

MEHER BABA

in

The GREAT SECLUSION

By

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and

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Wood Parks

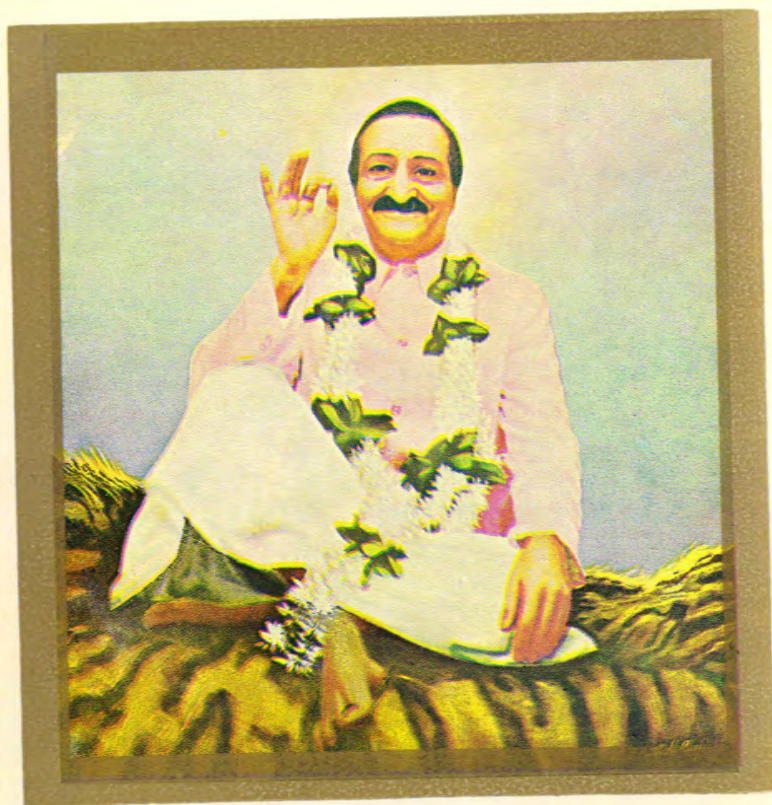
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THE CARAVAN OF THE NEW LIFE

At the time of writing this account, on the eve of the New Year of 1950, it is the third month of Meher Baba's New Life of complete Faqiri or utter Renunciation. It was on October 16th, that Baba took this momentous step, taking with him only those who were determined to share with him his new life, which is utterly free from all longings or *hopes* and which does not even for a moment linger on with any expectations or anticipations concerning any sort of *help*. The keen sense of humour which always has been the predominant characteristic of Baba, never fails him; and even in the midst of the seriousness of this great and insuperable sacrifice, a "Song of the New Life" was recently released from the first stage of his training camp of the new life at Belgaum:

Hai beshak khudā aur barhaq nabī hai,
Woh har daur avatar hardam valī hai,
Hamen to faqat be basī be kasī hai,
Kahun kya tumhen kya nāi zindagī hai.

"God exists indeed and true are the Prophets;
Every Cycle has an *Avatar* and every moment has a *Wali*.
For us however, it is only *hope*-lessness and *help*-lessness.
How else should I tell you what our New life is!"

While the writers present this account, the song of freedom and inspiration is still ringing in their ears. It gives most picturesquely and accurately a description of what the new life means for Baba and his companions who will remain by his side till the very end, in the midst of all hardships and ordeals. By the time that this account reaches the reader, the Caravan of the New Life may well be in full swing from Benares to Haridwar or as later expressed by Baba "to wheresoever God takes us" and thus without longing and without lingering, the Caravan marches on in symphony with the spirit of the "Song of the New Life."

The immediate background of this new life is Baba's retirement into the Great Seclusion, for 40 days, from 22nd June 1949 to 31st July 1949. How Baba, after this momentous seclusion, completed all preparations for the new life, with amazing speed, seriousness and thoroughness, how he not only himself made the supreme sacrifice, but also invited a number of his close

disciples to do the same, and how he effectively broke through all ties to the past or to the future and got launched into the eternal life of the active present, along with his stalwart companions, is a story by itself. It has been presented in detail in the booklet, "The New Phase of Meher Baba's Life—1949." The theme of this account is the great seclusion, which became the forerunner to the momentous step, which will always remain outstanding in the progress of Meher Baba's eventful life.

