

AVATAR
The Life Story of the Perfect Master Meher Baba
A Narrative of Spiritual Experience

Second Edition (December, 1947)

By

Jean Adriel

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A V A T A R

“When you meet the true Guru, He will
awaken your heart;

He will tell you the secret of love and
detachment, and then you will know indeed that
He transcends this universe....

He comes to the Path of the Infinite on
whom the grace of the Lord descends: he is freed
from births and deaths who attains to Him.”

--Kabir

“It is my part in the Divine Plan to bring to the
Weary world a fresh dispensation of Eternal Love.”
--**MEHER BABA.**

A V A T A R

The Life Story of the Perfect Master

MEHER BABA

A Narrative of Spiritual Experience

By

JEAN ADRIEL

1947

J.F.ROWINY PRESS

SANTA BARBARA

CALIF.

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Ojai, Calif.

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Second Edition, December, 1947

TO THE LIVING CHRIST
WHOSE BEAUTY THE VERY HEAVENS CANNOT CONTAIN,
BUT WHOSE PRESENCE
MAY BE FOUND IN EVERY HUMBLE,
LOVING HEART

I wish to express my deep indebtedness to all those devotees--Eastern and Western-whose letters, diaries, and articles appearing in the Meher Baba Journal I have drawn upon for much of the material in this biography of the Master.

--J.A.

PREFACE

When Meher Baba told me, in India, to spend most of my time meditating upon him and writing down the fruits of my meditation, I little thought that they would find their way into print. It was not, in fact, until I had been back in America for about four years that the book AVATAR began to take its present form.

I had spent a couple of weeks at a psychological seminar conducted by Dr. Fritz Kunkel, the renowned psychiatrist. It had been a most inspiring and revealing fortnight, which for me had had the effect of not only helping me to understand better my own particular problems, but it had given me profound insight into many of the more puzzling aspects of Baba's technique with his disciples. Only one other member of the group had any interest in Baba, so I was compelled to keep my new insights largely to myself, but I recorded them all in my note-book.

As our stay drew to a close, I felt greatly quickened by the creative forces which had been released, as the leader, Dr. Kunkel, unfolded for us the dynamic possibilities inherent in the right understanding and application of "Introversion," which had been the subject of the seminar. He suggested that whatever life-bearing seeds had been sown during those weeks should be given the opportunity to mature and bear fruit. They should find outlet in some form of creative expression which would symbolize a totally new way of life. One of his concrete suggestions had been to write out our life-stories as a means of starting the creative flow. I considered his advice earnestly for some days. I finally came to the conclusion that the most fruitful course for me would be to write the life-story of my Master, Meher Baba, as I knew it, with particular emphasis upon my own experience with him.

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As I reviewed my own life-intensely colorful and dramatic in the spiritual sense, I knew that it derived all its significance from Baba; that it had for many years, even prior to my meeting him, drawn its very momentum from his inspiration. AVATAR is, therefore, a story within a story; a life within a life, as the disciple's life must inevitably be-hidden within the Master's.

About ten years have passed since the disciple in India was instructed to write down whatever came to her: "I shall be the force behind you," the Master had said. Now, as the book is finish, word has come from him that he places his blessing upon it and wishes it given to the world. In anticipation of his coming again to America a Center has been established for him at Myrtle Beach in South Carolina, and on the West coast, in the Upper Ojai Valley, a beautiful place, Meher Mount, awaits him.

-J.A.

Meher Mount,
Upper Ojai,
California.
September 1, 1946

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CHAPTER I

SOUL-AWAKENING

THOUGH I was not consciously seeking a spiritual Master I was seeking that spiritual fulfilment which had been the passionate longing of my soul for many years, when the Master, Meher Baba, first came into my outer life.

When I was twenty-one, through a priest of the Anglican Church, I had been initiated into the Kingdom of Reality. This spiritual awakening had precipitated a state of consciousness in which all my senses were suddenly merged into one unpremeditated awareness of a transcendent Presence which permeated every atom of space and quickened the whole of life with Its sublime beauty. Human beings, trees, flowers, even the concrete of the pavements upon which I walked were radiant with an unearthly light. The most sordid surroundings were enhanced by the inner glow of what I knew to be the Presence of God. I knew this because this Presence had awakened within my heart.

For a period of many months following the initial experience this blissful consciousness remained with me. Then, through bitter disillusionment and the bewildered state of mind, which it induced, I lost the heightened awareness. For long years I searched with heavy heart for the key to spiritual joy and peace.

Because I shared with many others the conviction that spiritual guidance must henceforth come from within, my search consisted in those practices of meditation and self-awareness which seemed most likely to re-establish the celestial joy. I was of the opinion that to depend upon any *outside* source would only postpone that consummation which my soul sought-union with the God-Self.

Now, with deeper understanding, I have become aware that life is an indivisible whole and that what we call 'outer'

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is but the objectification of inner processes-the spiritual Guide is the visible answer to the soul's inner call.

Once, during this period, as I sat in the dentist chair inhaling nitrous-oxide gas, I lost consciousness for a moment and in that brief interval I again recaptured the awareness which transcends three-dimensional existence. Before my inner sight a cosmic panorama of creation (life, death, and man's ultimate destiny) was revealed. The sorrows and problems of my own earth-life which had weighed heavily upon my spiritual shoulders slid easily from me. I was free! The limitations of the finite mind had vanished. By the power of directed will I soared high into space until I reached a sun-lit mountain-top. Then I looked down into the vast valley below me. There, milled the children of earth and though they were enveloped in gloomy shadow, and I seemed miles above them, I saw their features with startling clarity. For the most part their movements seemed aimless, but here and there one would strike out on an uncharted course, and soon others would break away from the human vortex to follow the trail-blazers.

I watched these adventurous pilgrims on their lonely way at the wide base of the mountain. As they advanced in their climb they were confronted by tremendous hazards. Discouraged by the initial hardships, terrified by the greater ones ahead, the faint-hearted dropped back into the maelstrom of earth. Others, more resolute, designed a slow spiral course upward, while a few-very few-climbed steadily to the summit in an almost undeviating line. As they reached the pinnacle of the great mountain I witnessed the joyous meeting of kindred souls in search of the same supreme objective. No word was spoken between these comrades. No word was needed: here thought, under the impulse of love, communicated itself without speech.

Here was the meeting ground of the soul with its Maker – the One whom we call God. By a process of inner unfolding I was made to understand that this One lives in all things and beings, yet is independent of his creation. It is union with this One which lovers seek in their beloveds. It is the power of this One which the conquerors of earth would as-

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sume. It is the knowledge of this One which the wise ones of earth have ever proclaimed. It is the peace and joy of this One which the saints of all ages and religions have sought and found.

As I became aware of my union with this One, there unfurled within my consciousness the pattern of creation. I saw, in space, a point of light whirling with terrifying velocity, and from within its rotation, stars, planets, worlds take form. Light and darkness balanced each other. In the midst of chaos order was being established. Then I felt within myself the consciousness of evolving life – so dense in the mineral, so delicate in the flower, so fierce in the wild animal. I could feel the slender pain, the dim awareness, the heavy ferocity which these lower forms of life experience, and I recognized these slower life-tremors as constituents of my own soul, with its more complex joys and sorrows. Never again could I deny to any aspect of God's creation its own particular awareness, nor could I exclude any emotion from the symphony of life.

It was revealed to me of what little moment were my sins, how equally unimportant my virtues, I saw clearly that good and evil are simply manifested aspects of this transitory life, while God, in essence, is beyond all opposites, This tremendous Reality was not concerned with my petty -world concept of vice and virtue. "Be spontaneous! wholly unfettered in response to life", was the burden of the message which this One in a thunderous yet still Voice spoke within me.

It revealed kaleidescopically how, through many lives of pain and joy, the soul in me-which was one with the soul of all and one with this Soul Supreme-had developed its capacity for conscious self-hood. It showed how many phases of tension and release had been necessary to weave for my individualized spirit a strong and resilient garment; and how, when this was ultimately achieved – after the saturation point of earth experience had been reached-my soul would be ready for the final evolutionary step-conscious reunion with God.

This 'one, far-off, divine event', which the poets of all

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time have proclaimed, I now experienced. In a tidal-wave of ecstasy the final remnant of my lesser self was engulfed in union with the Oversoul. For a timeless moment I was that One. My individuality was not lost; merely raised to the infinite proportions of God, endowed with his infinite capacities. Out, out into an eternal future, back into an ageless past-both blended in a dimensionless present-I saw worlds being formed, worlds destroyed; an infinite game being played by an infinite God, who, even in pain, perpetually enjoyed the imperishable bliss of his creation. For an eternal moment the dental chair had become my stratoplane into Infinity.

This vivid glimpse of Reality naturally left me with the inspiration and incentive to integrate as much as possible its transcendental wisdom into my conscious life,. Again, some years later, a door opened which admitted me for a few brief weeks to another intensified experience of expanded consciousness. All mind activity was utterly stilled by an ecstasy which almost consumed me. Like fire, this heightened vibration poured through my body and soul; in fact there seemed no longer to be any cleavage between physical and spiritual; The inner faculties of clairvoyance, clairsentience and levitation were awakened. One sunny morning in walking through Central Park, just off Fifth Avenue, I found myself rising about four feet from the ground and floating down the pathway with great freedom and joy, until some people approaching at a distance caused me to pull myself sown to earth again. I had no desire to become the object of sensational publicity.

A future was revealed to me in which this expanded consciousness would be the norm for many people. I understood how discord and war would automatically disappear when those qualities of universal love and joy which then poured through me were released in the soul of man. I perceived how unpossessive would be the relationships of that future day; how one would be able to retain the physical body as long as one desired to remain in it , and how the untrammelled spirit of man would constantly recreate life in a vehicle in which there would be no mental, emotion-

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al or physical strain to disintegrate it. It was also revealed to me how destructive to the finer vibrations of the spirit are the dissecting, separative and corroding propensities of the analytical mind, when it lacks the synthesizing faculty of the heart.

After a month, alas, this intensified awareness, too, abated. Painful as it was to continue living without it, I knew well what had to be accomplished before I could regain and maintain it as permanent state of consciousness. The experience had been induced by meditation on the resurrection of the body; and I was shown very clearly that before the body could sustain such a swift rate of vibration, every cell must be cleansed – attuned to the newly – released power; the egoistic mind stilled, the restless emotions purified. Every fibre of the body, every cranny of the mind had literally to be reconditioned in order to house permanently this exalted state of consciousness.

The experience left with me a fragment of that radiant life – force which had permeated it – to be used whenever the need became acute. The deep peace and causeless joy vanished, however, leaving with me a greatly augmented yearning for God. To have once experienced the inner life of the Kingdom is to become a God-addict. No physical nor mental pleasure, no earthly delight can ever satisfy the hunger of the soul which has once tasted God, though all human joy is infinitely enhanced by the divine afflatus.

During the succeeding two years I continued my inward search in company with a dear comrade, my former husband, Malcolm Schloss, while trying to help him keep our metaphysical center, the Northnode Bookshop in New York from financial failure. The events, which followed its ultimate collapse form an important segment in this story of meeting the Master, and the reason for its loss became apparent. But at the time its failure was difficult to understand, hard to accept.

One day, in those last strenuous weeks, a stranger came into the bookshop. After talking with Malcolm, and buying a volume of his mystical poems, *Songs to Celebrate the Sun.*, the man left with him a letter he had recently received

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from an Englishman, in which he described his spiritual retreat in Devonshire. The stranger intended to send the purchased copy of Malcolm's poems to this Englishman, also a poet.

Under the pressure of last-minute attempts to revive the failing life of the shop, Malcolm had put the letter aside, forgetting its existence, until one evening, seeing it on his desk, I picked it up and read it. I felt excited by the strange and moving power which seemed to pour through the words.

"There's something in this letter for us!" I exclaimed to him. "Let me read it to you."

As I read, I sensed that this power came, not from the pen of the writer, but from some source beyond it. I was not, therefore, surprised to learn from Malcolm that the Englishman had spent six months in India with a spiritual Master, and at his suggestion had established the Retreat in England to prepare the way for him when he should decide to make his first visit to the Western world.

BANKRUPTCY AND BOUNTY

The swiftly moving events of the next weeks drove the letter from our immediate consciousness. The financial pressure of the previous months had made it impossible for us to meet the rent for our small apartment which was situated in the same hotel as our bookshop.

Upon returning from a Decoration-Day week-end, which we had spent with friends outside of New York, We found ourselves locked out of our rooms, and all our belongings confiscated. Our total remaining possessions amounted to something around \$2.50 and the clothes which we had taken along in our week-end bags. The bankruptcy sale was to take place within a few days, so there was no hope for any financial help from, the sale of books. Malcolm moved in with his family and I went to the apartment of my friend, Princess Norina Matchabelli. Gradually, as other friends learned of our predicament, gifts of money and clothing came to us. After adjustment to the first shock of finding ourselves without funds and homeless, we rose to

BANKRUPTCY AND BOUNTY

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the potentialities of adventure in our acute situation. We realized that an old chapter was finished, and rather eagerly, joyfully, we turned the page, to find it bright with prospects for a pleasant vacation. We were invited to spend the summer with a group of friends on a large farm in New Hampshire. When the day finally came for our departure, we had all that we needed in the way of summer clothing; we had paid for our transportation, and had \$6.32 left over for summer spending money.

We welcomed the healing peace of the open country after the turmoil of the last weeks in New York. Malcolm particularly needed the refreshment which pine-laden air, unadulterated sunshine and still nights could give him, after the drastic operation of having his bookshop taken from him. So for a summer we lived the life of slightly animated vegetables, with very little work, intermittent play, and regular intervals of meditation. Only one member of the group seemed able to take himself seriously enough to write. The rest of us lazed in the sun, swam in the stream, read or meditated under the pines and ate the good vegetarian food which we raised in our own garden and prepared ourselves. Incidentally, we learned a little about group life; its advantages and difficulties, and two of us, at least, looked forward to the day when we might have a permanent place in the country which we could share with like-minded friends, who would care to explore with us the hidden treasures of the inner Kingdom.

NEW THREADS

Into this placid, sylvan life, came, one afternoon, a curious message. A friend at the near-by MacDowell colony telephoned to say that she would like to bring Milo over for a visit. Milo was a Harvard graduate, who had just arrived from England where, for the past year, he had lived in a spiritual Retreat. The head of the Retreat-the same Englishman whose letter so deeply stirred me some weeks before-had sent this young poet to America on a mission, the purpose of which he had not revealed to Milo. Our friend seemed, however, quite certain that the purpose

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was to contact Malcolm and me. This amused us, but we were quite naturally interested in meeting Milo and hearing, first-hand, of his experiences at the English Retreat.

The next afternoon they arrived for tea, and it so happened that all the other members of our group-family were in Boston that day. We plied Milo with all the questions which had been accumulating in our minds, especially concerning the Master from India; and we learned that this Master, Baba, as he is familiarly call, was expected that autumn in England, on his first visit to the West.

As we spoke of him I felt my inner life quickening into flame, "My heart burned within me!" I felt I was in the presence of mystery and power-the Master himself might have been in the room with us, so close he seemed, so strong and direct the current which flowed through me as my thoughts and questions turned toward him.

Intuitively I felt that Meredith Starr, The Englishman of whom Milo spoke, was merely a relaying station for the vibrations of the Master. But even a transmitter of such transcendent power might be the means of preparing the way for a meeting with the Master, so at the end of the poet's visit we were already turning our minds toward England and Devonshire Retreat. A few days later Milo came again to say goodbye. He had just received a cable from England summoning him to return. Apparently the purpose of his visit to America had been accomplished. He left with us a brochure describing the English Retreat, in which prospective visitors were asked to write a brief outline of their experiences and spiritual aspirations. Since Malcolm's mystical poems – in themselves indices of his ideals and inner experiences-had by this time reached Devonshire, I wrote the required letter to England, and expressed the hope that some day we might be able to visit the Retreat.

We were just about to settle down again to our bovine life, when a book of Meredith Starr's poems arrived from England for Malcolm. Most of them had been written by Starr while he was in India with the Master. They bore

the imprint of that experience and conveyed so much of the Master's love and power that when we read them to the group, under a large apple tree, at sun-down, I had difficulty in holding my consciousness in my body. Certainly this man, Baba, who through the medium of another's words could so tremendously quicken one's spirit, was no ordinary man. Also I now discovered that whenever Malcolm and I spoke of him, as we invariably did in the afternoon rest period, the same quickening took place within me.

In exactly the length of time required for a letter to reach England and for us to receive a reply, our answer came from Meredith Starr. It was a cordial response, inviting us to come whenever we could, emphasizing that if we were destined to come the way would open up for us, as he felt certain it would.

FED BY RAVENS

Simultaneously with the receipt of his letter, began a series of miraculous manifestations of bounty. In the same mail with Starr's letter came another from England for one of our group, from someone who wished to remain anonymous, in which was enclosed fifty dollars for Malcolm and me. A day or so later, our dear friend Julian Lamar came up to spend the week-end with us and, on departing, left with us twenty-five dollars, apologizing that it was so little. Another friend sent me the same amount by mail, and two of our group gave us thirty dollars. Then came a letter from a friend who had moved to the Isle of Jersey, and had only recently heard of the bookshop's bankruptcy. He regretted his inability to help much, but suggested that a large collection of old and rare books which he had sent to us on consignment might be sold, and the proceeds kept for our needs.

By this time we felt like a couple of Alices in Wonderland, and believed anything was possible! And indeed it was, for in the next mail-as if in answer to our question as to how we could dispose of the books-came a forwarded

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letter from a friend who had not heard of the bookshop's closing. Believing us to be sweltering in the heat of a New York summer, he invited us to spend a long week-end with him at his place in the country. In reply, we told him of our hoped-for trip to England, and of our need for a place in New York to display the books. Two days later we received a telegram from him, cordially offering his house in the city, and telling us where we would find the key.

It was the first week in September when we made the trip back to New York, our hearts exultant with a new joy. I had written Starr that we were helping to leave for England soon and in reply received word that the Master, Shri Meher Baba, was expected in England within a few weeks. This news naturally gave fresh impetus to our efforts in selling the books. Malcolm contacted prospective buyers and again money began pouring in. Topping the whole amazing series of events was the notice I received on my birthday, September 21st, from a New York bank, informing me of a hundred dollar draft on a London bank, from an anonymous sender, which it was holding for me.

We suspected that this new gift came from the same source as the fifty dollars which we had received while we were in New Hampshire and later, when we discovered the donor's identity, our supposition was confirmed.

Thomas A. Watson, was our nameless benefactor. We had met him in New York a few weeks after the 'raven days'. He was a man well past seventy, with a heart as young and responsive as that of unspoiled youth. At the inception of his career he had collaborated with Alexander Graham Bell in the invention and manufacture of the telephone, and throughout his long and helpful life he had been alert to creative ideas and processes which would help mankind to a higher, more God-inspired life. What he advocated for others he had demonstrated in his own life. So responsive did he remain to new inspirations, that when he was well past sixty he went to England to study acting as a member of a Shakesperian road company, with which he travelled for several years through rural England. Not many years before we met him he had taken up paint-

ing. In this field too he had manifested unusual ability.

One of his many proteges was Milo, the young poet, who had visited us during the summer. Through him Mr. Watson had heard about the English Retreat and of Baba's impending visit there. Feeling drawn by the reports he had heard of the Master, he arranged his summer itinerary to include a trip to Devonshire. When we met him he related to us the unique story of his meeting with Baba.

He had retired one night at the Retreat, sharing with many others the anticipation of Baba's arrival the next day. When he awakened, early in the morning, he found his pillow wet with unaccustomed tears which were still streaming from his eyes, and in his heart was an indescribable joy. He stood before his open window and pondered for a while as his eyes feasted on the peaceful beauty of the Devonshire country-side. What was the meaning of this strange phenomenon of tears-this profound, spontaneous joy? As he probed for the answer he felt a gentle hand upon his shoulder. The touch of that hand, and eyes of the Master smiling into his as he turned around, brought to him at last the knowledge of that Love of God for which he had been searching most of his life. Waves of ecstasy and light poured through his being as the flood-gates of his heart opened and suffused his eyes with a fresh deluge of tears. In the core of his being he knew that this meeting with Baba was the culmination of his quest for the Living Truth.

