expressions, His rhythm and pauses as His fingers moved on the board, presented a marvelous sight, so vivid in memory to this day! At the end of the discourse, I vaguely gathered that the timeless transmutation of infinite Unconsciousness into infinite Consciousness is a phenomenon of which the Beyond-Beyond State of God is neither aware nor oblivious! It is really the *Beyond*, untouched by any experience! The magnitude of the subject matter made my mind silent. I looked out of the window at the fast-moving trees and fields and at the sky and horizon, wherein the reflection of the Beyond was manifesting in one way or the other. What an astounding Beyond with an endless variety of splendor about it!

The Internal Journey with the Master

After the discourse Baba wished to retire from the *mandali* for His work. Some of us found an unoccupied first class coupe on the train, so it was reserved for Baba. As He left the carriage He instructed Dr. Donkin to occupy His seat until He returned. We did full justice to the lunch so lovingly given by our dear host at Madras. Baba made a few visits to our compartment and asked some of us to tell Him a few stories or jokes to relieve the burden of His work. Then He gestured to Sidu, who is a ready qavval-in-waiting, to sing a *ghazal*. The substance of the Urdu lines, as per my limited understanding of the language, was as follows:

"Love is a strange binding! It binds and unwinds. The more you bind yourself to the Beloved, the greater the freedom (unwinding) you have. But such love is very, very

rare. In fact, love is an ocean of fire that you have to cross to meet the Beloved."

By evening Baba had returned to His coupe with Kaka Baria, Adi Sr. and Dr. Donkin. In the early morning the train reached Kurduwadi, the station where I had joined the Baba party. Leaving those who were in the compartment, I stepped down onto the platform. The window of Baba's coupe was open, and I saw him preoccupied and absorbed in His work. Even in that "unseeing state," He gave me a look of compassion for a second and I felt satisfied. I did not dare go near Him to offer *namaskar*, for I feared that it might draw a crowd to Baba's coupe and thus disturb Him in His work. I left the railway station with heavy steps and mingled feelings of joy and sorrow. The happy moments of *sahavas* are surrounded by unseen tears of separation! It was a pity that the journey ended so soon, but once begun, does the internal journey with the Master ever end until final union?