By observing complete silence and prescribed fasting for the entire month of July 1949, many people in different parts of the world have more or less, directly shared with Baba the seclusion; and they will no doubt have a special interest in this detailed account, which is based on "The Best Days of My Life"—a daily diary, carefully maintained by Jal D. Kerawalla, who was one of the few disciples, who had the privilege of being in the close vicinity of the memorable place of the great seclusion, from its beginning to the end.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SECLUSION

Those, who have carefully followed Baba's life, know that seclusion for him, is no sterile incident. Even in the past, Baba entered into seclusion several times; and every time, the seclusion had been carefully planned and executed. It will also be noted that every time, a seclusion has always either precipitated a new phase of Baba's activity or it has run concurrently with major changes in his activities. But it will be a mistake to look upon any of Baba's seclusions as being no more than periods of quiet deliberations or planning for the future. They were intervals, during which he invariably intensified what he calls his *internal work*.

There have been occasions when those living near Baba, particularly at the time of the seclusions, have themselves seen, heard and experienced strange things. But for all that, it should not be presumed that Baba attaches any importance to miracles or spiritual phenomena. It is neither for self-discipline nor for self-indulgence in supernatural experiences, that he takes all the trouble to ensure a careful seclusion. His seclusion is, for him, necessary for his exclusive work in the non-physical realms to be carried out without any disturbance to himself or any danger to others. The element of spiritual phenomena is incidental. As compared with the Truth, Baba never gives any importance to any experiences of the Path or to miracles. According to him, just as we have in magic or jugglery an *illusion within illusion*, we have in spiritual experiences and miracles *illusion plus illusion*. The empty and purely illusory nature of the occult phe-

nomena is unequivocally emphasized in the following words in the "Song of the New Life."

Na duniyā na 'uqbā na dozakh na jannat,
Na Siddhī na Shakti na kashf-o-karamat,
Yeh sab naqsh-e-batil hūe dil se rukhsat,
Jo kuchh hai woh hai hal ki qadr-o-qimat.

"This world or the next, hell or heaven, we no longer bother about. *Shaktis* and *Siddhis*, *occultism* and *miracles*, we no longer think of;

All these false impressions (thoughts) for us have been purged from the mind.

What has value and importance for us now, is to live in the *active present*."

In 1914, Meher Baba received God-realization from Hazrat Babajan and became spiritually perfect. By 1921, Shri Upasani Maharaj brought him down and turned him into a Perfect Master to work in the perfection of his Truth-realization for the sake of those who have not yet attained that inherent perfection. Since then, the most unequivocal statements received from Baba during the last 28 years are the following:

- (1) "God is the only reality; and all else is unreal."
- (2) "Baba has nothing more to achieve for himself."
- (3) "He is constantly at his *work*, more or less all the time."

The only occasion when Baba did directly disclose both the nature and the object of the work in a seclusion, was at the time he had retired into a cave of St. Francis at Assisi in Italy, in 1932 for 24 hours only. "A meeting was held," said Baba, "when all the Saints and Masters from the sixth and seventh planes of consciousness saw me and we mapped out the spiritual destiny of the world for the next two thousand years."

Baba's references to his internal work have otherwise always been in the most general terms, e.g. "some work" or "special work." Its true nature and spiritual significance for the individuals or for the world will therefore be really understood and appreciated most only by those, who have themselves spiritually benefited by it, at some point of time or space, and for whom it is no idle theory to guess at, but is a tremendous and spiritually important reality. For those, who have not yet even begun to suspect the existence

of super-physical realms or spiritual ends, Meher Baba's occasionally going into seclusion of one kind or another or his long and continued Silence (for the last 24 years) since 10th July 1925, will both be thoroughly baffling and inscrutable. But all the same, they are both vitally connected with his work of helping man to realize the unlimited Truth and inherit the already existing freedom of the soul, along with its abiding peace and joy.