Later, during the day, he heard through Meredith Starr that he had shown Baba the letter in which I had described my spiritual experiences and aspirations, and expressed the hope that Malcolm and I might visit the Retreat. Baba's instant reaction was that Malcolm and I were 'his own' and that meeting us was essential. It was this declaration of the Master which had inspired dear Thomas Watson to send us the two anonymous gifts of money toward our passage to England. His heart and hand were always ready to help; his generosity ever gracious.

At the time of our meeting with Mr. Watson, we had already secured our passports and were about make reser-

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vations for sailing the middle of October, when we received a cable from Starr to defer our visit to England, as he and the Master's party were coming to America. During this period of eager waiting we received numerous cables, the first of which asked us if we could accommodate the party for a week. Thrilled by the prospect of acting as hosts to the Master, we decided to use the passage money for the purpose. I got in touch with a friend from whom we had once rented a furnished studio at Harmon-on-the-Hudson. In reply to my letter, in which I revealed the identity of our illustrious visitor, she responded with the gracious offer of her beautiful greystone house, high among the trees, which overhung the Croton river, as her contribution to the entertainment of the Master and his retinue.

The day before leaving for Harmon to prepare the house for the great event, I spent the afternoon with my friend, Norina Matchabelli, who had just returned to town. I had written her of our prospective plans—first of our hope of going to England, later of Baba's impending visit to America. With searing sarcasm, but more than usual emotional restraint, Norina pried me with questions, and wound up by asking: "Who is this Master at whose feet you would worship?" I tried to convey to her the little I had heard and read about Baba and abundance my heart had told me. She listened for about ten minutes; then, pacing back and forth the length of the living-room, she upbraided me:

"How can you worship at the feet of *any* man, even though he calls himself a 'Master'? Women like ourselves, who have had such deep inner experiences, need no man to show us the way to God. How can you allow yourself to be drawn into such foolishness?"

I waited until the torrent of her disapproval had run its course. Then, quietly, I told her that I felt strongly impelled to follow my one inner prompting, which I knew to be the deepest intuition of my life.

One of the things I had told Norina about Baba was the extraordinary phenomenon of tears which Mr. Watson and many others had experienced upon first meeting the Master. So, as I bid her goodbye, she laughingly remarked:

“Well, when your ‘Master’ arrives, I must meet him. I too, would like to weep!”

THE MASTER COMES

The next few weeks were busy ones, setting in order the greystone house, with the red window-trimmings and doors for our visitors from abroad-Meher Baba, two Indian disciples, Ali and Chanji, and Meredith Starr. Also as guests, were our five friends who had been with us in New Hampshire. No work ever seemed more joyous, more exhilarating. Yet, due to a rather frail body, I had little strength left when the preparations were finally completed.

Baba was scheduled to land in New York on the sixth of November. The night before, as I lay in bed, exhausted, wondering how I could muster sufficient strength to fill my role as cook and housekeeper for eleven people, I suddenly had the impression of my room being filled with light, and next moment there streamed into it through the walls and ceiling a host of angelic beings, singing celestial music, the beauty of which is indescribable. In the center of the white-clad figures I recognized the form and features of the priest--now deceased--who had first initiated me into the life of the spirit, sixteen years before. At that time he had predicted that many years hence, I would have an important part to play in what he described as the establishment of the Kingdome of Heaven upon earth. Now, as I saw him in this waking vision, he smiled at me and said:

“This, Jean, is the moment I predicted many years ago.” Then the heavenly messengers gradually faded and I fell into a happy, restful sleep.

The next evening, as one of our friends stood in the kitchen with me, peering through the kitchen window into the silent darkness of the wooded road that led to the house, the head-lights of a car appeared in the distance, and we knew our long anticipated visitor was approaching. My husband and most of our friends had driven three cars into New York that morning to meet the boat and provide transportation for the party and their luggage. For us, who had stayed behind, it had been a day crowded with last

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minute preparations, electric with eager expectancy. Now the grate moment was at hand.

I walked to the small courtyard upon which the doorway opened and lit the hanging lantern, then stood in the passage-way, waiting. The cars pulled into the driveway. Meredith Starr got out first and came forward with outstretched hand. I returned his greeting, but my eyes were on the Master, who was directly behind him, looking into me with a deeply knowing smile. How long his eyes embraced me I do not know, but at some moment Meredith's voice recalled me to temporal surroundings:

“Jean, this is Shri Meher Baba.”

My most outstanding impression of that first meeting is one of peering into bottomless pools of infinite love and tenderness, as my eyes met his. My heart pounded with tremendous excitement and for a while I could not speak. I felt that in an inexplicable way he was the reason for my very existence; that I had never really lived until this moment; that he was deeply familiar and precious to me, even as I was no stranger and very dear to him.

“I'm so happy you have come,” I finally managed to say. Hearing myself say it, I felt acutely the inadequacy of this greeting from one who had just experienced the merging of time and space into fathomless Eternity in which the cosmic drama, portraying God, was again being cast with the age-old characters re-living their ordained parts.

Here I am impelled to put on record something which to the Western reader may savor of sacrilege or childish fantasy. From my earliest childhood I had always felt I would some day meet the Saviour in the flesh. I remember that it came to me first when I was about four years old and attended a Sunday Infant School, where we sang the children' hymn:

“I think when I read that sweet story of old,
How Jesus was here among men,
How he called little children
Like lambs to His fold,
I wish I had been with Him then”.

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I remember the ecstasy with which I entered into the emotional longing of the hymn, then the vivid certainty that I had been with him then and I would be with him again.

This childhood experience had sunk into my sub-conscious and was not to appear again until the day of the priest's prediction, years later. Now, once more, it came to life as I looked into the divinity of Baba's loving eyes and knew that this was indeed the moment for renewing an age-old and sacred relationship.

I knew that *he* knew all I yearned to say but could not utter. Later I showed him to his rooms, and sat beside him on the divan as I told him of the members of our group, and placed the house and our services at his disposal, to be used by him as he deemed best. Only *my* words were spoken, because Baba had been maintaining silence then for seven years. Yet, to my heart he said many things, and on his little alphabet board, which Starr read for me he spelled out: "I am so happy, so very happy!" His eyes were filled with tears which overflowed from a heart that knows only eternal love. I knew then that it was a momentous meeting, not only for me, but also for him; for reunion with his 'own' is ever a joyous experience for the Master.

Suddenly a cloud of concern passed over his happy face as he noticed my bandaged thumb. I had cut it deeply that evening with a bread knife. He wanted to know how it had happened. I tried to make light of it as it deserved. But Baba insisted on knowing the details. Tenderly he placed his hand over the bandage and spelled out on his alphabet board that it would be entirely healed by morning. It was. I mention this incident not only because it was in the nature of a minor miracle, but what is of greater importance, because it exemplifies a fact which I have since had many opportunities to observe: that no detail of life that pertains to human need or suffering is too trivial or unimportant for Baba's merciful consideration.

Having heard that he usually had his meals alone in his room, I told Baba that I had made arrangements accordingly. He smiled his thanks, but indicated that this night he would have dinner with the group if we would like it. I

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assured him we would be delighted. So, for our first communal evening meal at Harmon, Baba sat at the head of the long table, pouring out his silent benediction upon us all. This is no mere figure of speech; Baba's presence is so electric with spiritual charge that even to be in the same house with him, and much more at the same table, is a soul-stirring experience. Slowly, his dark, luminous eyes passed from one face to another as we sat around the table, and I felt he was making a soul-survey of the inner life of all of us. Yet nothing which he beheld in the chambers of our hearts brought any sign of condemnation or criticism to his countenance-only evidence of deep tolerance and understanding .

Before bidding us good-night, he said he would see only the members of our group-family the following day, and since I was keeper of the house, he would see me first. So the next morning after breakfast, while our friends waited eagerly in the room below, I went up to Baba's quarters. I felt I wanted only to be quiet in his presence, and for five wonderful minutes he let me sit silently with him. Then he asked, spelling out the words on his board: "What are you thinking about?"

I could not put my thoughts into words. In truth, they were, I told Baba, too abstract even to recall. He replied: "You need not try. I know what you were thinking. I know what you thought yesterday, what you will think a year from now." For a long moment I was speechless. Never before had I encountered such egoless omniscience. Yet I accepted his statement naturally, without question. The force of his pure integrity lay behind it. Then I found my voice: "Is it because you see things whole-unfettered by time?" He nodded his confirmation. Again I sat silent for a few moments before replying: "This seems so familiar, to be sitting here with you like this, Baba. I feel as if I had always done it." He assured me it was so: "You've been with me for ages."

By this time the dissolving of my artificial shell was well under way. With no emotional appeal, such as is inherent in the spoken word, but through the more penetrating in-

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fluence of pure Being, he had accomplished the initial untying of painful knots and bonds of egoistic self-consciousness, fear and ignorance. I left the room in tears-purifying tears in which joy and pain strangely mingle; unashamed tears which both humble and exalt one. Later the other members of our family kept their appointments with the Mater in the upper room and without exception they descended again to the world of everyday things in the same transport of inner release; back into a world which by now Baba's divine alchemy had transmuted into a realm of wonder and beauty.

Baba's faculty of penetrating the mask of even the most sophisticated is due to his seeing the Eternal Self in people. Since this Self is *perfect* in everyone it naturally, follows that Baba's calling it into the consciousness of the individual, by his spontaneous recognition of it, causes many people to feel a temporary release from their every-day limited consciousness. Those whose egoistic vitality has been weakened by the impact of previous glimpses of higher consciousness, or by the disciplinary hand of life experience, feel a sublime joy mixed with a salutary kind of pain, at the moment of meeting Baba. The mirror of perfection which he holds before their consciousness reinforces their intuition of the Truth of themselves, in spite of the contrasting anguish which their present limited awareness generates in them. Others, of course, who are deeply crystalized in their passions, desires and opinions resist this purging activity of God in their souls. This deflation of their self-esteem causes them to turn from and often against Baba.

METAMORPHOSIS

The next day began the interviews with our New York friends to whom we had relayed word of Baba's arrival. Norina Matchabelli, who had laughingly declared that she too, 'would like to weep,' was among the first to arrive. Something extraordinary had apparently happened to her since I had last seen her. She had the desired tears in her eyes and her attitude was that of a puzzled child; a sharp contrast to her usual self-assurance.

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“Tell me about him.” She whispered as I led her into the living-room.

“You will see for yourself, in a few moments. But what has happened to you ?” I asked.

She then told me that ever since the moment Baba’s feet had touched the shores of America she had done nothing but weep. She had been compelled to cancel all of her social engagements. The old hauteur of sophistication was replaced by child-like wonder. Then word came that Baba would see her. About ten minutes later Malcolm happened to be passing the stairs that led to Baba’s room. He saw Norina, on her way down, in what seemed like a state of profound agitation, holding on to the bannister to steady herself. He ran up to give her his supporting arm and assisted her to the living-room where she fell into my arms, weeping as if her heart were breaking in an ecstasy of pain. Another shell was being dissolved. As other friends began to arrive I took Norina up to my room where she stayed for the day, resting on my bed. Every hour or so Baba would go with me to my room and stay for a few moments to compose Norina with balm of his healing Presence. Before she left that evening he said he would like her to come out every day during his stay at Harmon.

Norina had had considerable psychic experience in her life and so it was but natural that her immediate reaction to the Master should have had psychic implications. When, on entering Baba’s room, she saw him for the first time, sitting on the low divan at the far end, white-robed, cross-legged, she was momentarily blinded by the intensity of radiance that emanated from his person and which eclipsed the bright light of the sun that was steaming through the window. She staggered across the room with the help of one of the Master’ disciples, and falling to her knees beside Baba, pleaded:

“Take me out of this. Oh, take me away from it all!”

Little had Norina suspected when she said goodbye to me so lightly a few weeks before, that not only would she ‘weep’ but that Baba would become her revered spiritual Master and that his unspoken God-words would become her

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law. Nor did she know that for the next three years she would continue to go through the outer motions of her accustomed way of life while she was being prepared inwardly, for the new one. Nor that at the end of this period, her husband, Prince Matchabelli, would die and release her to devote all her time, all her substance, and all her energies, to the service of the Mater.

PENETRATING THE VEILS

In varying degrees this experience of Norina's was duplicated many times during the four weeks of Baba's visit. Men as well as women (doctors, lawyers, psychiatrists and hard-headed unemotional business executives) found their way to that upper room. Some came out of curiosity, a few to pay homage, others, perhaps, to scoff, but without exception they all remained to worship.

There was, for example, the reaction of a renowned professor of Western philosophy, Dr. Frederick Kettner, a man deeply read in the wisdom of East and West and Founder of the teaching known as Biosophy. In the presence of Baba he too fell to his knees and found himself unable to speak. He came from the room in a daze, his eyes glistening with tears.

The experience of another man of intellectual background, L.H., was outwardly less pronounced but his testimony as an eminent psychologist is illuminating. Though his training had conditioned him in the purely scientific approach to human nature he admitted to me that he had long felt the need for a deeper insight than that afforded by the rational mind. He felt in Baba this insight which he craved: "He seems to see through all veils and from my short interview with him I believe he is the guide who could help me to do likewise."

Even a few minutes with Baba seemed to stir the inmost depths of every visitor, and bring to the surface long-concealed shadows as well as light. One poignant illustration of his power to uncover the hidden sin was the case of the mother whose daughter had been told she could remain

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with us, after Baba's departure, to help Malcolm with secretarial work, in preparation for Baba's return visit in the spring. The daughter came dancing into the dining-room one evening, just as we were sitting down to our dinner, and with shining eyes shared with us this glad news which Baba had just given her. We all rejoiced with her, except the mother, whose face clouded with dark emotion. There was no mistaking the symptoms. Her daughter had achieved a place in the family-group which she, the had coveted in vain. Immediately after dinner word came from Baba for us all to meet in his room. Only we who had sat at the table were witness to the minor tragedy that had been mutely enacted there; and none had left the table.

We all gathered around Baba and sat silently for a few minutes while he quietly twirled his small alphabet board. Suddenly he touched the mother's shoulder:

"Happy?" he asked on his board.

She started, and turned to him her astonished face.

"Do you know what I am thinking, Baba?"

He nodded, looking deep into her eyes.

"And you don't condemn me?"

Slowly he shook his head, compassion pouring from his eyes. The next moment she broke into a torrent of weeping and hid her face on his knees. The mother's shell had been pierced.

In such simple, irresistible ways does Baba bring to light what modern psychologists call out 'shadow'-the symbol of all that is repugnant and reprehensible in our unconscious psychic life-which we all possess, but of which few of us are aware.

Another dramatic event occurred when the principal parties to a notorious feud met by 'chance' at our house. For many months there had been nothing but bitterness and recrimination between them, growing out of some widely noised financial manipulations of a well-known metaphysical teacher in New York. I happened to be in the library when the wife of the teacher and his tow chief opponents came face to face with each other, prior to their interviews with Baba. They stopped in their tracks, their faces flushed

with heart-corroding emotions of rage, bitter resentment and wounded self-esteem. It was only the inhibitions of their civilized background that seemed to restrain them from flying at each other's hair and throats! In this Baba-charged atmosphere of self-unveiling their caveman tendencies, hitherto repressed, were being forced to the surface of their consciousness.

Later, when one by one they descended into the living-room, after only few minutes with Baba, it was strikingly evident that they had gone through an amazing transformation. What transpired in that upper room I do not know; but when they emerged from it their faces were aglow with such an inner light that all traces of bitterness and animosity had completely vanished from them. In the crucible of Divine Love the dross of their emotions had been consumed. Concealed elemental forces had been brought into the open and overcome. Less than twenty minutes before these women had been mortal enemies. Now, with tears in their eyes, they embraced each other.

POCKET-BOOK CONSCIOUSNESS

During his month's stay at Harmon, Baba gave many examples of his mastery in precipitating situations that revealed in a dramatic, unmistakable way our subconscious fears, inhibitions and prejudices. He had selected certain people from the list of scheduled appointments and ordered Malcolm and Norina to approach them for donations toward the establishment of spiritual retreats in India and Persia. Norina took the charge in her stride, but Malcolm responded with serious misgivings. To solicit our friends as they emerged from their interviews with Baba-to intrude upon the very rapture of that first meeting with a point-blank request for money-seemed to Malcolm in bad taste and extremely embarrassing. This reaction was in keeping with his views on the subject. He had long believed-and practised it in his bookshop classes-that spiritual teachers should never ask for money. It was his fixed conviction that spirituality and emphasis on money were simply not compatible! Baba, of course, was aware of Malcolm's

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viewpoint and anticipated his reluctance to comply with the order. He called him to his room and rebuked him.

“It is not the money that is important,” Baba spelled out on his board, “but that you obey me – implicitly and without hesitation-just as Arjuna obeyed Krishna when he told him that it was necessary for him to slay his kinsfolk.”

This was a large order for a Western intellectual to swallow. Malcolm himself was surprised by his spontaneous acceptance of the Master’s reprimand and by the alacrity with which he proceeded to carry out the painful task.

“I had never in my life taken orders graciously from anyone,” were Malcolm’s words in summing up the experience. “Yet Baba’s slightest wish became a sacred trust, an inescapable command; and this *before* I had been converted to the idea of the Master-disciple relationship.”

As part of this assignment Malcolm was called upon to ask one of our house guests-a prominent Theosophical lecturer-if, on returning to his home in the West, he would undertake to raise money for Baba’s work. This our guest flatly refused to do; for too many years he had shared Malcolm’s viewpoint, and he was not disposed to change it. Before anyone had a chance to relate the incident to Baba he summoned me to his room and feigned deep sorrow that our friend should so misinterpret the request as to imply that he, Baba, cared a pinhead about money. I remarked that our friend’s reaction was not illogical since Baba had been placing considerable emphasis upon money. Looking at me a little sadly he pointed out that whether he asked for money or did not ask for it our friend should have known that he had no personal interest in material things; that money in itself is neither good nor bad, but one’s *attitude* toward it that makes it so. In the West-especially in America-money has become polluted because of the unreal value which people place upon it. It is this destructive misvaluation which must be changed.

I felt the integrity of Baba’s statements. From my first meeting with him I had been aware of his utter detachment from all things mundane. During my subsequent, more intimate association with Baba, I learned that he possesses

nothing for himself-not so much as a penny of his own. Whatever money is given to Baba is used for the current requirements of his work, or placed in a trust fund for the need of its larger aspects, which are universal in scope.

Out of this fund, among other things, Baba provides the means of livelihood for hundreds of destitute Indian families within the sphere of his immediate influence, who are unable to obtain sufficient work to make ends meet. In times of acute distress, which under present conditions in India are frequent, Baba also distributes essential food and clothing to tens of thousands of victims who might otherwise perish. In addition to this he assumes full responsibility for every physical need of the Indian men and women who have been accepted by him as disciples, in accordance with the age-old tradition of Perfect Masters in the East.

Even strictly personal gifts are either given away by Baba or shared with others. The one thing to which I have ever seen him appear to be even remotely attached is a threadbare coat, so patched and worn that its original material is scarcely perceptible. And even this, I believe, is dear to him only because of the sagging pockets which for years have bulged with loving letters of his devotees.

Once during his visit Baba expressed a desire to motor through New York's financial district. It happened to be on a Sunday. As we drove through the narrow canyons converging on Wall Street, now like a quiet, deserted ghost town, we looked up at the solid and impressive banking houses and the empty Stock Exchange in which on week-days the powerful emotions of greed and fear are so rampant. "How ephemeral and unreal this money madness is," I thought. The next moment Baba smiled at me and indicated as he pointed to the buildings: "It is all a bubble. So easy to prick!"

But our Theosophical friend had not yet learned that secret, nor was he evidently destined in this life to learn it. Baba declared that he could not carry on his work in an atmosphere of distrust, without impairment of efficiency. For the same reason that caused Jesus to dismiss the doubters from the scene of his divine ministrations, Baba instruct-

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ed me to tell our visitors from the West that he could not continue his work in an atmosphere of doubt and that he would therefore have to leave our house. Naturally, when our guests heard this they declared that they would be the ones to leave. When I told Baba of their decision he stipulated that during the twenty-four hours which they required to prepare for their departure they were not to share our table but must eat alone. Right here I had to face a little corner of my own 'shadow'! To say or do the disagreeable thing deliberately had never been my long suit! I liked harmony too well; I like people to like me. I feared their displeasure. My reluctance to say the drastic but sometimes necessary thing was, of course, reverting to my childhood pattern of seeking the approval of my superiors. With his unerring instinct Baba had put his finger on this weak spot in my character and had contrived a situation that would compel me to face and transcend it.

