

A Short History of the Sixth Edition

The following account is reproduced from the essay entitled “A History of the Discourses,” published in the revised sixth edition of Meher Baba’s Discourses (Myrtle Beach: Sheriar Foundation, 2007), vol. 4, pp. 3–80; since the entire review of the creation of the sixth edition is too lengthy to reproduce here, we have confined ourselves to three extracts, taken from pp. 44–46, 58, and 60–62, with footnotes eliminated. For the full story of the sixth edition, see the “History,” pp. 41–62.

. . . In any event, as of the late 1950s, the matter of the *Discourses* was still unresolved. It was Baba himself who took the initiative; and at this juncture we turn to the account of Don Stevens, one of the principal actors in this saga. At that time, Don was a *mureed* (disciple) in Sufism Reoriented, an order whose charter Baba had signed on 12th November 1952 and which had played a major role in the publishing of Baba’s books during the key period of the mid-1950s. Don Stevens and Ivy Duce, the Murshida of Sufism Reoriented, had co-edited *God Speaks*; and shortly thereafter, under Baba’s direction, Don edited and provided narration and commentary for *Listen, Humanity*. Don was an employee of Standard Oil, and though residing in the West, during the early 1960s his work brought him on many trips to Asia. He used these trips as occasions to visit Baba at Meherazad, who had given him a blanket permission to come for his *darshan* whenever the opportunity presented itself.

On one of these visits, Baba suddenly asked, “And now, Don, what are you doing about Baba’s words these days?” As it happened, back in San Francisco Don had been meeting with young seekers who had found their way to Baba through the hippie movement, and a major activity in these meetings had been the study of selected passages from the *Discourses*. So in the course of his reply to Baba’s query, Don said he felt he should reread the five-volume set again from beginning to end; and Baba immediately nodded his head in approval—“Do that, Don.” In subsequent visits, Baba kept bringing the subject up, prodding, asking Don if he had reread the *Discourses* as he had promised, and soliciting his opinion as to what would make them more accessible to Baba’s devotees. Don replied that, while Deshmukh clearly commanded a wide vocabulary and rarely made a grammatical error, his sentence structure, Indian rather than American, made reading cumbersome and slow.

This analysis appeared to interest Baba considerably, and he asked my opinion of what should be done about it. I replied that this could be very easily corrected, as Baba had a large number of very qualified devotees in both England and America who could quickly and easily handle the problem of difficult sentences.

Baba immediately changed the style of his own features, becoming rather severe, and leveling his forefinger at me, gestured through Eruch, “You do it.” I was quite unprepared for this outcome, and tried out on Baba my hesitancy to tackle such an important undertaking. To this Baba gave

his now standard reply, “I will be with you,” to which I gave my own standard reply, “Then, Baba, I will be happy to do my best.” [revised sixth edition, vol. 4, pp. 44–46]

. . . the editorial work seems to have come to a head during the summer of 1966, and many details of its finalization and publication were being settled over the next few months. Minutes of the meeting of the board of directors of Sufism Reoriented on 20th August 1966 record the following note.

Don Stevens outlined the procedure to be followed in publishing the five volumes of “Meher Baba’s Discourses” in accordance with the understanding arrived at with Meher Baba and Adi K. Irani. Murshida Duce is to have full responsibility for the publication. She has been given the five volumes of “Discourses” and a folder of comments and corrections from Baba to prepare for printing. The “Discourses” copyright is to remain in India with Adi K. Irani (and subsequently will go to Meher Baba Trust). . . . [revised sixth edition, vol. 4, p. 58]

During this same period [late 1966] the manuscript must have been sent to India; and during October–November 1966 Baba evidently reviewed and approved the draft, returning it with certain corrections conveyed through Mani. Don Stevens, in the course of his work-related travel, had established a relationship with Komiyama Printing Company in Japan, that undertook to produce the book at an economical price. The text was sent on to Japan, probably at the end of 1966. Over the next year it went through two sets of galley proofs. (Recently having returned from a meeting with Baba in India, Rick Chapman took part in this process, having been given a hundred pages or so for proofing during the summer of 1967.)

Finally, after many difficulties, late in 1967, the three-volume set was printed (the date of record for the first printing is October, 1967); and by December it was ready for sale. The publisher was Sufism Reoriented, and the copyright notice was in favour of Adi K. Irani. Over the next few years the book sold well, and new printings were issued in September 1968; September 1970; October 1971; and December 1973. Meher Baba dropped his physical form in January 1969, and the three printings after that date insert after the end of the original introduction an additional paragraph that concludes the biographical narrative of Baba’s life. . .

We close this section with an interesting comment that Baba made during the course of the editing of the sixth edition, a comment perhaps suggestive of the kind of role that the *Discourses* may play in the future. Baba conveyed this remark to Don Stevens during one of his visits to Meherazad during the mid-1960s. By this time, as Don

relates, he had progressed about a third of the way through his part of the editorial work, during which, he had become aware that there were more discourses on meditation than any other subject. “This not only amazed me,” Don says, “but also slightly hurt me, because Baba had never graced me by giving me a meditation of his choosing.”

On his next visit to Meherazad, Don found an opportunity to bring this to Baba’s attention—“Baba, you have never, in all this time that we have spent together, given me a meditation.” Baba’s eyes brightened, and in response to Don’s complaint, he dictated the following:

Don, that is an extremely important point. You should understand that during my manifestation, and for some time after, the gate to the path of love, that leads to realization, is fully open. As the path of love is the most rapid and effective of all paths to realization, when it is available to all humanity, it is a relative waste of time to use any other path. However, the gate to the path of love will gradually narrow, and in the future will only be available to the very rare seeker of truth. At this time secondary routes must be used, and the most effective of these is that of meditation. As I must prepare during my lifetime for my devotees the resources necessary for them to use during the hundreds of years that I will be physically absent, now is the time that I must give out in detail the methods of the use of meditation, being the best of the secondary paths. I did not give you a meditation inasmuch as the path of love is fully open to you, and its sufficiency far greater than that of meditation. [revised sixth edition, vol. 4, pp. 60–62]