Realization of the Truth involves annihilation of the false and the changing; it is *experiencing God as the only reality* and is experienced by perfect Majzoobs and Paramhansas. This then is *the last and the only logical seclusion of the soul*, wherein it does not get mixed up with any shadow or unreality whatsoever. Meher Baba went through this *hundred per cent seclusion* for 9 months, after he suddenly became God-conscious one night in January 1914. As explained by himself, for 9 months thereafter, his real Self remained absolutely and completely secluded from everything under the unreal creation, including his own existence as an individual. He could give this explanation after he had completed *experiencing the entire universe as nothing*, over and above experiencing God as the only Reality. This *dual experience* of the one in the many may well be described as the Seclusion of seclusions. It is therefore, from his own realization and experience that Baba often makes the assertion that God is the only reality and that all else is, but *is all unreal*, be that as the beginning of anything or the end of everything. Once in a direct reference to that turning point of the spiritual cycle of our times, Baba said, "I lived through 9 months, in the state in which it is impossible for another to live for 9 days."

By ordinary means, we can shut the rest of the world from our view. We can take sufficient precaution to ensure calm and quiet. But we are not able to go into seclusion, without taking with us a world of our own thoughts and desires. Only in deep sleep, we are without thoughts and desires. But then we are completely unconscious. There is, however, an infinite difference between the superconsciousness of Truth-realization and the unconsciousness of deep sleep, though *both* are attended by hundred per cent seclusion. Now, though the seclusion of Truth-consciousness is the only important thing from the point of view of spiritual perfection, and a Perfect Master is all the time continuously in the Seclusion of seclusions, ordinary physical seclusions in which Baba enters time and again, are also extremely important from the point of view of the work, which he has to do in the world of duality for the sake of others.

SOME PAST SECLUSIONS IN RETROSPECT

A rapid retrospective survey of some of the important past seclusions will provide a useful prelude for appreciating the nature of the Great Seclusion, which is the theme of this account. Each of these past seclusions was characterized by some interesting specialties. As early as 1922, Meher Baba allowed people to look upon himself as the *Salik-e-Mukammil* (Qutub) or Sad-guru (Perfect Master); and he started his life of partial seclusion in a temporary little Zhopdi (hut), specially put up at a lonely spot by the *Fergusson College Road* at Poona. It is around this spot that the present Shivajinagar has sprung up. During nights, only the night-watchmen were allowed to be near Baba.

At this time, some disciples and devotees got out-of-the-way experiences. One *Jambumama* tried to reach the hut at night, against Baba's instructions; but though he was a frequent visitor to this place, he could not find it. One night, Baily, who was on watch duty inside the hut, happened to find Baba having actually disappeared bodily although the door of the hut remained closed from inside. When he tried to open the door, although he had been previously asked by Baba not to do so, he was shocked and frightened to see weird figures coming in his way. On another occasion, Arjun, who kept watch outside the Zhopdi, and who had been forewarned about it by Baba, saw two white-robed tall figures coming towards the hut when he could not help squealing with fright. Baba at once responded from the hut, the figures vanished and in their place, there was Baba himself!

One of the fixed routines for his early devotees who lived with Baba in the *Manzil-e-Meem* (Station of the Master) at Bombay in 1922-23 was to retire in their respective rooms on the ground floor for 45 minutes every morning from 5:00 to 5:45 in order to repeat silently any one name of God according to one's own choice. In fact, by sending others into seclusion, Baba automatically used to get all by himself in his own little room on the upper story of the house. The pin-drop silence in the "Manzil" then used to vibrate occasionally with sharp and loud knocks repeated with clock-work regularity on the wooden floor of the upper story right over the heads of the devotees engaged in their silent prayers below. It was Baba who used to knock his forehead on the upper floor in spiritual agonies. Few know this for certain, as, at the end of the prayers, Baba always used to be ready with a smile in the breakfast room to serve them all, with his own hands, without making even the remotest reference to these terrible poundings. The morning change of a colourful silk hand-

kerchief neatly tied round his forehead, which to all appearances was necessary to keep his then growing curls tidy, was all the more helpful to Baba.

It was just a few months before the desolate and destitute spot near Arangaon really became "Abad" (inhabited) and known as Meherabad (bristling with the activities of Meher Baba and his Mandali in the dispensary, hospital, school and various asylums) that he went into a very strict seclusion about November 1924 for about 8 days only. Baba seldom ate and did not allow even his only attendant Padri to look at Baba's face throughout that week. This was also the first time that Baba observed silence during those 8 days. This silence was the harbinger of his subsequent great silence, which continues to this day since July 10th, 1925.