So I swallowed hard, and with as much grace as I could muster, transmitted the painful message. Our friend left these parting words for Baba; "Tell him I love him, but don't quite understand." To this statement Baba made no reply; but he might well have remarked what later in India I knew him to express more than once: "The true lover withhold nothing for himself; he neither bargains nor doubts."

This memorable episode was the first in which Baba's technique had vividly brought home to me how fatally the egoistic intellect with its preconceived opinions and prejudices can block the way to deeper spiritual insight. Many times since, however, have I witnessed re-enactments of this same drama. There are many people who are not ready for Baba. To my knowledge, more have turned against him for this one reason than for any other. The unprecedented things which Baba so often says or does are inexplicable to the spiritually unready, and often outrage the intellect which, according to Baba, is the co-partner of the ego. For men, particularly, the highest standards of value are generally determined by the intellect, and since the most drastic aspect of Baba's spiritual technique has for its object

the elimination of the ego, it naturally follows that its close partner, the intellect, is considerably perturbed. Inevitably, a major conflict is aroused in those who are not yet willing to surrender their egoistic opinions and values.

REVELATION

At first Malcolm's dearly-held convictions stood in the way of his whole-hearted yielding to Baba's divine influence, Gradually, however, he found himself relinquishing, one after another, his most prized prejudices.

"I was not seeking a Master." Are his own words. "I did not wish to become a disciple. Yet there, as our guests, was a man who claimed to be a supreme Master-an Incarnation of Divinity, a Jesus, a Krishna, a Buddha-and who, moreover, every moment of the day and night was proving his mastery, was establishing his claim."

It was not, however, until the twelfth night of Baba's visit that Malcolm capitulated unreservedly. Our Western house guest were gathered after dinner in the living-room, where Meredith Starr was explaining to some of the group Baba's teachings concerning the inner cosmic planes.

"I grew suddenly very tired of words," Malcolm confesses. "I was glad that Baba, at least, was silent." Excusing himself, he went to his room and prepared for bed. But before he retired, Meredith stopped at Malcolm's room to tell him that Baba wished everyone to think of him just before going to sleep. Still uncertain of the desirability of the Master-disciple relationship-at least as far as he was concerned-Malcolm determined not to accede to this request. He did not desire to place himself in a position where his outlook might be influenced. He did not then believe in meditation on any person. He had never done it, nor did he wish now to do it.

But when he started to go to sleep he found himself thinking of Baba in spite of his decision. He could not erase him from his mind. He attributed this to the power of suggestion, to which he would be no party. He would overcome it by concentrating on something else.

"Upon my wife, Jean, whom I loved deeply, I felt I

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could meditate without hesitation. So I started to meditate on her, and was just about to fall peacefully asleep when suddenly the thought of Baba popped into my mind-Baba in relation to Jean-my last conscious thought before I slipped into unconsciousness!"

It was near midnight when he awoke from sleep, with tears pouring from his eyes, and a realization, in his mind, of Baba's true nature and mission; a realization so transcendent, so beyond the mind of man to comprehend, much less to describe, that he could not put it into words. Kabir, the great Indian poet and Master of the fifteenth century, says of such an experience:

"It can never be told with the words of the mouth,
It can never be written on paper."

Malcolm was convinced that Baba had revealed to him his Universal Form, as Krishna revealed his to Arjuna-and the revelation wiped out all his reservations and doubts. He now knew Who Baba was. He knew what his mission was; and he knew it was his destiny to serve him.

The following morning, on meeting Malcolm, Baba embraced him and, with a twinkle in his eyes, asked by way of his board, whether he had slept well. Malcolm nodded, then exclaimed: "Oh, Baba! Why don't you reveal yourself to everyone as you revealed yourself to me last night? There would then be no more wars and conflict".

Baba's only reply was a deeply-knowing smile and another tender embrace. But he has since assured us that when, through his spoken word, mankind becomes initiated into a higher state of consciousness, the causes which lead to war will disintegrate. "This idea of the self as a limited, separate entity will vanish. Cooperation will replace competition; certainty will replace fear; generosity will replace greed; exploitation will be no more. When I speak, I will reveal the One Supreme Self which is in everyone."

MIND-READING

Throughout Baba's visit, his extraordinary capacity to read our innermost thoughts and desires was revealed to us countless numbers of times. Perhaps no incident better il-

illustrates the supra-normal quality of Baba's mind than the experience of a friend of ours who came for his interview with the Master.

Harry Barnhart had, from childhood, possessed the faculty of accurately reading people's minds. To meet a Master and read *his* mind would no doubt be a unique experience. So it proved to be! To our friend's amazement he could read nothing, intensely though he tried. He had the peculiar sensation that Baba's mind was an absolute blank; there seemed to be nothing there to read.

"Yet all through the interview," he explained to us later, "I knew that Baba was reading my every thought and feeling!" When, that evening, we spoke to Baba about this, his answer was: "I have no mind, in the customary sense of the word—only a Universal Mind; which, to read, requires a Universal Mind."

When Chanji (Baba's secretary) heard of this experience he told us of the Indian lawyer who had come with a number of questions which he wished Baba to answer. Glancing at the secretary who had taken him to Baba's presence, the lawyer pleaded that his questions were of very personal nature and requested that he might be allowed to ask them privately. So Baba told him to sit at the far end of the room and write them down on a slate. Then Baba requested another slate. When the man had finished his list of questions and took his slate over to the Master, Baba in turn handed him his own slate. A look of amazement spread over the lawyer's countenance, as he looked at the blackboard. White against it were the answers to all his questions, in the order in which he had written them down; Baba had recorded his answers at the same time as the man was engrossed in writing out his questions.

GARMENT OF FLESH AND BLOOD

Toward the end of the Master's visit I was present at an interview in the course of which a doubting Thomas, steeped in intellectual theories about higher states of consciousness, tried to explain to Baba why he could not agree with those who had come to regard him as a God-realized Master:

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“How can your mind be infinite?” he argued. “You are limited to the form which you use as Baba, just as I am limited to mine. Your very use of ‘I’ and ‘my’, ‘you’ and ‘your’ denotes your sense of separateness.”

He was unaware, of course, that he was projecting upon the Master the limitations of his own consciousness. Baba smiled and spelled out on his board:

“No—I am not limited by this form. I use it like a garment, to make myself visible to you; without it you could not see me. And I communicate with you through words best fitted to *your* understanding. If I used the language of my own consciousness, you would not know what I was talking about.”

Shortly after this interview I had an opportunity of witnessing the facility with which Baba uses his body ‘like a garment.’ Two carloads of us were on our way for a brief visit to Boston. I happened to be sitting next to Baba. Suddenly he threw over his head the blue cloak which lay on his lap. The next moment his body became lifeless. Baba—that dynamic, radiant embodiment of spirit—was no longer beside me. I was startled and for a moment, frightened. Then I remembered that the limp body next to me was that of no ordinary man. I had learned enough of this supernatural being not to be alarmed, no matter what he might do or initiate; so I sat motionless, in silent wonderment. About five minutes later I could sense the life-force taking possession of his body once again. The next moment I felt a slight movement under the cloak. Then Baba straightened up and removed the cape from his head. When his eyes looked into mine I knew that what I had witnessed could have been no hallucination. His eyes were deeper and blacker than I had ever before seen them and they seemed slightly crossed. They gave the impression of having been on a far journey of exploration into fathomless depths. During this amazing ten-hour trip to Boston Baba must have gone in and out of his body a dozen times. He explained to us later that there are constant calls on his inner counsel from all over the universe, often requiring of him urgent work of a nature which necessitates his presence elsewhere

GARMENT OF FLESH AND BLOOD

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for brief periods. He added that during such spiritual journeys, in which time and space are no factors of limitation, it is unavoidable that he shed the ballast of his physical body, to be picked up again on his return.

Fantastic as this may seem to the uninitiated, I doubt whether the rankest skeptic in my stead, during that all-day drive, could have remained unconvinced that before his very eyes was repeatedly taking place something that transcended the rational mind, yet which was fully under Baba's control. There was in it no make-believe or pretense, no striving for effect upon impressionable neophytes. Nor were the sudden transitions from sparkling vitality to lifeless inertness and back again to his customary aliveness due to some physical anomaly or mental eccentricity, as the scientific mind might at first have surmised. No one who had observed, as I had, the tremendous concentration, the acute awareness which animated Baba throughout the day, could have dodged the conclusion that there was an esoteric reason, a sublime and directed purpose behind this strange phenomenon. I have since discovered that Baba is *never* unaware, never inactive; these are two of his major characteristics. Yet, at all times, he conveys the impression of profound serenity and complete detachment.

That this apparently singular phenomenon is not peculiar to Baba is verified by the recorded instances of similar withdrawals of which Roerich gives some examples in his *Altai Himalaya*, where he speaks of the Tibetan *lamas* who often cover their heads with cloth, during what they call their 'hearings'. He recalls also the statement of Damias (the pupil of Appolonius of Tyana) of how Appolonius, when he heard the 'soft voice', always wrapped himself from head to foot in a long scarf of woolen texture. Tradition has also recorded how astonished were the contemporaries of the *Comte de St. Germain* at the manner in which he sometimes 'wrapped himself up'.

WRITTEN IN FLAMES

The fifth night of Baba's visit was enlivened by a dramatic episode which is illuminating for its symbolic significance.

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I was awakened about midnight by a gentle medley of insistent calls at the front door. Considerate of Baba and the other sleeping guests, I tip-toed downstairs and opened the door to an excited group of people-our out-of-town-visitors-who had been sleeping across the river in a guest house also loaned by our friend. From the scramble of their agitated whispers I learned that the guest house had burned down. They were shivering with emotion and the crisp mid-November night wind, so I gathered them into the warmth of the kitchen, where they gave me a spirited account of the calamity. The caretaker, it appeared, had left the lower door open, after piling the furnace high with coal. This had intensified the draught and caused the flames to ascend through the floor-register of the central hall, ignite carpets and curtains, and within a few minutes set the whole house on fire. This happened after they had all retired and though the wildly spreading flames left the occupants of the guest house barely time to save their lives, miraculously they all escaped without harm. The only injury was a slight scratch which one of the guest suffered while crawling through a window.

Greatly relieved, I rummaged through the house to improvise overnight accommodations for the victims of the fire, which happily I contrived without rousing our sleeping guests. When I related the eventful experience to Baba, the next morning, he showed no surprise; merely asked: "There was no one injured?" When I assured him that all the guests had escaped without injury, he then asked: "Will our hostess suffer financial loss?"

"On the contrary," I told him, "it so happens that she is in greater need of money than of the guest house, and will benefit by the cash which the insurance company will pay her."

Baba seemed very pleased, and summed up for us the significance of the event: "Since no one will suffer severely through this experience we should rejoice that it happened. It is a good symbol. Those who lost their few belongings through the fire will begin a new life. Those who man-

aged to save their possessions will have to wait awhile for their new beginning.”

And thus, to the letter, has it since proven to be.

FAREWELL TO ECSTASY

Exactly one month after the day of his arrival, Baba left America for Europe and India. It had been month of deep inner experience for hundreds of people, particularly for those of us fortunate enough to have lived under the same roof with the Master. For us, it was like the *agape* of the early Christians—a continual love-feast-in which all the daily problems and frictions were mysteriously resolved by the power of the divine love which emanated ceaselessly and spontaneously from Baba, and in which we all shared.

With heavy hearts we bade farewell to Baba. Yet, as I look back over the years, during which these painful separations from Baba occurred again and again, I see that they have been quite as necessary as the joyous meetings. In the early days of our association with Baba they were essential for some of us if we were to remain in our physical bodies, because protracted close contact with the Master so quickens the vibratory rate of his disciples that, until their bodies become gradually attuned to it, they are apt to suffer the effect of the swifter current.

In my own case the regenerative process was so intense that on the fifth day I was compelled to turnover my house-keeping duties to one of our guests and under Baba's orders spend most of the time in my room resting. During this period I saw Baba's face in everything—sky, trees, water, other people's faces, the walls of my room, my own hand—everything upon which my vision focused. It was, therefore, not surprising that I had no desire for material food. When a tray was brought to my room I would look at it for a moment, resolved to eat what had been so kindly prepared; but immediately Baba's face would appear, blotting out food and dishes. When, however, Baba discovered that I was not eating, he made a point of coming to my room at meal-times. Sitting on the edge of the bed, he would, like a loving father, tenderly feed me the food from my tray,

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until finally overwhelmed by this act of compassion, I forced myself to eat.

Though infinitely more satisfying is spiritual food, food for the body is essential on this plane to help us keep balance between heaven and earth, in order that the *whole* man, with his human needs as well as his divine aspirations, may be taken into God. As Baba has often said, the purpose of earthly incarnation is to bring the unconscious into consciousness-not to inundate consciousness by too swift transcendent metamorphosis. Such precipitate transitions would but defeat God's purpose.

Baba functions in full knowledge of God's laws; he knows exactly how much of the 'heavenly food' his disciples have the capacity to digest at any time. Only when they have fully integrated into their consciousness whatever intimations of divine Reality have been vouchsafed them, does the Master open wider the door to the inner chambers of the spiritual Kingdom.

CHAPTER II

INDIA'S CONTRIBUTION

Only yesterday, to the vast majority of Westerners, India was a land of snake-charmers and Maharajas, a sub-continent of mystery and fabulous wealth. Of the true significance of India the bulk of mankind knew less than nothing; nor did it ever occur to the average man that the four hundred million people of India might have an important role to play in the destiny of humanity. But today the eyes of the whole world are upon India and scores of millions, instead of handfuls, of people everywhere are asking what manner of country is this-what contribution to the world's need may we expect from her?

As one who knows something of India first-hand, I am convinced that her greatest contribution will come not so much from her potential wealth and man-power, as from her spiritually illumined souls, her God-men who have the capacity to effect for humanity the soul-quickenning it so desperately needs, if civilization is not utterly to perish from this earth.

In India, the appellative 'God-man' carries with it no prejudiced connotation as it does to us in the West. For us, conditioned as we are by Christianity, there is but one God-man, our great Master, Jesus. And I, whose spiritual perceptions were first quickened by surrender to that Blessed One, would be the last to detract one iota from his glory, beauty and perfection. But soul experience, born of long years of ardent search for sustained inner peace and joy, compels me to recognize that life is an infinite adventure-an eternal game which the Father plays with his created children-and when, at certain evolutionary periods, man is in need of the physical embodiment of Godhead for his

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quicken upon earth, the Supreme One takes upon himself the garment of flesh and dwells among us.

To the cultured Indian this is a self-evident truth. To recognize Jesus, Buddha, Zoroaster, Moahammed, Krishna, as God-men, equally endowed with spiritual power and wisdom—though *expressing* it in different degrees and qualities, as the exigencies of the age demand—requires no effort on his part, erects no mental hurdles to surmount. The Orientals are an ancient people—the least of them wiser, in some respects, than the most learned savants among us, because their wisdom is of the soul and not of the intellect.

Theirs is the perspective of Eternity, which recognizes that a perfection once achieved in consciousness is forever recurrent in manifested form, because inherent in such a consciousness is the desire to help all other sentient beings to attain that same perfection. To the Indian mind it is unthinkable that God should not manifest himself again and again throughout the ages, in all his beauty, in the form of perfect man. Their sacred literature abounds with accounts of God-men—souls who have attained complete and permanent realization of God—who have left upon their age the imprint of their immortal lives. And when there is a “decline of virtue and an insurrection of vice and injustice in the world”, then, as one of the great Bibles of the world—the Bhagavad Gita—says, God incarnates as the Avatar or Saviour, “to destroy the wicked and to re-establish righteousness and preserve the just.”

Certainly, the world needs a Saviour today as never before in the history of mankind, a Perfect One, whose knowledge and power qualify him to resurrect man from his ignorance, to liberate him from his self-imposed bondage of greed, selfishness and fear.

At the moment we are concerned with trying to establish and maintain a peace which will guarantee man’s basic freedoms of speech, action and worship, if war in vastly greater horror is not to be repeated within another generation. None, I am sure, will gainsay the importance of these objectives. But wars and their aftermath are merely the projection of individual conflict, magnified to national

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or world proportions. Some means is therefore needed which will resolve for the individual his inner turmoil and establish for him *true* freedom-freedom of spirit and freedom of consciousness that will be his even though he languish behind prison bars or slave in bondage to a tyrant. Such is the freedom which Jesus had, which other God-men have had, and which Shri Meher Baba, of whom I write, gives every evidence of having; a freedom that may be communicated to those who turn from the bankruptcy of their intellectually-conceived panaceas, and call from the depth of their souls upon God for help.

DESCENT OF GRACE

The story of how Baba became conscious of his God-hood and of his role as Avatar was first recounted to us by Baba's devoted secretary, Chanji, on their first visit to America. Later, in India, it was amplified and re-told many times by Baba's brothers and other disciples.

As a lad of eighteen, Shri Meher Baba, or Merwan, as he was then called, was riding his wheel along the hot, dusty Poona road in western India. He was on his way home from Deccan college, where he was a student. As he approached a large, shady lime tree, a very old woman rose from the midst of a group which sat beneath tree, and came forward to meet him. He dismounted his wheel and the two looked into each other's eyes. Then the woman kissed him on the forehead, between the eyes, and returned to the waiting group. Not a word was spoken.

The boy mounted his wheel again and continued on his way home. Such was the simple and apparently insignificant incident which occurred to Merwan Sheriar Irani, in the year 1913. Yet, the repercussions of that meeting effected in him such a cataclysmic revolution of consciousness that for some years thereafter he was regarded by his family and friends as a happy madman.

Baba relates that at the moment of his contact with the aged woman, a tremendous current, as of electricity, shot through his body, leaving in its wake a feeling of unearthly ecstasy. It remained with him for several months, until

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one night, just prior to sleep, he suddenly lost all awareness of his physical body and found himself lifted into a state of super-consciousness.

That such an apparently slight occurrence as his strange meeting with this ancient woman should cause such monumental changes in his being may seem incredibly fantastic to the matter-of-fact Western mind. But not to the people of the East, whose vast storehouse of sacred literature is rich in similar accounts of supra-normal states of consciousness, induced by contact with spiritually advanced souls.

GOD-WOMAN

Babajan was the name of the remarkable woman who came so dramatically into the life of Baba. She was known as a Perfect Master or *Sadguru*. In the East, this appellation refers to the few rare human beings whose consciousness has transcended the finite boundaries of the limited self. Their minds being merged with the Universal Mind of God, they are completely *conscious* of the Unconscious, but without loss of awareness and mastery of the physical body. Perfect Masters function in outer respects as normal men and women, while at the same time they enjoy inwardly all the prerogatives and responsibilities of Godhood.

Babajan is one of the few known examples of Perfect Mastership in a woman. According to Sufi tradition, Babajan's manifestation of spiritual perfection in a *female* body symbolizes the end of the old world order and heralds the beginning of the new age in which woman will take her place beside man in bringing about that transformation of consciousness which will elevate the feminine principle of life-the heart-to its rightful place of pre-eminence.

Babajan was born in Afghanistan of well-to-do, aristocratic Mohammedan parentage. Her maiden name was *Gul-rukh* (Rose-face) which name she well merited, for even in extreme old age her complexion was clear as a young girl's. Her training followed the pattern of the Afghan Mohammedan nobility. At a very early age she had learned the Koran by heart, and later learned to speak and read Arabic, Persian, and the Indian dialects of Pushtoo and

Urdu. Unlike most young girls of her age and background, she found her greatest joy in meditation and solitude, much to the chagrin of her parents: From their point of view it was unthinkable that a girl of her caste, tradition and beauty, should not fulfill her function as woman through the only avenue which they knew to be open to woman-marriage and motherhood.

The inner bliss, however, which this unique girl derived from her way of life made her unalterably opposed to her parents' traditional desire. *Gul-rukh* had made her decision; marriage was not for her. But her parents were persistent, and when they tried to force her into an unwanted alliance, she made her escape to Peshawar, India, and later to Rawalpindi. For a young girl of her background, brought up in the strict seclusion of the *purdah* tradition, this was an unprecedented and no small undertaking. Doubtless her great spiritual destiny aided her in covering up her tracks until she reached the safe harbor of India.

Here she continued her life of spiritual aspiration through prolonged meditation and fasting, until at length she was guided to a Hindu Master who initiated her into the spiritual path. For nearly seventeen months following this initiation she imposed upon herself severe spiritual austerities in the seclusion of a mountain cave.

At the age of thirty-seven she was guided to a Mohammedan Master who put an end to her spiritual struggles by freeing her from the illusion of separation from God. She knew, however, that a further adjustment in her consciousness had to take place. The realization of her Godhood must be perfectly balanced with her physical consciousness if she were to fulfill her inwardly revealed function of becoming the leading Perfect Master of her time, destined to awaken the Avatar of the new age to his God-ordained mission and to relinquish to him her spiritual leadership. For this final step in consciousness she was led back to the Hindu Master who had first guided her. Through his ministrations she achieved the ultimate in consciousness and subsequently became the head of the spiritual hierarchy of her day.

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Shortly after this supreme attainment she travelled from one end of India to the other, staying at one period of time in the Punjab in northern India. While there she was heard one day-during divine ecstasy-to declare that she was God. To the orthodox zealots of the Punjab this was rank blasphemy; in their rage they had her buried alive. Through her supra-normal powers, which all God-realized Masters possess but which is beyond the rational mind to comprehend, she managed to escape, and some years later took up her abode in Poona, one-hundred and twenty mile southeast of Bombay. It was here that some soldiers of the Baluchi regiment were stunned with amazement to find the woman they had buried alive, years before, sitting under a large tree-very much resurrected and surrounded by her devotees. Overawed by her spiritual magnitude, in the presence of some of Babajan's disciples, they prostrated themselves reverently before her and later recounted their part in her burial to by-standers. As the result of this incident the fame of her saint-hood spread far and wide.

One of Baba's women disciples, who had the privilege of knowing Babajan well, related to me that her presence was magnetic that no passer-by could resist turning his head for a second glance. She was short in stature, firm and agile in gait; her skin was fair and sunburnt, her face broad, with high cheek bones, and a wealth of thick white hair hung loosely to her shoulders. Her voice was deep and sonorous, her eyes fathomless pools of liquid blue light.

After a number of years of roaming about the city of Poona-to all appearances as a mendicant-sitting or resting wherever her fancy led her, she took up her 'seat'-as the permanent abode of a saint or Master is termed-underneath the lime tree where many years later Baba was destined to meet her. At that time, this particular spot was an eyesore of dirt, desolation and ugliness; a breeding place of plague and pestilence, and the favorite haunt of the city's riff-raff. Here Babajan improvised an apology of a shelter with some sticks and gunny-sacks, and here, through the driving rains of the monsoon, and the scorching heat of the Indian summer, Babajan remained.

Within ten years her 'seat' became a focal point of pilgrimage for thousands of spiritual aspirants. The neighboring section changed from a slum of squalor and filth to a bazaar of spiritual wealth and beauty. New buildings sprang into being, old ones were rejuvenated. Tea-shops echoed to the hospitable clatter of cups and saucers, and to the chatter of throngs waiting to pay their respects to Babajan. In the streets singers entertained the crowd with their spiritual music; gay, laughing and eager people of all ranks and creeds stood by the hundreds, patiently waiting for the long-anticipated moment when they could 'take the dust' of Babajan's feet. And because this was India, where the 'shadow' side of life could never be completely disregarded or suppressed, the ubiquitous beggar slunk his way through the crowd, whining his pitiful plea for alms. Near Babajan, herself, clouds of sweet-smelling incense rose and mingled with the out-pouring of devotion from the hearts of the pilgrims; a scene to be found only in the Orient, and one which left an indelible impression on the mind and heart of the beholder.

To the town-authorities these daily demonstrations presented a serious problem. Traffic was being held up, congestion spread for miles around. They would have liked to move Babajan's 'seat' to a more outlying, less congested district, but they knew she would never consent to that. However, something had to be done; their local pride was at stake. Such a celebrity-as she had now become-should have a more suitable place to live in. It was unseemly that she should be living beneath a gunny-sack roof, under a tree. So the township built her a decent abode only a few feet from her self-chosen spot. She did not remonstrate, but when the building was finished and they invited her, with suitable ceremony, to move in, she refused point blank. The authorities were flabbergasted, but ultimately the difficulty was resolved by building an extension which connected the new structure with Babajan's old 'seat' underneath the lime tree!

Like other Perfect Masters, she slept very little, and even that little was merely withdrawal to the plane of super-

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consciousness. Unconscious sleep plays no part in the life of a Master. She ate little and irregularly, with frequent servings of strong, black Indian tea; a regime calculated to shatter even a robust constitution. But for Babajan-the Perfect Master-it was apparently the perfect diet: she lived to the ripe age of over one hundred and twenty! She used to refer to the act of eating as, “patchwork to the body.”

If anybody addressed her as ‘Mother’ her eyes would flash and she would exclaim: “I am a man; not a woman!” indication that her *consciousness* was not conditioned by her physical form and confirming a saying of prophet Mohammed, that “Lovers of God are males; lovers of paradise are eunuchs; lovers of the world are females.”

Many miracles are attributed to Babajan, among them the merciful act of healing. Her method in this was unique. She would place her hand over the diseased part or hold it between her fingers and calling upon some Celestial Being, order the troublesome entity to depart, as she jerked or moved the affected area. This technique would bring instantaneous relief and the estwhile sufferer would depart smiling and happy.

Hundreds of incidents are related about Babajan illustrating how her great love and compassion for sinful man always came to the fore whenever human derelicts came her way. Characteristic of these is the occasion when a man tried to steal a costly shawl-a gift from a devotee-which covered the sleeping Babajan. One end of the shawl happened to be caught under her body, which caused the thief considerable trouble in removing it, since he tried not to awaken her. But Babajan raised herself a little, without opening her eyes, to help the man achieve his purpose.

At another time a wealthy devotee had placed upon Babajan’s wrists two bangles of solid gold. Watching his opportunity, a thief snatched them from her wrists so roughly that they cruelly lacerated her flesh. Too late did her followers realize what had happened. They were infuriated and set up a great hue and cry to prevent the thief’s escape. When the local police brought the culprit before Babajan, to everyone’s consternation she ignored

the thief and called upon the police to arrest his accusers!

These are but a few of the many incidents which highlight for us the character of this unsurpassed God-woman who, upon seeing the boy, Merwan, recognized him instantly as her long-awaited spiritual son. After placing the kiss of divine enlightenment upon Merwan's forehead, she told her disciples that this was a soul who would startle the world with his God-power and love. She had known from the time of her own inner illumination that it was her destiny to awaken Merwan to his great mission. Even the eternal Avatar must each time be re-awakened to his divine role. On September 21, 1931--the time of Baba's first visit to the West--her work completed, she gave up her earthly body.

We of the West are so far removed from esoteric phenomena that we find it difficult to grasp such singular proceedings, let alone accept them as facts. The Eastern scriptures however, are lucid on the subject. They recount many instances of Perfect Masters conferring instantaneous spiritual grace at will upon anyone of their appointed choice, by means of sight, touch, or speech. At such moments all of the Master's completely realized God-power is focused with needle-point sharpness upon the consciousness of the predestined disciple, who in a flash becomes aware of his own Godhood.

PREFACE TO DAWN

Though Eastern lore is replete with records of similar instantaneous liberation, accounts of such grace falling upon one who had not consciously been seeking God are rare. Generally it comes to one after long years of earnest striving and complete renunciation of worldly values. But to Merwan it seemed to have come as a free gift from Heaven, unexpected and not consciously sought. He had not been seeking anything outside the boundaries of his mundane activities. He loved the poetry and literature of the West as well as the East, read avidly of both. He excelled in his studies and at sports; was a leader in his group, well-liked by his friends and teachers, in spite of an inher-

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ent mischievousness. He seemed in all respects a normal, healthy, happy boy, loving the beautiful, despising the mean and petty.

His father, a Parsee of the Zoroastrian faith, had been an ardent seeker after God ever since his young manhood. He had, in fact, decided to dedicate his life to that search, and become what in India is known as a *Sanyasin*-a spiritual wayfarer-when an inner voice commanded him to give up his asceticism, marry and bring children into the world. One of these children, the Voice declared, would bear the fruit of the father's striving, and would become known as a great spiritual leader of men. The father obeyed the inner command and shortly thereafter married a fellow Parsee woman, whose forebears had likewise migrated from Persia and settled near Bombay. Five children were the off-spring of this union, of whom Merwan was the second, born on February 25th, 1894.

One circumstance of his childhood may have contributed somewhat to the reflective side of Merwan's nature, though it is my understanding that spiritual liberation, such as Merwan experienced, is not conditioned by nor dependent upon environment or physical heredity. Spiritual readiness, in the sense of soul-maturity is the determining factor.

Merwan lived near the community Tower of Silence where those of the Zoroastrian faith take their dead and leave them to be consumed by the vultures which throng about the Tower in black clouds of waiting eagerness. Often the child Merwan chose to visit this eerie place, sometimes sitting alone for hours, with only vultures and dry bones for companions. Perhaps here began his first faint intimations of his immortal role which transcends life and death. In any case it would seem to indicate a nature instinctively reflective-introverted. But for this factor in his childhood, Merwan's environment was similar to that of thousands of other Parsee children born of refined, devout Zoroastrian parents.

He completed his preparatory school grades at St.Vincent's High School with high credit and at the age of seventeen entered Deccan College, at that time the finest educa-

tional institution in the Deccan—a province of Western India. Merwan's main interest was in literature and he read eagerly Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Shelley, as well as many other English, Indian and Persian poets. Of Hafiz, one of the great Persian poets, he was especially fond. He felt enraptured by his deep mysticism, although at that time he had had no mystical experience himself. Under the inspiration of this poet, Merwan wrote many poems in various Indian dialects and in Persian, which were published under the *nom-de-plume* of "Homa," in *Sanj Vartman*, one of the most popular vernacular newspapers of Bombay. He also wrote poems in English. He loved music and had a beautiful singing voice. In contrast to this more aesthetic side of his nature was his keen interest in mystery stories, and at the age of fifteen he wrote a story for his favorite 'thriller,' *The Union Jack*, which was accepted and printed.

In preparatory school and college Merwan was regarded as a natural leader. In quarrels, he was called upon to be arbiter, and the boys came to him for advice on all subjects. At Deccan college he formed an organization called the 'Cosmopolitan Club.' Anybody, regardless of caste or community, could become a member. Its rules included the prohibition of gambling, coarse language, and quarreling.

GOD-AWAKENING

Merwan was in his second year of college when this great inner transformation took place. After his initial meeting with Babajan, Merwan continued to attend his college classes, but each evening on his way home he would stop for a short visit with the venerable saint, who at that time was reputed to be well over one hundred years old. Age had left its deep imprint in furrows upon her face, but her faculties had become intensified with age. Her sight and hearing were perfect, and she walked as spritely as young girl. When I was in India I was told by many who had known her that the love which emanated from her was so great that people could hardly bear to leave her presence.

One evening in January 1914, Babajan was in a talkative mood and Merwan stayed with her longer than usual.

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He kissed her hands and stood humbly before her. Her deep eyes were intent upon him. She pointed her finger at him and declared, "This child of mine will create a great sensation in the world and do immense good to humanity." Merwan continued to stand reverently before her for a few more moments, then reluctantly made his way home. It was nearly midnight. He went immediately to bed. Within a few minutes he began to experience extraordinary thrills throughout his body, as though he were receiving high-powered electric shocks. He felt somewhat alarmed as the indescribable joy, mingled with pain, became more intense. After a few hours of this ecstasy he passed beyond all mundane consciousness.

The first person to discover Merwan in this condition was his mother, who found him the next morning lying on his bed with wide-open, vacant eyes. Thinking he was seriously ill, she made him lie down again. For three days he remained in this condition. Though his eyes were open, he saw nothing. On the fourth day, he began to move about a little, being now dimly conscious of his body. In this semi-trancelike condition he remained for some nine months. He had no knowledge of his actions and what he did was in response to no prompting of his conscious mind. He was wholly unconscious of the physical world. He neither ate food nor drank liquid; any action initiated he would continue for hours at a time. Once, during this period, he went to Kondwa, and lay behind the Parsi Tower of Silence for three days. He did not sleep and the food which was given to him he gave to the dogs or put in his pockets, intending to give it to beggars.

His parents were desperate. They naturally thought his mind was impaired, and in their efforts to restore their beloved son to normality they subjected him to every conceivable kind of medical treatment. But none was of any avail, nor was he aware of any of it. He was oblivious of the doctors, and not even the hypodermic needles made him aware of them, or caused any sensation to register in his brain.

Ten months later, in November 1914, he regained slight

physical consciousness and behaved, as he afterward said, like an automaton possessing intuition. His eyes ceased to be vacant; life returned to them, and he began again to take food regularly, although in very small quantities. A month after this partial return of physical awareness, a friend brought a poor young man named Behramji Irani to see Merwan. The newcomer became instantly devoted to Merwan and later was one of his closest disciples. Merwan offered to teach him Persian. His parents were delighted, as this was the first concrete evidence of more normal functioning. To accelerate the process they got additional pupils for him to teach but he declined to accept them. He continued, however, to teach Behramji, and with very marked results, though Merwan at that time had little more than a fraction of his normal consciousness. He taught instinctively, not intellectually.

BALANCED CONSCIOUSNESS

With this slight return of physical consciousness, Merwan became increasingly aware of the need to find someone who would help him regain perfect equilibrium. He knew intuitively that it was not the function of Babajan, his liberator from world-illusion, to effect his balance on the physical plane. For this he knew that he must find another Master.

The spiritual hierarchy, known as Perfect Masters, are a completely integrated group, functioning as one in God-consciousness, and known to each other inwardly. Each having a distinct and unique role to perform, they never overlap each other's sphere of action. Though endowed with infinite wisdom and knowledge, and therefore able to perform any work they might choose, their earthly mission is divided into highly specialized activities. It is characteristic of Perfect Masters that in everything they do, they manifest the utmost economy of effort.

The Master destined to complete the process of perfect functioning for Merwan proved to be Upasani Maharaj. His first meeting with Upasani illustrates the singular ways of such Masters. On the surface, many of their actions seem strangely incongruous-even grotesque-yet upon closer analysis, the underlying meaning becomes apparent.

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As Merwan approached Upasani Maharaj on his first visit to him, the Master picked up a pebble and hurled it at Merwan. This was for the purpose of awakening him again to the physical world. The stone grazed Merwan's forehead -on the same spot where Babajan had kissed him-and Baba relates that from that moment his equilibrium began to return, bringing him down gradually from the supra-normal level on which he had been solely functioning since Babajan's initiation, to balanced consciousness on the earth plane. The kiss of Babajan might very well have been the symbolic Breath of God that lifted Merwan into God-realization; the stone of Upasani Maharaj the symbolic fragment of earth that brought him down to the sphere where he was to function among the children of the earth.

In the beginning of his contact with Upasani, Merwan used to visit him for only a day or two at a time, spending the intervals with his family. Not yet privileged to comprehend the great spiritual transformation which was taking place within their son's consciousness, they still regarded him as mentally deranged. He would sit for hours at the Tower of Silence, accentuating the fact of physical consciousness by knocking his forehead against the stones. Then he would wrap his head in a scarf or turban to hide the bruises from his family. Baba later told his group that the physical pain provoked by knocking his head against the stones relieved somewhat the spiritual agony in which he was then immersed.

As Merwan's consciousness became more balanced, his mother's anxiety to see her son re-established in an atmosphere of normal living became more pronounced. She pleaded with him to adopt some kind of profession or trade, and to please her and ease her concern he tried his hand at various occupations. It was during this period that he became manager of a theatrical company for a short time. How Merwan reacted to these excursions into worldly life is summarized in a letter to a friend, in which he expressed his distaste for a life that compelled him to eat uncongenial food, and required him to wear confining clothes, both of which he heartily disliked.

When the owner of the theatrical troupe died, Merwan was glad to return to Poona. Here he was put in charge of his father's teashop. But the boy whose forehead had been touched by two Perfect Masters was not destined to distinguish himself as manager of a teashop. His mind was too greatly absorbed in lofty subjects to pay attention to crafty customers who took delight in cheating him.

The teashop served one useful purpose, however, and perhaps that was its function. Through it he began gathering about him a small circle of friends who, in spite of his eccentricities, felt deeply drawn to him. As a gathering place for this little group, Merwan rented a small room near the shop which he decorated with pictures of Babajan and Upasani Maharaj, and of other saints and Masters. Here the circle performed spiritual ceremonies every evening, and twice a week at four o'clock in the morning—the hour when Baba became God-realized, and when, he has told his disciples, they also will become God-conscious.

While in charge of the teashop, part of Merwan's work required him to wash bottles, dishes, and to sweep and wash the floor. Curiously enough, this aspect of the work did not disturb him. On the contrary, he seemed to take delight in doing the most menial tasks. In later years this same proclivity was evidenced when, during the first Ashram days, he helped with the household work and later, at his school for young boys, when he cleansed their latrines.

Another poignant example of the urge Merwan apparently felt, to experience symbolically the lowest level of life – even as he had experienced in reality the highest—is recounted by Behramji, who tells of the incident when Merwan obtained from a sweeper a bucket of refuse, which he took to an attic. There he stayed for thirty six hours. When he emerged, he was covered with filth from head to foot, and completely exhausted. His devoted friend took upon himself the task of cleansing Merwan of the refuse.

In July, 1921, Merwan moved to Sakori, the headquarters of the Master Upasani. Here he spent many hours daily in silence; only now and then would he break the silence with a song. At the end of December, Merwan was

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restored to fully balanced consciousness. Signaling this important event, Maharaj said to his disciples: "I have given my 'key' to Merwan. He is now the repository of my power."

And later, again in the presence of his disciples and devotees: "Merwan is the leading *Sadguru* of this age. He will move the world and all humanity will be benefited by his work."

"Merwan is a Perfect Master," he told Baba's friend, Behramji. "You must carry out his every command."

Thus Merwan became a *Sadguru* at the age of twenty-eight. He was henceforth called Meher Baba, which means Father of Compassion.

When Baba left Sakori early in the year 1922, Upasani Maharaj turned over to him a few of his own followers, whom he had been nurturing until Baba-their destined Master-should be ready to receive them. Again Upasani admonished them to obey always the word of Baba, who now had the power to help them become God-realized, even as he was.

Baba has told us that in attaining perfect control over his physical body, his superconscious state of God-realization in no wise abated. Through the ministry of Babajan he had been awakened to the realization of his Godhood. In this exalted state he became aware of his destiny in this life, as well as in former incarnations, to serve as the Divine Leader who brings about that quickening of mass consciousness which is humanity's greatest recurrent need. Babajan released in him the well-spring of his Divinity, but in order that he might use this transcendent knowledge for the benefit of humanity his consciousness must be balanced again on the physical plane-without loss of God-consciousness. Accordingly, was the second Master, Upasani Maharaj, destined to enter Baba's life, and to be the intermediary in rendering him this service.

Succinctly, Baba sums it up: "Babajan gave me God; Upasani Maharaj, knowledge."

Thus in him were fused the spiritual strains of two great religions-the Mohammedan through Babajan, the Hindu through Upasani, as were also the Mother and Father as-

pects of God. Moreover, through his physical birth he had inherited the great tradition of Zoroaster, while his Christian schooling had acquainted him with the teaching and precepts of Jesus; a universal inheritance, bestowed for vast universal work.

SIGNIFICANCE OF GODHOOD

Since this story concerns one whose state of consciousness is that of the incarnate God, and since few of us in the West know much about this supreme achievement, it seems appropriate to include in this biography Baba's own teaching on the subject. He tells us that though the Realization of God is the supreme goal of man, few in any age achieve it. Of those who do, the *Sadguru* or Perfect Master stands at the pinnacle. He is one who has passed through the six planes of illusory consciousness-all of which involve a sense of separation from God-and has entered the seventh plane where final and permanent union with God is realized. He has, moreover, balanced this supreme soul condition with his physical plane consciousness.