After commencing his present continued silence and before he completely ceased to write from January 1927 onwards, Baba used to retire into seclusion for hours together every day for almost one year. During these seclusions he was writing and often to the point of exhaustion, what is believed to be a book about those spiritual secrets, which are within the reach of reason and which yet remain undisclosed in any writings. For some years after the work was finished, a small wooden box kept heavily secured with iron chains under lock and key, used to remind those who lived with Baba, about the writings; but lately it is not known where and with whom the unpublished work lies. The hitherto published Discourses and Messages of Meher Baba have arisen out of his communications through his alphabet-board.

At the time of his Meher Ashram activities in 1927-28, Baba lived on a little milk and a few cups of milkless weak tea for 5½ months. In the midst of this prolonged fast, Baba remained for 69 days in the crypt-like double room, built one upon the other on the Meherabad Hill which now is known as his future tomb. He used to retire in the six feet deep, four feet wide and six feet long underground crypt during the nights and supervised the Meher Ashram activities throughout the day time from a window of the room built above and all round the crypt. During the seclusion of 69 days, he also lived on plain water for 28 days.

In the course of the seclusion in 1941, for the whole month of August that year, Baba neither saw anyone's face nor anyone could see his. In case of urgent communications, Baba used to put his alphabet-board out of the box-office-like little window arranged in the room when only his fingers could be seen pointing to the letters on the board.

The diverse seclusions, mentioned in this brief retrospect, do not constitute an exhaustive account of Baba's past seclusions. He went through many more seclusions during the last 28 years of his life, characterized by incomparable peace and serenity underlying his dynamic and multifarious activities. The seclusions, which have been hitherto described, have been picked at random to correspond with some of the earlier and important phases of Baba's activities. But it is in no way suggested that they were necessarily more important than other periods of seclusion, of which no note has been taken here. Since, the special characteristic of the seclusions is Baba's internal work, it is quite possible he finished some of his most important *works* in the course of the lesser known seclusions, not included in the foregoing description. The description of some typical seclusions, collectively provides only a suitable introductory prelude to the main theme of our account—the Great Seclusion at Meherazad in 1949. This prelude has clearly shown that a seclusion of some sort or the other has always introduced a new phase of Baba's *changing* activities.

THE SECLUSION IN QUESTION

Meher Baba's seclusion at Meherazad in June-July 1949, is, however singular in many respects. Though for many of its aspects, analogies can be found in his past seclusions, it has also many unprecedented features of its own. It was after this seclusion, that Baba began to get actively averse to the "buried" past, hurriedly arranged to be carefree of the "unborn" future; and having freed himself of all responsibilities, he is now living in the "Eternal Now" of the "passing" present. Therefore, as the *link* between what Baba described as the "old life of cherished hopes and multifarious activities" and the "new life of complete renunciation and absolute *hope*-lessness," the seclusion is bound to remain most memorable and is therefore referred to as the "Great Seclusion." On a number of occasions in the past, Baba has allowed one or more persons to share with him, more or less, his silence, seclusions, fast and various other activities. This time, months ahead of the disclosure of his plan for the seclusion, all who believed in him had been categorically invited to observe silence and fasting throughout the month of July, which in fact proved to be the last 31 days of this momentous seclusion.

The preparations for this were started almost six months in advance; but they were kept a well guarded secret until only a few days before the date of its commencement. Baba also took

great pains in preparing his immediate followers and asked them to remain alert and watchful about every little action of theirs right from the very beginning of 1949.

July month was observed as a month of complete silence and prescribed fasting by many devotees under the circular orders from Baba. The writers of this account know from personal experience how this silence was for many who observed it, not only a unique experience by itself, but was both spiritual regeneration and spiritual refreshment, bringing to them a new outlook, tone and enthusiasm. Though Baba was in strict seclusion all the time, everyone was inwardly in communion with Baba, thinking mostly of him and his future work. When occasionally they came together and communicated with each other in writing on the slate or paper, the topic which engrossed their attention was largely Baba and his work. So, though Baba was externally and physically secluded from their view or contact, inwardly and mentally his inspiring presence was being felt all the same.