This ultimate goal of the spiritual journey-union with God-is achieved also by two other classes of God-realized souls-*Muktas* and *Majzoobs*. They do not, however, possess the mastery over the physical body which the Perfect Master enjoys. The *Muktas* give up the gross body at the moment of liberation, and leave the earth plane. The *Majzoobs* retain the human form and continue functioning on this plane, but without regaining *consciousness* of the body. Only a few-the Perfect Masters-regain physical awareness without yielding their uninterrupted consciousness of being God. The Perfect Master returns to the valley of earth from the mountain-top of God. Having realized his Divinity, he descends to the level of mortal man to help all those who are spiritually ripe, to make the great ascent.

There are fifty-six such Perfect Masters incarnate at all times. In our age, they live in the Orient, whose spiritually-conditioned atmosphere is more suitable for their esoteric work. Though one in consciousness, they differ in function. Of these 'fifty-six' only five attain public recognition. The

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remainder are unknown to the world. They live either as ascetics, in secluded mountain caves and forests, or as normal men doing their inner work secretly, unsuspected even by their closest associates. The five who serve as a sovereign Council determine the course which man's destiny on earth shall take. Only those decisions which are unanimous are released for action and assigned for execution. The governing head of this august body is known as the 'Emperor.'

At rare intervals—in times of acute world crises—mankind passes through Avataric cycles. Such was the time of Jesus, of Buddha, and many believe that humanity has now entered another. In Avataric periods the Supreme Master of the Council becomes known to the world as the Saviour or Avatar.

Except for this highest function, the ranks of Perfect Mastership are open to women as well as men. The Avatar incarnates always in a male body. He is the 'Ancient One' who was the first human to become fully conscious of his Godhood.

In the intervals between Avataric periods, the One Avatar continues unbroken his successions, but the positions he assumes on earth are of less *universal* spiritual significance, though always his role is one of beneficial help to struggling humanity. There are times—when world conditions demand it—that he occupies many bodies during one and the same period. As genius of the arts he quickens man's higher sense; as a master of poetry, he unfurls for man another petal of the cosmic rose; as an inspired scientist he reveals to humanity the hidden secrets of nature; as a great leader of Church or State, he lifts mankind to a broader concept of life; or as a nameless wanderer over man's earth, he cheers the disheartened and eases man's burdens. No generation is without his physical manifestation in one form or another, though often his true identity remains hidden—his presence upon earth unknown to mankind.

SAINT'S TESTIMONY

While we were in India, Ramjoo—one of Baba's pioneer disciples—recounted to us an experience of his own which

testifies to the preeminence of the position which the Master Baba occupies in the spiritual hierarchy.

Ramjoo had been sent by Baba to contact a saint in a certain town in India. When he arrived in the locality he learned that the man he sought had disappeared just that morning and no one seemed to know when he would return. But since Ramjoo had been instructed to see him, he decided to wait around for a while, hoping the saint would soon reappear. For the better part of two days Ramjoo kept vigil by the side of the main thoroughfare. As he watched the passers-by one dishevelled old woman, who muttered strangely as she passed and repassed him many times, impressed herself upon his consciousness. She appeared to be entirely oblivious of any external thing or person, and to the uninitiated would have seemed mentally distraught. Questioning another passerby, Ramjoo learned that this woman was highly regarded in the neighborhood as a God-realized soul, who functioned on a super-conscious plane.

Suddenly the old woman stopped in front of Ramjoo and turned upon him her piercing dark eyes. All traces of preoccupation and abstraction had vanished.

“What is the name of your Master?” she demanded.

When Ramjoo replied, “Shri Meher Baba,” she seemed to project the full force of her tremendous concentration into his inmost being, before exclaiming:

“Ah, he is the emperor of us all!”

Then without another word she turned from Ramjoo and disappeared into the maze of the local bazaar.

Ramjoo later came to know that true to the mysterious and often indirect ways employed by Perfect Masters in their work, it was this woman saint Baba had really intended him to contact outwardly, not the man who had so inconveniently disappeared.

PSYCHIC PITFALLS

To us in the West, the blind obedience which Baba expects from his disciples may seem strange and perhaps arbitrary. But with deeper knowledge of the pitfalls of the psychic and mental planes of illusion through which the

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disciple must pass, the Master's technique is understood to be a merciful one. The first three planes of expanded consciousness bestow upon the disciple great psychic powers in which the inner senses are awakened and utilized; while the fourth and fifth planes confer upon those who reach these levels, super-mental powers, such as raising the dead, or continuing in the body indefinitely. Unless one is wholly free from all taint of self-interest, these planes constitute a dangerous hazard for the spiritual pilgrim. It is because of this danger that the Perfect Masters take their disciples through their initiatory training blindfolded. On the sixth plane of spiritual intuition, or sainthood, the danger of egoistic functioning is passed, but there still remains a sense of separation from God; it is therefore still in the domain of illusion. Only on the seventh, the plane of Oneness, is the soul freed from all duality and sense of limiting impressions—even though they be of high order. Here, on the peak of the spiritual mountain, the individual soul is merged completely with the Infinite.

This state of complete God-consciousness which the Perfect Ones possess, Baba assures us, is possible for all human beings—is indeed, the birthright of every soul, regardless of color, caste, creed or nationality. To a questioner, he once replied: “Jesus realized God as himself; you have to realize God as *yourself*.” It is, however, so difficult a task that only real heroes of the spirit can achieve it after long and arduous struggle.

THE NATURE OF GOD

In the New Testament this great adventure of the soul has been simply and graphically described by Jesus in the story of *The Prodigal Son*. But since we are living in an age when the intellect demands to know something of the metaphysics behind such parables, Baba gives to us a profound analysis of the nature of God and man.

God—who in essence is One and indivisible—appears in the four-fold capacity of Almighty, Creator, Individual, and God-man. God, as the Almighty, is One, not in the sense of being half of two, but the One who remains forever One,

without a second. He always was infinite, is now infinite and will always remain infinite. He is the Shoreless Ocean of Truth. He is beyond time and space, cause and effect. He is beyond instinct, intellect and inspiration. But God in this state is *unconscious*. The Almighty is not *aware* that he is the Shoreless Ocean of Truth. His primeval state resembles that of sound sleep.

God as the Creator is none other than the One, Indivisible God, but he is *conscious* in one respect only—that of being the Creator. Consequently, although he *is* the Shoreless Ocean of Truth, he, as Creator, is not aware of that fact, and so is concerned only with the illusory universe, which he creates, preserves and destroys. As he is conscious only of being the Creator, and not being the Shoreless Ocean, he is limited by cause and effect, time and space. His creative decree is the cause; his Creation is the effect. His functioning as Creator is limited by the time-span of what is called one Divine Cycle; the range of his activities is bounded by the space limitations of his Creation.

God as the individual is again the same Supreme One and, like the Creator, he is both conscious and unconscious. He is unconscious of his *real* Self, and does not know that he is the Shoreless Ocean of Truth, but he is conscious of his limited existence, of being a drop of individuality in the Universal Ocean of creatures. Therefore, the individual, like the Creator, in spite of being in fact the Infinite One, is not infinite, but finite in *realization*. As such he is subject to the laws of causation, and those of time and space, and is restricted by them. His life manifests the effect of his consciousness of being a separate entity. The duration of his incarnate life as individual is equal to that of the divine cycle, or until he becomes fully conscious of his true Self—until he realizes that he is the Almighty himself.

The manifested individual, who is form plus soul, must give up his separate individuality or life, before he can become conscious of being the Almighty. But this giving up of life does not mean ordinary dying. It means the shedding of worldly desires and attachments. Man must become free from all mundane desires, both good and bad, as an impera-

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tive preliminary to God-realization. This renunciation is tantamount to losing one's individuality or separate life. This is not achieved, however, by the mere loss of physical consciousness. Desires must be transcended *consciously*, while in the body. All that separates the individual from the God-source of his life must be given up while *living*. Otherwise, the individual, minus full consciousness, remains as he always has been, conscious only of being one of many individuals. To renounce the desires of the body, of the mind, and of the world, and at the same time to retain consciousness of the *Unconscious*-of the Almighty-is the great goal; a prospect appallingly difficult for the average man to contemplate, all but impossible without the spiritual help of a Master to achieve.

In ordinary sound sleep, every human creature loses his individuality, but not consciously; when sleep stops, he has to return to conscious life. For the same reason ordinary physical death is no death at all. It is but a longer sound sleep; when that has spent its cycle, one has to incarnate again. Ordinary death does not liberate the individual from the chain of worldly desires. In order to achieve this, man must become fully conscious of the unconscious, *conscious* of the pure, infinite, sexless Self and unconscious of body, mind and universe. Only death *without giving up the body* can accomplish this.

God awakens when, as a *conscious* individual, he succeeds in penetrating through the maze of Creator and creation, and comes to know himself as the Almighty. Then does he become conscious of what he innately has always been and will ever remain-the One Infinite Ocean of Truth. For him now the imaginations of the Creator and his creation no longer exist. He has ceased being finite in consciousness. He *knows* himself as the Almighty, the One Infinite Ocean that has always existed, continuously, without any change or division, and will remain so forever. Such a One-the God-man-knows that although he was present in consciousness in stones, minerals, vegetables, trees, birds, beasts and human beings, he had through all these evolutionary

forms remained-unceasingly and without impairment-that which he now is, the One and only Reality.

The God-man then is none else but the same Almighty One, *plus* knowledge and consciousness. He is Knowledge, Knower, and the Known. He is Love, Lover and the Beloved. The God-man knows that he is in every individual and that every individual is in him. He *experiences* all this, while the *unawakened* individual does not. Both are in the same Ocean of Truth, yet with what a difference! The God-man knows that he is the All-in-All, the totality of existence; that he always was and will ever remain the same One Ocean of Truth; the unenlightened individual, though he *is*, in fact, the same all-inclusive One, does not know whence he came, nor whither he is headed.

It is the One Supreme Self who plays the different roles of Almighty, Creator, Individual and God-man. In the state of the Almighty, the Supreme Self is One, indivisible, and infinite, unconsciously possessing and sustaining infinite powers, eternal existence, unfathomable bliss and universal complete knowledge, though without becoming *aware* of them. As Creator he possesses the same unconscious attributes, but he becomes aware of being the Creator and *experiences* himself as creating, preserving and destroying Creation. As Individual, he still possesses all these potentialities, but he limits himself to earthly desires and thus experiences himself as finite-as circumscribed by his physical body. Only as God-man does he experience and realize all of his infinite and limitless capacities in *full consciousness*.

Before the individual can lose his limited personality and become God-man, it is an absolute essential that he realize Love-Divine Love-for the indivisible, infinite Supreme Self, who is beyond the realm of thought and reason. Inasmuch as the Supreme Self is beyond all man-comprehended things, including the intellect, the intellect cannot find him. Only Divine Love, free from the dross of illusion and the drag of desires, can realize him.

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WHEN THE TIME IS RIPE

To quicken this Divine Love in humanity on a mass scale is always the function of the Avatar. Being divinely conscious of man's need, and having the power to fulfill that need, he spares neither himself nor others the necessary pain to achieve the desired end. There is a price to be paid for every attainment, and the Supreme Attainment is no exception.

For the quickening of consciousness *all* the forces in the Unconscious-both 'good' and 'bad'-must be released. Old established traditions and accepted concepts which have encased man's spirit for ages must be demolished. New collective images and evaluations must be born. Living, growing, maturing, is no child's play, and in endeavoring to achieve this end, one may well find himself at war with himself or with others. This inner and outer conflict the Master deliberately fosters, but he does it in the spirit of utmost compassion, for he knows that without the complete purging of the congested tendencies and desires, deep-rooted in our inner being, no spiritual regeneration is possible. He knows that the psychological warp in the average person makes him shrink from facing the most negative and corroding tendencies in his make-up; that only through precipitation of acute inner crises can even the most earnest seeker be forced to face the pressing issues of his psyche, and thus create the opportunity of dissolving them.

For Meher Baba, in being the Perfect Master, is also the master psychologist, whose consummate skill ferrets out the well-concealed skeletons in the most hidden recesses of our being and brings them into the sunlight of our consciousness. Baba knows that only by such means can man be made so acutely, so overwhelmingly conscious of his deepest spiritual needs, that he will at last be ready to relinquish the distracting toys and trinkets of his sham existence for the greater and lasting values of immortal life.

COSMIC CATHARSIS

In the light of this teaching, such a catastrophe as the recent world-war takes on a new meaning-a spiritually purposeful one. On his first visit to America, in 1931, eight

years before the world had been plunged into its cleansing blood-bath, two years before Hitler's rise to power, Baba had foretold all the events which have since come to pass. He has also predicted that a kind of armistice or seeming victory would bring hostilities to an end, but it would be only a lull before an even greater storm breaks. When, however, man has come to the end of his own resources, to the recognition that shifting the balance of power from one nation to another will not solve the problems; when through bitter anguish *all* the nations of the world awaken to the fact that only through God's grace will man be able to accept all men as his brothers, then, Baba predicts that the consciousness of mankind will be quickened-raised to a higher level. He states that the breaking of his long self-imposed silence-now in its twenty-first year-will be the signal for this momentous cosmic happening, which will lift man's awareness from the plane of reason to that of intuition, from self-consciousness to soul-consciousness. Comparable in importance to this great step, in the evolution of consciousness, was the transition from the animal to the human kingdom, from the plane of instinct to that of reason.

For more than a quarter of a century Baba's disciples have been witnessing the fulfillment of his prophecies; it is not surprising, therefore, that they believe this supreme prediction of his will also come to pass, when, in Baba's words, "the time for man's release is ripe."

Even hard-boiled reporters, whose ultra-sophisticated attitude toward spiritual teachers is notorious, have at times found themselves unable to resist the impact of Baba's integrity. I recall an incident in India, on Christmas day, 1937, when a reporter, T.A.Raman of the Evening News of India, came to Baba's Western Ashram at Nasik to interview him. In response to the reporter's questions, Baba repeated his prediction of the global holocaust which has since engulfed the world. The reporter shot back with an undertone of sarcasm: "So that, sir, is your opinion?"

Smiling, Baba answered: "My son, I have no opinion. I know."

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And strange as it may seem to the Western reader who has had no contact with such ego-less omniscience, the effect was electric. The cynical journalist left Baba's presence in a much sobered mood. Something he had never before encountered must have punctured his hardened shell, for his full-page story in the *News* of January 7th, 1938, lacked all the flippancy of his interview. He writes, in part:

“Shorn of the trappings of mysticism and platitude, there is much in the teaching of Meher Baba which the world badly needs to be told. The peace which he himself seems to have attained is undeniable nor can one gainsay the charm and the sincerity of his personality... ‘The time to preach in the market place will come.,’ says Meher Baba ‘but only after the world has been humbled and purified by a carnage greater than any the world has yet seen.’ ”

This is the prediction which won headlines for Meher Baba the world over and which has been so terribly fulfilled, but it is important to remember that Meher Baba predicted this war for years, immediately following the last Armistice—when another such war seemed impossible.

CHAPTER III

GENESIS

AFTER Meher Baba left Sakori and Upasani Maharaj in 1922, he stayed for a fortnight with a friend in Bombay. From there he moved to the outskirts of Poona, where, at his request, a small, thatched hut-six feet by ten-had been built for him.

When asked why he subjected himself to such enforced discomfort though he was spiritually perfect and beyond all need of physical self-discipline, he explained that the physical confinement was only apparent, not real to him. "It does not inconvenience me, for walls do not bind me. For certain kinds of work which I have to do in non-physical realms, I prefer to shut myself up in a small place. It was for the same reason that Jesus, after attaining perfection, stayed for thirty continuous days on a mountain where he did not allow even his intimate disciples to approach him."

There are times, particularly when he is deeply immersed in inner work, that Baba also forbids anyone to touch him, or even to come within a distance of six feet of him. Only those who have lived in intimate proximity to the Master know that such stipulations are as much for the safety of his disciples as for any other reason-so powerful is the spiritual voltage in his body at such periods.

He lived in the circumscribed hut for about five months, with his disciples ministering to his physical needs. Very early in the morning-generally at four-his breakfast was brought to him. At nine o'clock he would receive Hindu devotees who would stay for an hour chanting ancient religious songs and playing Hindu musical instruments. At ten-thirty he left the hut for his mother's house where he had dinner; then, after a short rest he would return to his small abode. In the afternoon he glanced at the headlines

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of the newspapers—(and this is the extent of Baba’s reading of newspapers) – to see how closely outer world events were conforming to his inner direction. He then remained alone in his hut until the evening, when his disciples and friends entertained him with music and song, while Baba, following the Indian custom, would serve sweets and talk of things spiritual. At nine o’clock his supper was brought to him, after which no one was permitted to approach him or even to come near the hut, except the one disciple whose duty it was to stay on guard with him all night.

The Perfect Master does not sleep in the ordinary sense—he never becomes *unconscious*. His apparent sleep is simply the voluntary withdrawal from the conscious plane to the super-conscious. The rest he derives in this way is only relative, for even on this celestial plane he is constantly active. During this period, the Master requires the wakeful presence of a trusted companion to protect his body from the subtle onslaughts of discarnate spirits who try to draw near him, but whose disturbing intrusion is prevented by the proximity of a waking consciousness.

DIVINE MAGNET

In the early days of his Mastership, Baba’s method of gathering to him those who were destined to become his disciples was as natural as it was effective. One of those early followers was Doctor Ghani, who tells us how Baba would have tea with him at a Parsee restaurant at Poona, and in all seriousness ask his opinion on political questions, giving rapt attention to his answers. Only through subsequent experience with Baba did Doctor Ghani realize that Baba’s feigned absorption in politics derived from his deeper interest in Dr. Ghani himself. It was, of course, Baba’s way of reaching down to the level of those whom he would help, and this he did with sympathetic friendliness and loving interchange of thought, occasionally high-lighted with some profound spiritual truth, when he knew the hearer was ready to receive it .

He made no claim of being God-realized, nor sought to

bind people to him except by the naturally attracting power of Divine Love. But gradually his friends became disciples through their growing insight, which conveyed to them his true spiritual stature. Through this same power of Divine Love, Baba held these first disciples close to him during long years of severe testing and tempering. Ghani's experience of what happened when he had gradually been drawn closer into Baba's orbit, and inspired to obey his instructions implicitly, is an illuminating example of the quality of the Master's testing technique.

The doctor, who bears a striking resemblance to Socrates, as his image has come down to us from ancient Greece, had been a successful homeopathic physician, founder-head of his own dispensary in Bombay, before he became Baba's disciple. One day the Master advised him to dust and sweep out the whole clinic himself instead of hiring servants to do it, for a period of six months. Such a practice, Baba assured him, would be of great benefit to him spiritually. So the good doctor carried out Baba's instructions literally, with the result that he swept his medical establishment utterly out of existence! Through a series of complicated events the clinic had passed out of his hands by the end of the six-month period. At first he was much puzzled, but eventually the priceless benefits of this uprooting became clear to him; it freed him to give himself wholly to Baba's service, and thus attain a spiritual development which he could not otherwise have achieved.

Another amusing instance of the baffling manner in which Baba so often achieves his supra-personal ends is the saga of Ramjoo's shop.

This handsome, charming young Mohammedan had reached the point in his novitiate where he desired to surrender his life to Baba. Just one thing seemed to stand in the way of that final step-his dry-goods shop. He would have to sell it before he and his family could move to the locality of Baba's headquarters. Ramjoo asked for Baba's help.

“Do just one thing. Until the shop is sold,” Baba in-

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structed him, “say to everybody you meet, before you say anything else; ‘I have not yet sold my shop’ .”

That seemed very simple and Ramjoo promised to carry out the instruction faithfully.

Things did not, however, work out as he had anticipated. The simple formula of repeating, ‘I have not yet sold my shop,’ grew very burdensome, not only for Ramjoo, but for his family and friends. Every morning, upon first seeing his wife, or his father-in-law, he must greet them-or return their greeting-with, ‘I have not yet sold my shop,’ which of course they knew! When the days grew into weeks and he still persisted in repeating his odd greeting, they began to wonder about his sanity. His friends looked upon him with pity; they too believed he was losing his mind. He found himself crossing the street to avoid them-if they did not see him first and avoid him. He invented what he hoped would alter the monotone of his salutation, make it sound more natural: “Beautiful day-I have not yet sold my shop!”