ON THE EVE OF THE GREAT SECLUSION

Just as Meherabad is near the village of Arangaon, five miles to the south of Ahmednagar; Meherazad is in the vicinity of Pimpalgaon village, about 8 miles from Ahmednagar towards the north. The two local centres of Baba's activities in the old life are within sight of each other from the tops of the two respective small hills adjoining the places. Baba had at one time or the other in the past retired into seclusions on both these hills known as the Meherabad Hill and the Meherazad Hill.

For the momentous seclusion, which we are now describing, Baba selected a small open space surrounded on three sides by walls of the adjoining Ashram buildings at lower Meherazad. The fourth side was closed temporarily with "tattas" (bamboo-matting). Inside this enclosure, under the shade of a nearby "Neem" tree, a special cabin was constructed of what was once known as Baba's "blue bus," the motor vehicle in which he had toured extensively years ago. The bus-body was mounted on empty oil drums fixed in brick and lime; and it was in this bus-body and enclosure that he spent the greater period of this seclusion.

The daily routine for the 40 days for all concerned was arranged to the minutest details a few days in advance. Special timetables, duty-charts and various other instructions including for emergencies, were all typed out, translated where necessary and distributed to respective parties to ensure complete order

and harmony during the seclusion. Barring a few exceptions, everyone was expected to observe silence and fast including Kaka (Baria) who was to wait upon Baba inside the cabin or the enclosure as and when required to do so by ring of a call-bell.

On June 21st, Baba had invited all his local disciples and devotees to be present at 7 o'clock sharp that morning to participate in what he said was the "purification ceremony" to keep the place free from maleficent spirits and evil influences. It chiefly consisted of recitations from the Avastha, Gita, Bible and the Quran that were read by Kaikobad, Kalemama, Donkin and Khaak respectively. Baba freely intercepted all the recitations in explaining to those present the import of the different divine communications. The gist of his say on this occasion is summarised thus: "These are all but different approaches to the same one Truth i.e. God; and therefore the real purport of each Book is just the same. These approaches can be broadly divided into two kinds—direct and indirect, that is, Impersonal and Personal. In spite of such distinctions, equally same results can be achieved and have been achieved through either of the ways. . . . What can be understood in a flash by spiritual experience takes ages to grasp intellectually. . . . As regards my seclusion, I have *hundred per cent reasons* of my own to retire from tomorrow for 40 days. This should not be looked upon as "chilla-kashi" or meditation and so forth. . . . I am free in every way but I am going to get myself bound voluntarily. I will also intensify my silence and will not bring out even the least sound by mouth." These comments from Baba were followed by a brief interval; and then there was, by Baba's order, a *Kirtan* by C. D. Deshmukh (who happens to be one of the writers of this account).

Thus on the eve of the great seclusion, the entire atmosphere was charged with great spiritual reactions, as is evinced by the writings of Princess Norina Matchabelli, one of the close disciples of Baba: "The Truth . . . has been previously revealed by the Avatars and Prophets of the past. But in the centuries, that rolled on, it got wrapt up in the phraseology of its learned exponents. Used by many people and in many contexts, their high sounding words have acquired the crust of careless usage. These words then begin to conceal the Truth rather than reveal it. They are worshipped rather than understood. . . . We meet these words in the mouths of friends and foes. But they only astound without enlightening. . . . Hence arises the need for . . . new language, which the world must understand . . . with the simplicity of children. . . . Once again the world is receiving the Truth without garb. Drink deep

at the fountain. . . . Entertain in yourself the Go-back-to-God drive. . . ."