As the weeks passed Ramjoo came to shun human contacts more and more. He, the jovial, gregarious friend of many was becoming a recluse! One morning-to top it all-word arrived that one of his uncles had died, which meant the inevitability of his attending the funeral. Ramjoo dreaded the day. The prospect of facing an army of bereaved relatives, many of whom he had not seen for months, with the salutation, “I have not yet sold my shop, ” was more than he could bear! He would not attend that funeral; he would pretend to be ill, and send his message of sympathy to the bereaved family through his wife.

So when the day arrived he remained in bed until he was quite sure that the funeral was over. Then he rose, dressed himself and, glad to have succeeded in his ruse, walked toward his shop. After proceeding leisurely for a few blocks he suddenly found himself, to his horror, in the very path of his uncle’s funeral procession; it was coming straight toward him! He could not possibly avoid it. As is the custom at Mohammedan funerals, he had to touch the coffin with his shoulder, then offer his condolences to every one of the sorrowing relatives, preceded by the wholly

irrelevant statement: "I have not yet sold my shop!" When Ramjoo told his story to Baba, the Master shook with laughter-and then revoked the order. The aftermath of this serio-comic episode was that the shop was never sold. The merchandise had finally to be auctioned off.

When I met Ramjoo in India I asked him what effect this experience had had upon him. He told me there were multiple effects. It wiped out his concern for other people's opinion of his actions. Formerly it had mattered greatly what people thought about him; now, if he knew himself in the right, he no longer cared what their reaction was. He had had many friends, had belonged to a number of societies and fraternal orders. He had been popular and loved it. But none of this was now important. The shop had been a materialistic millstone around his spiritual neck, and its loss had gained him his one great desire; to dedicate his life to the service of the Master. He was functioning from a new center-a true center-in which his ego no longer needed to be fed by the good opinion of his friends. That was the primary result. Prior to this experience Baba had said to him one day:

"I have many powers, and can help you in many ways. For example, I can prosper you in your business, harmonize your relationships, give you health and strength-and I will grant you any request of that nature which you might ask. But before you ask, let me tell you the best thing for you would be to ask nothing-to leave everything to me-and promise to obey me in whatever I command."

Ramjoo chose to obey Baba's orders. The resultant tribulations, which, when they occurred, often seemed cruel, now-many years later-give him, too, a hearty laugh and he thanks his guardian angels for having inspired him to choose so wisely.

FIRST ASHRAM

In May, 1922, Baba left Poona for Bombay, where he inaugurated his first Ashram. With him went forty-five followers, of whom twelve were Mohammedans, eleven Zoroastrians, and remainder Hindus. At night, one by one

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the party visited Babajan under her lime tree at Poona, to pay homage to the great soul before starting on this spiritually significant journey.

On arrival in Bombay they leased a spacious bungalow on Main road, Dadar-a suburb of Bombay-which was known as Manzil-E-Meem (The House of the Master). It contained fifteen rooms which were entirely devoid of furniture. Even the quilts and mattresses from the bedding rolls were-under Baba's orders-removed, leaving only blankets for covering and as slim protection against the hardness of the floor. Mosquito curtains were taped and tacked to the floor and walls of their sleeping rooms to keep out the dangerous carriers of malaria.

In the beginning Baba took pains to keep alive their devotion and enthusiasm, while at the same time he prepared them for the reaction which he knew would follow, by explaining that an aspirant of the spiritual path must pass through three mental stages: enthusiasm, indifference, despair. When disappointment or despair reach their peak then a crisis occurs. To circumvent the effects of developments which the Master knew to be inevitable, he enjoined his disciples never to leave him, no matter what the provocation might be. The poet Hafiz no doubt had this same thought in mind when he wrote:

“The path of Love seemed to be an easy and comfortable one in the beginning, but now I know better-it is surcharged with unimagined difficulties, trials and tribulations.”

The rules of the Ashram were strict and included a number of orders which radically changed the habits of many of its members. Most of them had been non-vegetarians before coming into Baba's orbit, nor had they been averse to occasional alcoholic refreshment. But now all of them were required to abstain scrupulously from all meat, fish, eggs and intoxicants of every kind. Sexual intercourse was also prohibited. They retired at nine o'clock and were up promptly at four, when the bath-rooms resounded with screams and sputtering as the disciples subjected themselves to the cold morning bath which was part of the dis

ciplinary regime laid down for them by Baba. One amongst them, who suffered with chronic asthma, was no exception to this rule. Curiously enough-and this will be no news to advanced students of health-the asthma left him! They were all required to meditate for forty-five minutes every morning, each one choosing his own posture, and mentally repeating the name of the Almighty which his particular religious upbringing sanctioned.

At seven every morning-after a substantial breakfast-they left for their various activities in the city. No one-whether within the Ashram or outside-was permitted to read or write anything without Baba's special permission. Even the chance reading of a billboard or street sign, on their way to or from work, was considered an infraction of this order.

Nor were they allowed to talk with or even recognize anyone who was not of the *Manzil-E-Meem* - family, except their business associates. This order, of course, had the effect of holding them securely within the protective range of Baba's influence during those early days of intense conditioning for channelship. The order was not without its particular complications-amusing in retrospect, but at the time often extremely embarrassing.

One of the disciples found himself, one evening, in a compartment of a railway train, face to face with an old school chum. Naturally his friend greeted him warmly, but the disciple could only turn upon him a cold, unknowing stare. For a while his friend was silenced, but continued to scrutinize the disciple, apparently wondering if he had been mistaken. No! this was certainly the friend he had known so well at school. He appealed to him:

“What's the matter with you, old chap? Why don't you speak to me? Don't you recognize your old friend Phiroz?”

Fortunately for the miserable disciple, the train was just pulling into his station; he fled from the carriage, leaving his friend with the impression that he had gone stark mad!

Baba required that all his orders be carried out promptly and without question, regardless of what the disciple was doing. If he were shaving or bathing when the call came

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from Baba, he had to respond at once, however difficult or ridiculous the situation seemed. It was obedience to such an order which Dr. Ghani describes as “a most ego-crushing ordeal”, that compelled him and another disciple—both of Mohammedan persuasion—to walk through the Mohammedan quarter of Bombay, where they had many friends, with posters hanging around their necks, advertising the biography of Upasani Maharaj, a non-Mohammedan Master; an unthinkable procedure for a Mohammedan!

Another very disconcerting practice was Baba’s habit of suddenly asking what they were thinking. The disciples would try to blank their minds, in order to avoid voicing an unsavory thought, or to concoct a fictitious one. Baba, however, knowing what was in their minds, encouraged them to be fearless and honest, regardless of the nature of their thoughts. Relating their dreams to Baba at breakfast also provided diverting, self-revealing entertainment.

Occasionally the members of the Ashram were ordered to fast for a day or two. But this did not exempt them from work. On the contrary, their work was increased. At other times they were ordered by Baba to find hundreds of blind and lame beggars and bring them to *Manzil-E-Meem* for the purpose of feeding and clothing them. Since beggars are plentiful all over India, this seemed an easy order to fulfill. But Baba did not want the able-bodied ones—only those who were disabled. This made their task more difficult. It was often further complicated by the fact that the disciples—who were restricted to eight pie (five cents) a day—would find themselves at the other end of the city without the necessary money for transportation home. To persuade the mendicants to follow them to a strange house—where, they assured them, they would be bountifully fed and newly clothed—and at the same time to borrow money from them for carfare, was another of those experiences which tested both their ingenuity and fortitude! However, the required number would always be found and transported to the Bombay Ashram, where they were bathed, fed and clothed. In this service Baba took the leading part, and as some of them departed, he garlanded them with

flowers, to the astonishment of his disciples and the bewilderment of the beggars.

But behind this puzzling performance of Baba's is deep significance. When we were in India, he told us that whenever he works with large numbers of beggars he is effecting a change in the economic structure of the world. This is but one of the many examples of the way he uses outer and visible symbols to effect needed changes in either individual or mass consciousness. His every act is in truth a sacrament.

SEX

During this Bombay period all the fundamental life-problems came into the foreground of consciousness and were used by Baba as opportunities for spiritual instruction. Sex being one of the least understood of man's problems, it quite naturally became a subject for consideration. Though the paramount enjoyment of the carnally-minded is sexual intercourse, its pleasure, as Baba points out, is evanescent and bestows no lasting satisfaction.

"Compare the fleeting gratification of earthly delights with the permanent satisfaction of spiritual bliss, and it will be readily apparent which is of the greater value."

Baba explains that neither in the gratification of sexual desire nor in its repression is to be found any lasting happiness, though a life of restraint comes closer to the ideal than a life of indulgence. True, lasting freedom is attained only through the freeing of the mind of *all* craving. To achieve this, intelligent understanding and direction of the life force is essential. The integration thus arrived at differs from both repression and indulgence in that it is motivated by a spiritual impulse, and leads to an enduring inner renunciation of sexual craving—a spontaneous redemption which is not dependent upon the fickle tyranny of the conscious mind for its constancy.

MARRIAGE

For the average person Baba advocates monogamous marriage, based on mutual love and respect. The oppor-

tunity afforded by such a marriage for the interplay of temperaments and mutual adjustment can best teach man the discipline and self-control which are indispensable for his higher development.

In this respect, as also in Baba's teaching that absolute mental control of the sexual phase of love is an essential part of any wholesome marriage relationship, the psychology of Dr. Fritz Kunkel bears a striking resemblance to Baba's precept. Dr. Kunkel points out that one's psychological maturity may be measured by one's ability to 'wait' or bear tension, during which period of 'waiting' he advocates the cultivation of the more subtle, spiritual aspects of a love relationship, thereby deeply enriching the lives of both man and woman.

This is in harmony with Baba's statement that only when sex companionship is accompanied by a sense of mutual responsibility and spiritual idealism can the lustful aspects of love be sublimated. In marriage the partners are compelled by force of their close daily association to tackle the whole complex problem of their personalities, rather than the relatively simple problem which the extra-marital relationship involves. In any kind of *temporary* relationship people inevitably play-up to a role, usually the role which the other party imposes upon them. Only when both parties are deeply committed to permanent union do they allow all facets of their characters to become evident. Only then are they likely to have the courage to 'let their hair down.' Without this commitment to permanency in their relationship, it is impossible for man and woman to *be themselves* and to assume the responsibility for the inevitable adjustments which 'being themselves' requires. For those who are thus able to face and understand themselves, marriage becomes a valuable medium through which the partners may become conscious of their latent tendencies and weaknesses. They mirror for each other the dormant personality characteristics of which, in the beginning, they may have been wholly unconscious and, as they incorporate these hidden dormancies into their conscious life, they become better balance instead of lop-sided.

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Then, too, through the mutual selfless sharing of joys and sorrows the participants in true marriage may reach ever-higher levels of love, until finally the possessive passion of the earlier days is replaced by the more profound emotion of selfless and expansive love. The partners of such a sublimated union are eventually carried so far along the spiritual path that they need only the final touch of a Perfect Master to lift their souls into the sanctuary of eternal love.

Among Baba's disciples are both married and unmarried men and women, though in the early days of the training of the Indian men strict celibacy was required of them. Toward the end of the Bombay period, however, Baba asked his men if any of them wished to be married and he assured them that whatever their decision it would not retard their spiritual development. Only one man elected to marry, but he, his wife and six children are among Baba's closest ones.

CELIBACY

To one like Baba, who knows the spiritual reasons for the physical separation of the sexes, man's preoccupation with sex is seen to be highly exaggerated and distorted. He points out that the traditional attitude of lust, ingrained and fostered in the mass consciousness, is responsible for most of the ills and aberrations that are such a sorry byproduct of modern life. For the serious spiritual aspirant he advocates a life of strict celibacy, rather than marriage, providing restraint comes to the disciple easily, without any undue sense of self-repression. The former life-experience of the disciple would, of course, determine this. Apart from its higher spiritual implications, the value of celibacy lies in the habit of restraint, with the detachment from the body and independence of persons, which it induces.

Nor does a life of spontaneous celibacy promote any impairment of health. On the contrary. If celibacy is achieved and practiced with full understanding of its creative role it not only enhances the spiritual growth of the disciple but also results in greatly improved health. However, the full benefit of celibacy is not realized until *true* detachment has

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been attained, and this is possible only when the soul has been awakened by a love so divine, so transcendent, that the spontaneous and permanent renunciation of craving becomes its natural by-product.

DIVINE LOVE

Pure love, which is the keynote and very heart of Baba's message, is always a grace from God or the Master. It has only one desire-to become united with the Divine Beloved. Such withdrawal of consciousness from all lesser cravings leads to unalloyed purity. In the flame of its intensity, all inferior thoughts and emotions are consumed; the energies are focussed upon the core of one's being, the God-center, which, to the disciple of a Perfect Master, is synonymous with the soul of the Master.

This is one of the major reasons why conscious contact with a living manifestation of Godhood-with a Perfect Master-is essential. Only full-hearted love can bring about a spontaneous re-dedication of the personal will to the Divine. Thus the Master becomes the *living* portal into the infinite life of God. For the spiritual mass-quickenings of mankind the living presence of Godhood upon earth is likewise essential. The dynamic, tangible manifestation of God in human form acts like a celestial magnet that draws mass consciousness from the mundane to the spiritual. The abstract approach to God is reserved for the very few, and even they, before they can reach the final goal, require the services of one who has made the great transition and can draw their consciousness across the borderline which divides the finite from the infinite. *Alone, no man can accomplish this ultimate surrender.*

Until the moment of liberation the mind of the individual must be used as the medium for such liberation. It must consciously focus energies, must master and direct them, if realization of God is to be achieved. Much of this process the aspirant may carry out by his own efforts, if his desire and will for union with God is strong enough, and his single-mindedness invulnerable. But eventually the moment arrives when the mind has fulfilled its function

and-together with the sense of duality-must be transcended if we would become one with God. Herein lies the difficulty. The conscious mind may be willing, even eager to 'let go', but the subconscious collective mind, in which reside the individual and racial impressions and tendencies of the past, draws us back into the world of illusion and separative existence. It is true that before being drawn back one may experience infinite powers, knowledge and bliss for days, weeks or months, but unless the mind's impressions and tendencies have been *permanently* obliterated, they sooner or later pull the pilgrim back into finite existence.

Before the soul can be free to enjoy the infinite prerogatives of Godhood, the final release from the domination of the mind must take place. Like a blinding flash this comes upon one, and in that infinite moment every thought, every feeling, every concept is blotted out. Consciousness remains-but consciousness of *nothing*. Neither consciousness of self nor consciousness of God. Simply blank, stark nothingness! It is a terrifying experience. No matter how courageous the soul may be, no matter how determined may be the will to pass through this abyss of annihilation, the instinctive mind recoils from it, and before one can muster the determination to see it through, the moment has passed and the soul finds itself back again in its comfortable, long-accustomed, finite abode.

If, however, at this point one has the good fortune to be the disciple of a Perfect Master of consciousness, one may be literally 'drawn' through this final experience, providing the love for the Master and the confidence in him is sufficiently self-consuming. With such a love, one is willing to undergo any trial, any agony of soul, in order to become one with the Beloved. Beyond this moment of terrifying nothingness lies the eternal realm of the blissfully conscious God.

Thus, the path of liberation is open to the aspirant either in marriage or in celibacy, provided that the way of life chosen is regarded as a spiritual enterprise. The road one chooses is, naturally, determined by the background of previous lives. In either case, the seeker becomes progressive-

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ly free of craving and desire, as his longing for divine Truth increases, until he achieves the final goal of life—Liberation.

MANZIL MEMORIES

Aware of the need of keeping alert the interest of his disciples in those early days of his first Ashram, Baba saw to it that their life was not monotonous or dull. He sometimes took them to the theatre and motion pictures, while at home he encouraged various indoor and outdoor games. Though religious devotions and the singing of spiritual songs also had a place in their daily routine, the Master's method of training his twentieth-century disciples to function in the world without losing contact with him, followed no traditional pattern. His technique confirms what he has often told us: that he is training us to take our place *in* the world, yet not to be *of* it.

In the close relationship that existed between disciples and Master, Baba never lost an opportunity to drive home a valuable lesson. One evening, as they were playing a new game of marbles in the compound, under specially provided electric lights, another of Baba's soul-testing dramas was staged. Ramjoo, a married disciple, had been rather concerned about the health of his only son who had been ill for sometime. He was also troubled about his wife who was pregnant. On this evening he arrived at the Ashram visibly worried because he had not heard from them. He went out to the compound where all the disciples were absorbed in the new game. Baba, as usual, was in a happy mood, until Ramjoo arrived. Instead of the cheerful word with which he always greeted every member of the Ashram family, he gave Ramjoo a grave look. Then he turned to another disciple and asked: "Shall we tell him now?"

Replying in an equally serious tone, the disciple suggested it would be more considerate to give Ramjoo the news after dinner. A few minutes later, Baba said: "I think it better we tell him about the telegram now."

Then he told Ramjoo bluntly that his son had passed away. Scarcely before Ramjoo could react to this sudden shock, Baba ordered him to join the others in their game.

For a moment he was too dazed to move, but quickly collecting himself, he obeyed Baba's command. In speaking of this experience, Ramjoo says that the electric lights were swimming before his eyes, and the players appeared like shadows in a horrible nightmare, as he mechanically joined in the sport. As soon as Ramjoo had, without hesitation, fulfilled the command, Baba called him back and handed him the telegram. The message read that Ramjoo had another son, and that all was well with his family! Thus does the Master train all his disciples to rise above personal pain or sorrow, that they may eventually realize the unconditioned life of God.

Few, particularly in the West, are able to understand this aspect of the God-man. Having achieved the ultimate in physical comfort and ease, the average religious Westerner projects upon God his own image of the indulgent father who satisfies all the desires of his children. This is particularly true of those whose religious background has inculcated in them the belief that God never inflicts pain. To them kindness is synonymous with softness and indulgence. Herein they reveal their lack of spiritual maturity. The larger kindness of freeing the soul from bondage to pleasure, or repugnance to pain is imperfectly comprehended by them.

In spite of the iron discipline which Baba exercised, freedom of speech and opinion were encouraged by him. The group had its own governing body called the *gutta* (wine-shop) which corresponds to our Western café. The *gutta* assembled periodically after dinner, when everyone expressed his viewpoint freely on the subjects under consideration. To prevent the *gutta* from becoming as noisy as the places after which it was named, they made it a strict rule that only one person could speak at a time, and only after obtaining permission of the chair. All earnings of Ashram members went into a common fund. All shared alike in its benefits. No individual owned anything for himself. Though each one was encouraged by Baba to develop his own special qualities, all were bound in brotherhood by their love for the Master, of whom many of them had heard Upasani Maharaj's advice: "Follow Merwan; do as he says;

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the time will come when all the world will follow his lead.”

One of the disciples was subjected to especially severe treatment. In his strange, symbolic way of helping to rid him of his binding karma, Baba would time and again throw the disciple's bedding out the window, and order him to clear out, reiterating that he did not want him around. Fortunately for the disciple, he let his intuition rather than his intellect or emotions govern his reaction. He held fast, and is now among those closest to the Master.

As the months progressed at the Ashram, Baba was drawing his spiritual 'net' tighter around the disciples. Less and less did he give consideration to their whims and preferences. More and more did he require them to 'give in' to each other-to relinquish a prized viewpoint or habit. In spite of the strict regulations and the severe tests and trails, however, the disciples look back upon their life at *Manzil-E-Meem* with fond and wistful memories.

During this period, Baba went on prolonged fasts of water, milk or lemon juice, with no impairment of his energy and directive power. Occasionally he would manifest sudden acute illness, during which his body would be racked with pain. Then, just as suddenly, the illness would vanish. He told his group that he had to undergo these periodical agonies for the benefit of the group that eventually he would have to suffer and die for each one of them, as he took upon himself the responsibility for their individual liberation.

HEAVEN AND HELL

To most of us, especially in the Western world, the thought of giving up the direction of our lives to another is quite unpalatable. Unless we have been brought up in the Catholic tradition, or have read lives of Western monastic saints, we do not know the great benefits to be derived from the discipline of 'obedience'. Our egos insist that such a course is childish-unworthy of mature human beings. We have been taught, and firmly believe, that we can find our way to Heaven; and so we can. By our own, unaided exertions we can create either Heaven or Hell for ourselves;

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but *both* are limitations and therefore handicap the individual soul's unfoldment. Heaven is the by-product of striving to do good, while Hell is the logical result of unbridled evil. Spiritual liberation, which the Master helps the disciple to achieve, is, however, beyond the duality of good and evil-Heaven and Hell. Before the perfect balance is struck, the debit and credit entries in the soul's ledger must absolutely cancel each other, not in sum total of entries, but in the comparative quality of good and bad soul impressions. No man, however highly destined, can achieve this balance without the intervention of a Master, though an intense spirit may go far toward the goal.