ACTIVE VIGILANCE

The following day, June 22nd, Meher Baba entered the cabin-enclosure exactly at 5:35 P.M. I.S.T., and Meherazad, which is normally a quiet spot surrounded by extensive fields and open spaces from all sides, turned into a deep jungle of peace and quietude, occasionally disturbed only by the rustle of trees and whistles of birds. With all that Baba used to remind all concerned from time to time through Kaka against disturbing the peace in any way. The "Nimboris" (fruit of the "Neem" tree) falling occasionally on the roof of the cabin gave so much cause for him to complain that Kaka once had to climb over the tree with a long stick to clear away all the fruit from it. As he was the only person selected by Baba to attend upon him, Kaka had necessarily to play many roles. He was thus carpenter, coolie, electrician, engineer, gardener, orderly, mason, messenger, plumber, superintendent and sweeper all rolled into one. At first he was supposed to work only between the hours of 5 in the morning and 9 at night, but within a few days, Baba would ring for him at any odd hour of the day or night, if for nothing else, than to warn him to see that no disturbance of any kind took place.

Against his normal sleep of about an hour or half every night, Baba hardly slept for more than a few minutes at a stretch since he entered into the seclusion. Often he did not get even a wink of sleep throughout the nights.

Some of those who kept watch at night in addition to the regular watchman, often heard inexplicable sounds and weird noises. All that could be guessed at was the direction from which such sounds emanated. For example, while at watch, Meherjee heard someone breathing in the bathroom near the cabin one night at about 10:30. He at once opened the door of the bathroom but could see no one there although he could yet hear the heavy breathing inside the apparently vacant room and which continued until Meherjee began to hear Baba's own heavy breathing from the cabin itself. The sound from the bathroom then ceased instantly. Meherjee thereafter continued to hear Baba's heavy breathing for about 45 minutes, when Meherjee suddenly heard heavy footsteps inside the cabin. Almost simultaneously he heard as if Baba was getting up from the bed and the heavy footsteps ceased to be audible.

On June 26th, twenty-one poor people (not beggars) were sent for. They were very carefully selected from amongst the needy irrespective of caste or community. Baba allowed each one of them to go to him inside the enclosure one by one, washed their feet and presented ten rupees to each. On 29th, seven mad and Mast type of people were brought to Baba when he clipped their hair, bathed them, dressed them in new clothes and sent them back with a present of a packet of sweets to each. A very interesting account of these and such further activities carried out by Baba during certain intervals in the course of the seclusion, is included in William Donkin's latest book "The Work of Meher Baba with Advanced Souls, Sadhus, the Mad and the Poor."

IN THE THICK OF IT

For the first 9 days, up to June 30th, Baba's diet consisted of tea once, coffee once and food once, and according to the original plan, Baba was expected to start living on honey, water and milkless weak tea for 21 days from July 1st, the day the general fast and silence for all concerned started. He was also to begin "the work to be done" within these 21 days.

According to Jal Kerawalla's diary: "30th June was the busiest day in the Meherazad Ashram. Kaka was completely exhausted by 9 P.M. Earlier, when he was communicating to us the final instructions from Baba, I could notice how Kaka had almost reached a stage of physical as well as mental breakdown, how with supreme effort he was keeping his usual self and how he marvelously succeeded in doing so. Those, who are acquainted with Baba's ways of work, know how on particular occasions, he expects his disciples to do their utmost. He carries them to a point where breakdown seems to be imminent; and yet the disciple goes through the task successfully much to his own astonishment. . . ."

Baba ate the last breakfast consisting of coffee, bread and butter at 6:45 A.M. on July 1st and J. K. says in his diary: "The Ashram presented a unique charm. . . . All was so quiet. At about 9 A.M., Kaka brought us the news that Baba had commenced his strict fast and had retired into the cabin for his work and that he would not come out into the cabin-enclosure till about 2 P.M. . . . The atmosphere seemed to be charged with a joy difficult to describe."

Besides Kaka and the two regular watchmen, some of Baba's own trusted men were also given the duty to keep watch by turns on the cabin-enclosure to ensure a round-the-clock-surveillance throughout day and night from July 1st onwards. They were strictly warned to make as little movement and sound as possible when on duty and to keep a watchful eye all round without looking at the cabin itself. The general instructions to all concerned emphasised "the extreme importance of this period, when each one should do his or her best to the best of their capacities, in order to make the most of an unique opportunity of rendering the greatest *seva* (service)."

On the 2nd of July, a message was released by Baba that *the work*, which he had intended to finish during 21 days of fast on honey, water and weak tea without milk, was going to be completed by him within 9 days by intensifying his fasting programme on the following broad lines.

1st July — Only weak tea without milk, for the rest of the day.