How indispensable is the aid of a Master, how essential the oneness between disciple and his destined Master, how all-inclusive the responsibility of the Master in the regeneration of his chosen disciple, is strikingly illustrated by the experience of Baba's second Master, Upasani Maharaj. When Maharaj became the disciple of his *own* Master, Sai Baba, he received from him the following instructions in preparation of his four year's novitiate:

"You are not to worry about a single thing. I am fully conscious of your worth. For many years have I followed your trail. Whatever good or bad deeds you have performed during these years have in truth been enacted by me. You were not conscious of me, but I was fully aware of you. For years I have been thinking of you in my heart. Now you are at home; there is nowhere else for you to go. If you are unable to do anything, do not do anything."

Then in language symbolical of the supreme service which he was destined to render Upasani Maharaj in uniting him with God, Sai Baba said: "I will myself purchase the ticket for you and will, with my own hands, seat you in the train; and without allowing the train to stop anywhere, I will take you straight to your ultimate destination."

In other words, he would not permit his disciple to be sidetracked or lost on any of the cosmic planes, but would guide him directly to the summit of consciousness. When Upasani Maharaj finally achieved Realization through the loving guidance of his Master, Sai Baba explained:

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“I have given Maharaj everything. Whatever he is, is mine. There is no spiritual difference between him and me. Mine alone has been the responsibility for the perfection which is his today.”

SPIRITUAL PILGRIMAGE

During the Bombay period, Baba made a number of short trips with his disciples to nearby places of pilgrimage. Among these was a journey to the tomb of the Mohammedan *Sadguru*, Haji Malangshah. To reach the tomb, which stood on a high hill, was a strenuous ordeal. Upon their return, the disciples were exhausted and parched, but Baba forbade them to quench their thirst before they reached the railroad station, another fourteen hot, dusty miles.

Such apparently arbitrary measures can be understood only if one realizes that every single outer action of Baba's is fraught with inner significance; and such a pilgrimage to the tomb of a Perfect Master no doubt had deep bearing upon the spiritual unfoldment of those involved. To quench one's physical thirst before the journey was completed would, according to the Master's wise judgment, manifest in a corresponding spiritual hindrance and delay in reaching the ultimate goal of Liberation.

The severe ruling-as so many of Baba's-could have served a double purpose. On purely rational grounds, the value of such discipline is apparent. To learn to wait, to deny ourselves the satisfaction of the moment, unquestionably helps to eradicate weakness-makes for strength of character. Perhaps the Master of man has resolved this time to train a group of disciples who will not so readily fall asleep in the Gethsemanes of the world.

ASHRAM AT AHMEDNAGAR

On the last day of March, 1923, Baba told his men that the Ashram in Bombay would be disbanded, although two months tenancy was still due on the lease of the house. The matter of leases is of little importance to Baba when his work requires him to make a change, however troublesome it may be for those who have to adjust the matter; not

for him are the limitations of time-worn routine. Change is always the order of the day with Baba. No one who has been with him for any length of time expects plans to work out according to mind-made time-tables. Yet, when outer circumstances coincide with Baba's inner work, every detail works out with clock-like precision; for though the greater part of his being functions in a sphere which knows no time, on this material plane Baba manifests a split-second time sense. If he gives orders to leave at five minutes past midnight on a journey, he will, without fail, be found ready to start at precisely that moment. This, not merely out of arbitrary punctiliousness, but because Baba's timing has always a deeper significance on behalf of his disciples, or in connection with his universal work, than may appear on the surface. For that reason he will not tolerate tardiness on their part.

Ahmednagar was to be the headquarters of the next Baba Retreat. He took with him only a few of his disciples; the others were temporarily sent back to their homes. With this smaller group of followers, Baba made a number of short journeys, before finally settling at Ahmednagar. At Arangaon—about five miles from Ahmednagar, where a Hindu saint, Buaji Bua, is said to have buried himself alive—Baba decided to stay, and asked his men to clear away the debris around a dilapidated, uninhabited postoffice building. They began the work at once, but after remaining there for only four days, Baba decided to return to Ahmednagar.

Those who have experienced with Baba this life of constant change gradually realize that something in their inner consciousness is loosening—they find themselves becoming detached from places, things and even people. For examples of utter detachment, which is so essential for progress on the spiritual path, Baba points to the greatest teachers of the world—Zoroaster, Buddha, Krishna, Mohammed, Jesus—whose watchword was renunciation. But Baba takes pains to convey to his disciples that renouncing must take place in the *mind*—in the innermost man. For in the mind—conscious and sub-conscious—is found the root of all desire.

Therefore, the mind must become the *Fakir*, the

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Renouncer, if man is to become free. When this freedom is finally attained, then no matter what outer life man may live, he remains detached under all circumstances. He then works not for self, but for the One—for the advancement of others, which is the true mission of the spiritually illumined.

NO GAME FOR THE WEAK

Baba was obviously weeding out his men—testing their stoutness of heart. Early in the stay at Ahmednagar, he gave them the choice of remaining with him—in which case he would demand implicit obedience—and, he added, their life would not be a soft one. Or they could separate from him outwardly by living away from the Ashram, yet still live according to a few rules of conduct which he would lay down for them. The third choice he gave them was to leave him permanently. None wished to separate from Baba entirely; thirteen chose to remain with him, the others would return to their homes for awhile, pledged to live according to his orders. The names of the thirteen were Behramji Irani, Gustadji Hansotia, Jal Irani (Baba's brother), Adi K.Irani, Aga Baidul, 'Uncle' Rustom, Baba Ubale, Ramjoo, Pendu, Padre, Slamson, a Hindu nicknamed, by Baba 'Nervous,' and a Mohammedan nicknamed, 'Barsoap.'

Baba never fails to emphasize that the pilgrimage of the spiritual aspirant is no undertaking for the weak—and his disciples seldom have to wait long for demonstration of this truth. The morning following the segregation of his group, long before the breakfast hour, Baba led the thirteen on a journey. After walking for awhile toward Arangaon, he suddenly changed his course and told them he would take them to some other undisclosed destination. They wondered about it, but asked no questions and continued on for a couple of hours until Baba halted at an Inn that was reserved exclusively for the housing of lunatics and criminals. Here Baba elected to stay with his men for a few days! On their return journey, they stopped off at Arangaon for a brief stay. Eleven days later they found themselves back at Ahmednagar, only to prepare for a more extensive journey which took them to Agra, where they visited the Taj Mahal. From Agra they proceeded to Muttra,

where they bathed in the sacred river, Jumna. Then they departed for Karachi, by way of Delhi. After a week at Karachi they journeyed on to Quetta, the principal city of Baluchistan.

Instead of going on to Persia as had been originally planned, Baba decided to go to Calcutta by train and walk from there to Bombay, across the continent of India. During this pilgrimage every member of the group wore robes of the ascetic, and ate but sparingly. Baba maintained a liquid diet throughout this entire period. During their long trek Baba was in the lead, and like all the others, he carried his bedding roll and travelling needs on his own shoulders. Throughout the gruelling journey under the relentless sun of tropical India, all of the group, under Baba's orders, repeated incessantly in a low monotone the name of God that was revered by their respective religions. Whenever his men became exhausted Baba relaxed the walking order. Immediately after a little rest, however, they would set out on foot again, averaging usually twenty-five to thirty-five miles a day. When they arrived at Navsari they were so dishevelled and bearded that they were mistaken for a gang of bandits which the local police were hunting for carrying off little children! Baba chuckled. By the time they satisfied the authorities that they were victims of mistaken identity, there was considerably less ego in his men!

Some time after their return to Ahmednagar a trip to Persia was discussed and planned. One of the disciples, who had been sent to Bombay to obtain visas from the Persian consul, came back with a strange story. The consul had told him that he could grant no visas unless all the members of the party presented themselves at the consulate in person. Baba, of course need not come, the consul added, since he had already been at the consulate a few days before and told him that he would send in his passport for the consul's endorsement when they were ready for the journey. The disciple knew, however, that Baba had not been in or near Bombay in his physical body since their return to the Ashram. Strange and inexplicable to the rational mind are the ways of the Masters.

JOURNEY INTO TRIBULATION

Early in 1924 Baba and eight of his disciples left for the first visit to Persia, the land of Baba's ancestors, the birth place of the God-man Zoroaster, upon whose precepts and teaching the great Zoroastrian religion was founded. Though the purpose of the journey was primarily connected with Baba's inner work, it also provided ample opportunity to stir the dormant propensities of the disciples. Not the least affliction which beset the party was the tropical fever which several members of the group contracted.

Being with Baba does not necessarily insure freedom from illness or pain. On the contrary. Just as he quickens the positive side of our natures, inspiring us to deeper love, greater faith in God, so does he stir in equal measure the negative side with its 'Shadow' manifestation. Whatever negative characteristics we have repressed because they do not conform to our conscious ideal of ourselves, are surely and swiftly brought to our attention, to be faced and utilized in a constructive way. Under the tremendous impact of Baba's catalytic effect upon consciousness, the seeds in one's mind—be they seeds of so-called good or so-called evil—inevitably work their way into expression. Since Baba knows that the conflict of the opposites must ultimately be overcome, he deliberately brings the warring elements out into the open, so that the disciple may be compelled to find the way of transcendence. These 'good' and 'bad' tendencies, called *Samskaras*, are the binding effects of past thoughts, emotions and deeds. These karmic fetters, which keep us in spiritual bondage, Baba undertakes to remove, if we submit to his guidance and are accepted by him as disciples. From the moment of such surrender, the consciousness of the disciple is subject to whatever intensification of experience he needs, in Baba's judgment, for his cleansing and release.

Baba denies nothing. He accepts everything—not as Reality, but as a medium through which Reality may manifest. 'Sin'—if he ever used the word—he would define as reacting to experience egocentrically, feeding the little self upon it, instead of viewing all expressions of life with de-

tachment. In this respect the most spiritually evolved of modern depth psychologists are in accord with Baba's teaching.

He is utterly detached and impersonal in the surgical application of his spiritual technique. At a time of deep inner ferment I confessed to him the terrible hatred I felt for my companions—hatred so intense that to murder them, I thought, would be sheer joy! I was profoundly disturbed by this dark, wild emotion, and was therefore greatly astonished to see Baba smiling with apparent satisfaction, and still more amazed when he said:

“Good! And have you felt lust yet?”

“Baba!” I exclaimed, “Do I have to feel that, too?”

“In order to reach God, one has to experience everything,” he calmly replied.

It was then I began to understand that to achieve spiritual integration, the hidden tendencies and potencies of the collective unconscious have to be brought into consciousness—not to be used for personal satisfaction or self-aggrandizement, but to be faced and accepted as part of one's evolutionary heritage—and then raised to a higher dimension, where the *power* of the collection image remains for constructive use, while its poison is distilled.

On the long journey to Persia Baba found many opportunities to teach his disciples unforgettable lessons in detachment from pleasure and pain. Nor was the return trip without repeated tests of endurance for them and unfailing self-immolation for Baba. The party, as usual, travelled in the lowest class. Adjoining the section where they ate and slept, carloads of fowl, cows, goats, donkeys and horses, crowded, moored, bleated, neighed and attended freely to nature's demands. Prior to meal time, the gluttonous Arabs who were in charge of the animals, killed the smaller ones, and gorged themselves with the almost raw meat. For a group of scrupulous vegetarians to whom the physical aspect of life was not of paramount importance, this oft-repeated carnivorous orgy must have been rather trying!

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On their return to India the usual change of plans took place. A superficial estimate of this characteristic of Baba might suggest a person of extreme indecision, or one tossed about by whim and circumstance, and there has been one—Paul Brunton—who in recent years has written much about India and her teachings, who has so judged Baba. There is something to be said on the side of such critics. Baba is a complete enigma to the intellectual or rational mind. But by such a criterion he cannot be judged, because he does not function on the intellectual plane, though in his capacity for organization, for attention to detail, for large scale direction and movement—all qualities we attribute to the balanced, rational mind—he has no peer. If Baba is what many of us know him to be, he functions on the plane of pure intuition, a sphere where things and events are as utterly fluid as time itself; where, in fact, time, as we know it, does not exist—where what seems to us the round-about way to a goal is in the long run the shortest way. Anyone who has had experience in trying to live by response to inner guidance or intuition, will know how circuitously Spirit often seems to work—and in ways fantastic to the rational mind—yet how miraculously it always achieves its objective. It is, I think, largely this *seeming* to be led in just the opposite direction to which one aims to go, that makes the spiritual life such as absorbing and often such a droll adventure.

This sudden moving from place to place, the unexpected, startling changes in plans, have deep inner significance, not only for the people involved, but also for Baba's all-embracing inner work. Like all Perfect Masters, Baba always symbolizes a change or shift in the collective or individual consciousness by a parallel action or ritual on the physical plane.

I recall that when we were with Baba in Cannes, on the French Riviera, in 1937, he allotted to each of us our particular rooms which, he said we were to occupy for the duration of our year's visit there. My husband and I unpacked our things and prepared to make our room homey for our long stay. When we were comfortably settled—

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after twenty-four hours-Baba announced that we were to move to another room, in another building on the estate. Baba noticed that we were disturbed by this order, so he assured us that the move to our new quarters would be permanent. So again we dug in for a long occupancy. But again we were moved! Three movings and settlings within four days! The last time I was wholly unable to hide my annoyance. I had unpacked *everything!* We had re-arranged the furniture according to our own needs and taste, and were at last-so we thought—settled! Baba assured me he was not ‘crazy.’ “The only sane one in the bunch!” he declared, and added: “There is a reason for these moves. They mean something.”

I hoped they did, though at the time I could see no valid reason for them. Years later, however, I was able to comprehend, in a measure, Baba’s meaning, and the obscure inner significance of what then seemed a fruitless ordeal. Even at the time, one quite pronounced result of this ‘crisis’ was to show me that my personal comfort, my liking of order and a harmonious and artistic environment were not of paramount importance; that attachment to such things was in fact a hindrance to the unfoldment of the spiritual life; that it was better to be fluid than comfortable.

NEW ASHRAM

One year after the disbanding of the Ashram in Bombay, Baba called his disciples together once more, and at Arangaon, near the town of Ahmednagar, established his new Ashram, Meherabad. Here strict discipline was again imposed upon the disciples. From their rising hour at five, until they retired seventeen hours later, they were busy with gardening, building new quarters, or repairing old ones, except for the time assigned for devotional activities and meals. The hour between six and seven in the morning was dedicated by each man to meditation or prayers according to his faith, of which there were many. Religiously and with respect to nationality, Baba’s circle is distinctly universal, corresponding to Baba’s own spiritual background.

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Within a year, a small town had sprung up at Meherabad—a school, a hospital and dispensary, an Ashram for lepers and the destitute. Baba placed Dr. Karkal in charge of the hospital with the disciples Padri and Pendu assisting. Baba himself bathed the lepers and gave them his most tender solicitude as, in fact, he did with all the patients who poured into Meherabad from the surrounding villages and towns. During the two years that the Ashram hospital was in operation, seven thousand out-patients were given free medical care, and five hundred in-patients.

Just as the hospital extended treatment to the sick and needy without charge, the ‘Hazrat Babajan School,’ with Vishnu Deomkhar as superintendent, provided free boarding, clothing and tuition to its 200 boys. At first, the ‘untouchables’ were segregated, but after a few months, age-old prejudices were subtly broken down and Baba ordered all castes to intermingle. He took upon himself the task of washing the thirty ‘untouchable’ boys, a symbolic ritual which he performed as part of his daily routine during the life of the school. It was a strenuous process which required nearly four hours, so unspeakably dirty were the boys. On one occasion, among the hundreds of devotees who came to Baba for *darshan*—the paying of homage—some Brahmin visitors came for the Master’s blessing. As they bowed before him, Baba pointed out that he was bathing ‘untouchables,’ and to earn his blessing the visitors would have to take a hand in washing the boys. Even to be touched by the *shadow* of an ‘untouchable’ is anathema to a Brahmin. Now, however, their hunger for Baba’s blessing proved more compelling than the pull of ancient caste taboo. To see these Brahmin pilgrims bathing the bodies of the ‘untouchable’ students with their sacrosanct hands was a sight unprecedented in India. Only a Perfect Master could make them do it—and like it.

DISPELLING IGNORANCE AND PREJUDICE

The condition of the depressed classes of India is truly deplorable. Baba says this is one of the basic *spiritual* causes of India’s inferior status in the community of nations. To

emphasize the need for removing this blight, Baba persistently works to dissolve the prejudices of the Brahmins who are responsible for this condition, and to dispel the dispirited ignorance of the 'untouchables,' which, over the centuries, has become inbred.

Though all classes in the villages bordering on the Ashram received Baba's spiritual and material help, it was to the 'untouchable' that he directed most of his compassionate activity. Food and clothing were supplied to those who needed them most. If they were being 'squeezed' by overseers for non-payment of back debts on plots of land, Baba came to their rescue. Those who showed signs of more than average ability were provided with the necessary funds to further their education or training in Bombay, and arrangements were made for their lodging with his devotees there. If quarrels of any kind arose among them or with the upper classes, Baba acted as a fair and wise arbiter. So extreme is the economic plight of the *Mahars*, as the 'untouchables' are called, that they are in a chronic state of semi-starvation. Those among them who regarded Baba as both friend and spiritual Master, were constantly exhorted by him to give up their habit of eating the flesh of dead or injured animals. Once, after having spoken to them repeatedly about the harm of such practices, he caught them in the act of secreting in their quarters, the carcass of a goat. He persuaded them to throw it away, and take oath never again to indulge in this filthy practice. Then he took them to Meherabad where he fed them bountifully on healthful, vegetarian food.

Their pledge was not, however, long honored. Shortly afterward, Baba heard from some of the *Mahar* boys in his school that they were having meat at home, as well as fish and eggs. Knowing the relation of food to consciousness, and seeking by every means to raise the life-tone of the *Mahars*, Baba had instructed both the boys and their parents never to indulge in food which injected gross animal vibrations into the body. His reason for this was that these 'untouchables' whose bodies needed drastic purification, needed also the character discipline of self-denial.

So again Baba reprimanded the boys, and by way of emphasis, he forbade them to eat any of the tasty, nourishing meals supplied at the school. This measure brought its desired result. Post-haste, the parents and guardians of the boys appeared before Baba and craved his pardon.

When, some time later, word was brought to Baba that a few of the Arangaon *Mahars* had found a dead bullock and feasted upon it, he went to the village to hold court over the guilty persons. None of the *Mahars* who had given their recent pledge were implicated, but Baba's stern, fatherly warning made the guilty ones uneasy. So they too, promised to bury all dead animals in the future, instead of eating them. Baba realized, of course, that their decision was influenced by his offer to compensate them in coin for every animal corpse buried and the skin delivered to him.

To teach the upper castes some additional needed lessons, Baba invariably ate outside with the 'untouchables' when invited to break bread with the Arangaon villagers, though special provision was always made for him inside, with the Brahmins. By such examples and many others too numerous to relate, Baba exerted upon the neighboring villagers an influence so profound that over the years it completely changed their consciousness and their lives.

During this Meherabad period-in contrast to the Bombay Ashram, where visitors were strictly forbidden-hordes of devotees and callers paid their respects to Baba. Among the pilgrims there were a fair number of genuine spiritual aspirants, but the majority, when put to the test, were rather lukewarm in their zeal. One such was a yogi who insisted that he had come to Baba desiring divine guidance. He stayed for ten days, following Baba's instructions, then suddenly he announced his unwillingness to remain longer. On being questioned, the man declared that the food was not to his liking; to which Baba succinctly remarked to his disciples:

“Come for God, gone for bread!”

MOTION PICTURE THERAPY

On special occasions, such as the celebration of the

birthday of Hazrat Babajan or Upasani Maharaj, disciples and visitors were treated to motion picture performances, the subjects of which were usually the lives of renowned Indian saints. Baba's interest in the motion picture as a potent means of quickening mass consciousness has always been very keen and continues to this day. In fact, much of his activity during his visits to the West was focussed on contacting writers, directors and producers of films. According to Baba, in the coming new day, the motion picture will be one of the most effective means arousing in people the higher emotions, through the portrayal of *soul*-stirring dramas. Some material for these new-age films of tomorrow Baba has already had prepared by those whom he has chosen to take a leading part in this phase of his work.

Both Eastern and Western disciples have witnessed many a movie with Baba. Once in New York we went to two shows in one evening! Baba's interest in motion picture performances, however, is not as an avenue of 'escape.' He uses motion picture audiences—as he uses any large gathering of people—for his inner work. When the active conscious mind of an audience is stilled by emotional concentration on a picture, Baba is then able to work directly upon the deeper levels of the collective Unconscious with greater economy of effort. Consequently at a dull picture he would remain longer—often until the very end—for this emotional interest to be aroused. Many times, however, he would cater to the disciples' enjoyment of a good performance and use their absorption in the picture for his own purpose of stirring the forces in the Unconscious.

SILENCE BEGINS

Early in June, 1925, Baba announced that he would soon begin a period of silence. He gathered together the disciples and other members of the community and outlined for each one his or her respective duties during the silence, which, he said, would probably continue for at least a year. Then on July 9th, he summoned the parents and guardians of the school boys, and asked for their cooperation in permitting their children to remain at the school. He explained that

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his silence was being undertaken for spiritual reasons—not to develop spiritual powers in himself, since he already had such powers—but to further his universal work, of which the impending wars and disasters would be the necessary purgative phase, to be followed by an era of peace and tranquillity for mankind.

The next morning Baba left his hut at five o'clock and greeted everybody by means of signs and gestures, inquiring as to each individual's well-being; and during the day he was busy as usual supervising the affairs of the school and community. Thus began his period of silence which has continued without lapse to the present day. Simultaneously he began to abstain from touching money, a practice which he also continues to observe.

Concerning this tremendous self-imposed discipline of total silence an amusing incident happened while Baba was in Hollywood on his first visit to California. A clever young reporter was interviewing him for the Los Angeles Times. Suddenly he sprang the question: "Just how do you pronounce your name?"

Baba's eyes twinkled and he motioned one of his disciples, who stood by, to answer the man's question. The reporter flushed and a few minutes later apologetically admitted that he had come to the interview with the determination of catching Baba off-guard and exposing him as a fraud who had adopted silence as a novel publicity stunt. The next day, May 30th, 1932, the interview appeared in the paper with none of the flippancy which characterized some of the newspaper reports, but written with dignity and restraint.

During the first year of his silence, Baba spent many hours daily writing the account of his experiences during the period when he was completely in the super-conscious state. Often he would write all night while the colony was sleeping, and sometimes this work would produce in him extreme exhaustion or fever. Yet he continued it as a necessary part of his preliminary life work. So far, no one has seen this manuscript, which Baba says contains hitherto

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unknown spiritual secrets. When, in his wisdom, the time is expedient for its publication he will release it.

A few months after the inception of his silence, Baba began again to observe frequent fasts which varied in duration from days to months, and in kind from partial fasting, consisting of one scant meal a day, to complete abstinence from food and liquids. The prolonged fasts—according to Baba—were for the purpose of effecting the removal of those binding karmic impressions which his disciples had acquired through yogic practices in former lives.

SYMBOLIC ACTIVITY

Throughout the fasts Baba continued his life of never-ceasing activity. In fact he now seemed to increase his physical labors. In addition to the arduous task of daily washing the *Mahar* boys, three or four times a week he now bathed *all* the boys in the school with his own hands. When the number exceeded forty he permitted the *Mandali* (circle of disciples) to give a helping hand, but he continued to assume the chief burden of the work himself. At this time, also, he made a point of washing the dirty clothes of five of the school boys.

As later, in Baba's work with the spiritually—dazed men, this washing of the boys and their clothes was, in the words of the Anglican catechism, “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace,” a ritual whereby Baba was achieving for the boys a cleansing of consciousness which would ultimately release them from all egocentric limitations. Another sacramental act was Baba's daily grinding of grain to supply the flour for the community.

While he exacted of his disciples the utmost physical activity, he never spared himself in any way. Once, when a mechanical well-lifter was being installed, Baba instructed the disciples and mason to finish it that night. When he found they were working too slowly, he joined hands with them and completed the job in the stipulated time. All outer action has spiritual significance for Baba. When, therefore, he speeds up any physical activity he is accelerating a corresponding activity on the spiritual plane.

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In the sudden break-up of the Meherabad activities in 1926 and the razing to the ground of most of the buildings, may be found another example of Baba's symbolic way of working, concerning which Baba once said: "When one has to erect a large building a temporary scaffolding is erected. When the building is completed the scaffolding is removed. The school, hospital and other buildings were but scaffoldings for my real, inner work. Now that that is finished, the scaffolding has to go."

Though this sudden upheaval uprooted many people, none were cast adrift. Due to Baba's foresight, provision was made for all those who might have been rendered homeless or destitute by the change.

NEW SCAFFOLDING ERECTED

In the early spring of 1927, Baba and his disciples were again at Meherabad and a new phase of the work was begun with the opening of another school in a bungalow on the outskirts of the village, with Chanji as principal. Coincident with this move Baba ceased writing his communications and thenceforth began using the small alphabet board which has since become so familiar to thousands of his followers in the East and West.

One might naturally suppose that Baba's silence and the use of an alphabet board in lieu of speaking would constitute a barrier between himself and others. Actually the direct opposite is true. Most of us have discovered that it is our moments of silent communion with a loved one which unite us most truly and deeply. Even more true is this with Baba; if one is attuned to him, deeper levels of consciousness, in which no words are needed to convey meaning, are quickened to their highest potential. To sit silently with a soul whose mind is wholly one with God, whose heart beats in constant rhythm with the love song of the universe, is an experience which far transcends the interchange of the spoken word.

The duties of the disciples during the second Meherabad period were varied and arduous. Not only did they minister to the destitute and the sick, including lepers, but they shared in their privations, owing to rules instituted by Baba

NEW SCAFFOLDING ERECTED

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which reduced their standards of food and living to the level of those whom they served. Thus they were able fully to appreciate the needs and viewpoint of afflicted humanity. The work was systematically organized by Baba and included such roles as nurse, watchman, cook, manger, storekeeper, accountant, teacher, reporter, writer, singer, water—carrier, barber, washerman. General duties in which all the *Mandali* shared, included the spreading of the grounds with cow—dung, bathing the hospital patients with hot water, (the heating of which under the primitive conditions of Meherabad was in itself a full—sized chore) washing the hospital and dispensary floors, and much other menial work.

FOOLS FOR GOD

Another discipline which Baba exacted of his men at times was that of begging for food when they went on short journeys. Once, the quiet villagers of Walki were astonished to see so many mendicants in decent coats, pants, shoes—none of which beggars in India ever wear—begging for food. They were abused, taunted and laughed at; but persevering, they finally returned to Baba with sundry bits of food, which he mixed into one concoction and distributed among the disciples. Soon the identity of the beggars and Baba's presence with them was discovered, to the great consternation of those who had refused food to the mendicants. For a devout Indian to refuse food to a Perfect Master or his disciples is the same as refusing to serve God.

Life at Meherabad with Baba was not a soft one for the disciples; nor was it intended to be. Baba was training his Circle to participate in the greatest spiritual quickening the human race has ever experienced. For this work, he once told us, he must have men and women who are strong and stable as mountains; he requires souls who will go through fire, if necessary, without flinching or faltering. Another Master said once of Baba that he was putting his disciples through a disciplinary regime such as never before has been known in man's history. Yet, through it all, down the long, strenuous years of preparation for the world work which is yet to begin, they have not wavered. Only in a few

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instances have close ones deserted him, and in these cases it has been less the strict, spartan life to which they were subjected that caused their deflection, than the conflict they experienced in trying to find rational explanations for Baba's super—rational, incomprehensible ways. Perhaps they had not read or understood those words of St. Augustine: "A comprehended God is no God."

Once, to a Western woman disciple who was going through a period of rationalistic doubt and questioning, Baba said: "Don't try to *understand* me. My depth is unfathomable. Just love me."

For those of us who have been privileged to be close to Baba, this is not a difficult order to obey! Though we have all, I suspect, been through the vale of puzzled wonder, we have come out of it loving him the more, because in some measure we have been permitted to glimpse a little more of his divine magnitude.

AN OUTSTANDING DISCIPLE

The story of Pleader, one of Baba's Indian disciples, illustrates the attitude of one who goes all the way with the Master, in spite of severe tests, and reveals another illumined soul's estimate of Baba.

Before becoming Baba's disciple, Pleader heard him discoursing one day on spiritual liberation. At the close of the talk he asked Baba if he could give him the 'liberation' about which he had spoken. Baba replied by asking him if he would be willing to do exactly as he instructed. Pleader said that he would. Baba then assured him that if he carried out his orders he would give him the liberation which he sought. After a short stay in the Ashram at Meherabad, Baba ordered him locked in a small room in Bombay, which Baba himself spiritually prepared by occupying it for a few hours. Pleader was then instructed to eat or drink nothing but milk, to observe complete silence, to see no one (except the man who would attend to his daily requirements) to read nothing, nor to write. The locality of his lodging was changed every year or so, but he saw no one save the disciples who attended to his needs and Baba, who came once a year.

At the expiration of five years of this discipline, Baba sent him to Rishikesh to contact one of his 'agents,' a sixth plane saint, well-known in that section. On finding the saint Pleader showed him Baba's picture by way of spiritual introduction, whereupon the saint immediately took him into his cave—much to the consternation of the holy man's disciples, who had never been permitted to set foot inside their master's abode. Then the saint proceeded to ridicule Pleader's silence and his milk diet.

"How can you help humanity," he questioned, "if you do not speak? And just how do you expect to get milk in this rugged section of the world?"

To this Pleader replied with his board that in observing silence and partaking only of milk, he was obeying his Master's orders. The saint then asked if he had had any great spiritual experience at the hands of his Master, to which Pleader replied that he had not. But now the saint's attitude changed. He smiled and declared:

"Ah, but your Master has perfectly prepared the ground. At a touch from him you will become perfect even as he is. You do well to serve faithfully such a Master. You can have no idea of the infinite scope of his activity. Even I, with my spiritual knowledge, can fathom only a fraction of his depth."

Shortly after his return to Meherabad, Pleader was permitted to enter again into the normal life of the Ashram. While in India, I had the opportunity of talking with him. He was at that time in charge of the God-intoxicated men in Baba's Rahuri Retreat. I asked him if he had not found those years of such severe discipline very difficult. He replied with a depth of tranquillity which could only arise from a mind at peace with itself and the world: "I could never have done it without Baba's grace."

HOW THE MASTER WORKS

The saint's question to Pleader concerning his spiritual experiences while undergoing the rigors of fasting, silence and seclusion is one which many people ask the followers of Baba. It is somehow thought that a Master parcels out

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states of higher consciousness or psychic powers much as an indulgent father might give sweets to a favorite child. But such is not the case. A Master such as Baba trains his disciples for universal work, not for their personal enjoyment. His first objective, therefore, is to free them from the bondage of the ego which they have acquired in their present and former lives, so that they may be unobstructed channels for his work.

In order that he may avoid the pitfalls of the psychic and higher mental states, the Master takes the disciple through the cosmic planes blindfolded, his purpose being to liberate him from all lesser phases of consciousness than the ultimate and supreme one—that of becoming aware of his union with God. To accomplish this, the roots of the ego must be destroyed and prevented from forming new tentacles, such as psychic experiences and powers inevitably generate. Once he is permanently free from the snares of the ego, then all power may be entrusted to the disciple. Until then, the ‘Dark Night’ of which the Christian mystics speak is the safest and quickest route to the mountain-top of God-consciousness.

Much of the criticism which has been levelled against Baba is on the grounds that he does not conform to the accepted standards of how people think a Master should function. Particularly in India, where there is so much tradition about saints and Masters, many find it difficult to fit Baba into the usual category of the holy man who spends most of his time wrapt in meditation or unconscious *Samadhi*. A Master who plays games skillfully, supervises the building of a house, or the choreography of a dance, is to them a fantastic figure. They expect his mastery to exercise itself only in the realms of mystical experience. Only if he sits for days lost in trance are they likely to be convinced that he is a God-man. They do not understand that the supreme achievement of consciousness is to maintain the ecstasy of the trance condition in the midst of all mundane affairs.

Perhaps it is because our own human nature is still so unredeemed that some of us deny a God who dares to be

human. Yet, logically, a Perfect One, whose work is the redemption of mankind, must be perfect in his humanity. He should function with all the powers of the human being raised to the nth degree. Whatever the human mind may conceive as comprising the fulfilled personality, he should have: that inner beauty which expresses itself as grace, charm and compassion; that inner poise which gives detachment and a sense of humour; that inner joy which expresses itself in work and in play. He should be human as well as god-like; and he should at all times express the ecstasy and peace of God. Otherwise, the 'Word made flesh' is a contradiction in terms. God, to be God the incarnate Avatar, should be master of all masters and masteries. Such a Master, Baba is.

His purpose for his disciples is so to train them that they too shall make the whole of life an unbroken meditation, such as Kabir describes:

“He is the real Sadguru, who can reveal the form of the Formless to the vision of these eyes:

Who teaches the simple way of attaining to Him that is other than rites or ceremonies:

Who does not make you close the doors, and hold the breath, and renounce the world:

Who makes you perceive the Supreme Spirit wherever the mind attaches itself:

Who teaches you to be still in the midst of all your activities.

Ever immersed in bliss, having no fear in his mind, he keeps the spirit of union in the midst of all enjoyments.

The infinite dwelling of the Infinite Being is everywhere: in earth, water, sky and air:

Firm as the thunderbolt, the seat of the seeker is established above the void:

He who is within is without: I see Him and none else.”

One of Baba's Western devotees once asked him why he held such a high transcendent goal before people, and suggested that some of the lesser steps along the way seemed

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more possible of attainment for the average person: to which Baba replied that there is only *one goal*-union with God. It is that which all life is consciously or unconsciously seeking. Anything else is merely illusion.

To aid those who have arrived at the place of consciously seeking this goal, Baba uses the simple ordinary events of life. He works *with* natural laws; he does not supervene them. He helps the aspirant to make the whole of life a spiritual exercise- to live as St. Paul describes: "For me to live is Christ;" or as the Chinese Sage replied to one who asked: "What is Tao?" "Usual life is the very Tao."

GEMS IN THE MAKING

Just as there is nothing of the ascetic in the make-up of Baba's men, so is there nothing of the sacrosanct atmosphere in his Ashrams. Normality and loving kindness characterize both. Though all of his Indian men have been subjected to the strictest of disciplines, its effect has not been to remove them from the world, nor to foster in them any illusions of being set apart from other men. The 'renunciation' in which Baba has trained them is an inner thing, and manifests itself in their detachment from possessions and people; from both the luxury and poverty of this world. When they are in the West, they adjust themselves with ease to our modern gadgets and trappings, without being unduly impressed by our boasted civilization; and when they return to India, where modern conveniences are only for Maharajas and high-ranking Britishers, they again adapt themselves happily to that life. They seem to have achieved that state of mind of which Baba speaks, when he says: "Make use of modern civilization, when and where necessary. But do not let it dominate you. Neither despise it, nor be driven by it."

As living examples of selfless workers, it would be difficult to find their equals; to find gathered together so many strong, stalwart men so astonishingly free from ego-centric speech and action. Doubtless when they first became associated with Baba, they were just as raw, just as unintegrated as the majority of us. Undoubtedly in the early days their

personal desires and weaknesses were vocally apparent, since Baba's technique of training is not one of repression. But having lived among them for some time, I can testify to the high degree of maturity which they now possess.

MIRACLES

Another criticism directed at Baba is that he does not perform the miracles which the average man expects from a Master. Because he does not stun people's reason with miraculous clap-trap, little minds fail to recognize his power and wisdom.

Illustrating this, and also Baba's attitude towards miracle seekers, is the story of one of Baba's boyhood school friends who came to see him one day. The young man had heard of the role of Master which Baba now occupied, but was puzzled as to how a boy with whom a few years ago he had played pranks and cricket could now be in such an exalted position. He told Baba that he would like to believe that he was God-realized, but the old familiarity between them seemed to block the way. If only Baba would do something unusual, something miraculous, he said, then he was sure he could believe in him. So Baba told him to go over to a table and write down certain things. As the man did this, the ink-well started to lift from the table, then the pen began to move in his hand. The young man was terrified and ran over to Baba and prostrated himself at his feet, crying: "Forgive me, Master, now I believe!"

Baba looked at him with pity: "If you are impressed with this gaudy show, you'd better go and serve X --," mentioning the name of a famous juggler in India.

At another time, when a new disciple suggested to Baba that he demonstrate his miraculous powers by causing a large building to be erected within a few minutes, Baba replied that no God-realized person would consider performing such a miracle. "It would be childish, and its effect would be just the reverse of what you would expect it to be. You think that hundreds of thousands of people would come to me and live spiritual lives. Certainly there would be no limit to the scores of people who would be at-

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tracted to me! But almost all of them would be worldly-minded and would ask me to gratify their materialistic desires. Those in need of money would say: 'You erected this building in a few minutes, why can't you miraculously produce a few thousand dollars for me?' And even those with the potentialities for a life of renunciation, on hearing of such a miracle would ask me to relieve them from all their troubles, and effect their spiritual salvation at once...This world is an illusion. Therefore, as a rule God-realized persons do not perform great public miracles—which are displays of the Master's power to create further illusion—except during an Avataric period, when the one who plays the role of Avatar has to perform such miracles as raising the dead and restoring sight to the blind, in order to stimulate the apathetic masses—to quicken their *wonder*."

The miracle of helping those in sorrow and sickness has, however, often been performed by Baba, whose love goes forth continually to those in need. Many of his devotees, both in the East and the West have experienced this.

Once, while the Master was in Persia, the child of a Parsi couple in Bombay—loyal devotees of Baba—was suddenly stricken ill. The child's condition grew worse from day to day. Night and day the parents implored Baba inwardly to save their child. Then one night, when the child's condition was so critical that they had about given up hope for its recovery, Baba appeared, apparently in his physical body, passed his hands over the body of the child, and instantly disappeared. From that moment the child began to improve and was shortly restored to perfect health.

A few months later, when the Master returned to India, one of the disciples asked him how such a thing could occur. Since Baba seldom reveals his hand by explaining any occult technique which he may have occasion to use, all the disciple learned was that it is quite a simple matter for a Master to be in one place and appear at another, thousands of miles away. Jesus, Baba told the disciple, once appeared at twelve different places at one and the same time in what seemed to be his physical body, but was in reality a subtle body.

There is also the widely known story of the *Comte de St. Germain* appearing simultaneously at the six gates of Paris, at the time of the French Revolution, in a form which appeared to be physical.

However, the only miracle with which the God-realized Master is really concerned is that of releasing the individual soul from its binding karmic impressions through divine love. These imprints upon the soul of thought, emotion, or action, are not merely those which we are *conscious* of having acquired. Many of these conscious effects of ego-experience can be wiped out through such an upheaval as religious conversion; but for the hidden, unconscious limitations, the individual requires the help of a Master of consciousness such as Baba is. The best of modern psychotherapists can do much in this respect, but unless they are themselves free from ego-centricity and can function as unobstructed pipelines to the reservoir of God, they cannot effect for the individual any complete and permanent release. Moreover, the individual must also be freed from his virtuous impressions. Here again a spiritual Master is needed to lead man through and beyond his hard-earned virtues.

FREEING THE SOUL

It is at this point that many people balk. We are, for the most part, willing to have wiped out the cause and effect of what we call sin or evil; but to have our virtues eliminated is quite a different matter! Yet, since all ego-centric impressions must eventually be balanced so that they automatically cancel each other, the Perfect Master leads the soul which surrenders itself to his guidance to the recognition that *all earth experience is illusory*. We must lose our sense of the separate 'I' or ego as the experiencer, for as long as the little 'I' remains, there inevitably creep in subtle forms of pride which often mask themselves as virtue or spiritual attainment. It is this condition of which Jesus said we must beware, when he told the story of the seven other devils, more vicious than the first, who would try to gain entrance into the newly-garnished house; that is, after the *conscious* sins have been swept out.