2nd to 4th — Only water and nothing else.

5th to 9th — Weak tea without milk and honey.

From 10th — For the remaining 21 days, partial fast as observed by the rest of his people up to 31st.

Excepting the late breakfast and milkless tea on the first day, Baba passed the next 3 days without taking anything except plain water. The next two days, he lived only on milkless tea and honey which then began to cause him nausea. He therefore changed the diet to milkless tea twice and two glasses of buttermilk twice during each of the remaining three days of the strict fast. It was brought to an end on the morning of July 10th when Baba ate a little rice with the "chatni" of "kothambir" and "lasoon" and thereafter resumed the partial fast of food once and tea twice every 24 hours.

So, the most crucial period of this momentous seclusion was for 9 days between July 1st to 9th just as the initial period of Baba's divine awakening had covered 9 months. "No one except myself and God, knows what I went through during these 9 days," was Baba's reference to this particular phase of the seclusion, a few weeks after it ended. Some of Baba's men were residing miles away from the place of the seclusion; and yet they could feel an atmosphere of deep tension during those 9 days of July, though

they did not know the details of the daily routine of the seclusion.

THE WORK AND THOUGHT-WORK

The more Baba suffered physically and spiritually the more he was in the best of humours because it was in the most crucial phase of his *work* and of his seclusion that Baba also became most communicative. These communications were as much outspokenly *human* as were his hitherto equally outspoken statements about the *divinity* of man apropos God, such as, that a true God-man for those concerned, is greater than God Almighty. In fact, the outspokenness marked about Baba's words in the course of the subsequent winding up of the old life and in the matter of fixing the details of the new, also appears to have commenced with this particular stage of the seclusion.

On July 7th at about 11 A.M., Kaka came out of Baba's cabin with his slate (he was also observing silence) on which he had just taken down in Gujarati what he had gathered from Baba's English alphabet-board, and which is freely translated into English as follows:

"My work by thoughts is going on during sleep and wakefulness throughout the 24 hours of the day and night.

Thoughts of God come—thoughts of Maya come.

Good thoughts come—bad thoughts come.

Pleasant thoughts come—unpleasant thoughts come.

Sacred thoughts come—unclean thoughts come.

Thoughts about my men-mandali and women-mandali come; thoughts about the world come; thoughts about the entire universe come but there is no fixed time for the *work proper*. It may be for half an hour, one hour or two hours a day and some day none. I ensure that Kaka does not disturb me at such time."

The above communication shows clearly that when he was not engaged in his *work proper*, Baba found himself for the rest of the period in the midst of diverse thought-currents going to him from the world in general and from his people in particular.

That same day in the evening Kaka brought another message in Gujarati: "Have taken buttermilk twice today yet there is burning and water is not to be drunk—firstly, there are the thoughts; secondly these *sittings*, thirdly the fast and along with them this additional burning—it is all together." The first message from Baba

the following day was: "I eat nothing, thoughts continue running, I have my sittings in the cabin and at night too I am tossing on the bed and although the cabin hits me in the head every day, today the part above the door hit me so hard that I began to feel giddy." Forty-five minutes later, another message followed: "Do not give these knocks of the head against the low ceiling of the cabin any supernatural interpretation as our dear old blessed Chanji (Late F. H. Dadachanji) would have done out of his deep *undying* love for me. These hard knocks on the skull show us how brave the real Yogis must be who live in dark low-roofed caves in remote wild jungles."

Apart from the details and the instructions that it contained, a gist of the long message from Baba (gathered and typed by Baba's sister Mani, who together with Mehera was allowed to see him for a little while once every day from July 10th, when the work-in-fast ended), is as follows: "The weight of the work done by Baba so far under the seclusion was terrific and that in order to remove that weight, complete change of an environment of the seclusion was desired by Baba. It was therefore decided that without breaking the continuity of the 40 days' seclusion, 31 days would be spent in the cabin at Meherazad, Pimpalgaon, and an intervening period of 9 days to be passed at Poona or at some other suitable place."

In the evening of the 11th July, the following slip was received: "Baba says—for Jal's diary—(1) During my seclusion Kaka has worked hard and wholeheartedly from morn to night—seeing to every detail of the countless duties for Baba, also managing household affairs of the Mandali and seeing to the bazar, etc. of the women-mandali through Goher. (2) Although infinite restlessness is my constant companion, I have never been so restless as from the 1st to the 9th of July in my present seclusion."

A HEART SPEAKS

We think it desirable on more than one count to let Jal Kera-walla, whom we really owe this account, to round it up as far as the space allows, in his own words:

"From 11th to 13th July, Baba made me, Meherjee and Nariman read passages from Upanishads, Dasateer and works on Christian Mysticism respectively concerning God as the only Reality and about the identity of the soul with God. On the last day, Baba's own "Divine Theme" was read to him by me as desired by him. . . .

On the 14th, word was received from Eruch in Poona that with the help of Sarosh a bungalow was arranged for Baba on the Mahabaleshwar road. . . . At about 7:30 A.M. on the 16th, a few minutes before Baba's departure, Adi took the car near Baba's cabin-enclosure. All of us then went into our rooms and closed the doors as per previous instructions so that Baba might not be seen by us. We then heard the car moving away. When it had crossed the bridge near the gate, Adi sounded the parting horn; and we came out of our rooms. Last evening, Kaka had brought Baba's message for us that Maya was tricky and powerful, and we must be very watchful in his absence. This naturally kept us all on the alert anxiously awaiting his return. . . .

At last 24th July has dawned. It is now about 10 A.M. and we expect Baba within a few hours. . . . It was 6:30 P.M. but there was no sign of any car. As it was getting late, I was feeling uneasy when at 8 minutes to 7 we heard the first sound of Adi's car; and we all rushed into our rooms and closed the doors. . . .

The fourth period of the seclusion which was intended for *relaxation* proved really one of intensive activities at Poona; and the details are collected in an interesting account written by Dr. Ghani, whom Baba had specially allowed to be near him during the Poona phase of 'partial seclusion, partial work and partial relaxation. Most of the details are beautifully described by William Donkin in his new book 'The Work of Meher Baba with Advanced Souls, Sadhus, the Mad and the Poor.'

The last period of Baba's seclusion from 25th onwards was notable for the re-intensification of his fast and seclusion on the 30th when on that day Baba passed complete ten hours all by himself and even Kaka was not allowed to approach him. On the 31st, even the servants had to observe silence.

I conclude the account after giving some of my own experiences during these most happy days of my life. Although I did not see Baba, he seemed to be always with me. Problems and questions arising in my mind used to get themselves solved in such a manner that I never seemed to have had such experience to such an extent before. Above all, Baba seemed to have kindled some spark of his love somewhere in me; and many times I felt an ecstasy difficult to describe. One day when I returned from evening walk and sat with Nariman and Meherjee, this feeling took such a hold of me that I could not repress a visible smile looking at the hills on the horizon. Nariman remarked, 'He is becoming Mast and has gone off his head.' I put him off by giv-

ing some plausible explanation and ended his curiosity. When I think of my being totally unworthy of Baba's pure love, the following lines come to my mind: "On an unworthy person like this, thou hast bestowed thy grace out of thy infinite kindness. My eyes get full of tears of love at the idea."*

It was ten years ago that I had the privilege of spending some months in Baba's company at Bangalore. During these years of work in different places and under different and trying circumstances, I happened to spoil my health and it was in March last that one morning I thought of taking some leave and to spend some time with Baba if possible. To my surprise, a few hours later I got a telegram from Baba enquiring how I was feeling. Needless to say, I replied what I felt and he desired me to take the leave. In spite of the difficulties involved in getting leave at short notice, I could get it and enjoyed it, and now I am going back to join my work soon with a refreshed and rejuvenated mind and heart with a prayer to dear Baba: 'May thou grant out of thy pleasure the eternal devotion—Bhakti—of thy feet and the contact of thy true devotees.* And further may that spark of love for thee which thou hast kindled out of thy grace and kindness unto this heart continue to shine and gather strength with each breath of this life and the hereafter.

As I wrote the last word of the last line above and placed the pen on the table sitting alone in my room, I simultaneously heard Baba's bell as he pressed the button, apparently to call Kaka, at the moment when I completed my prayer."

AMEN, ĀAMIN, TATHASTU

All those local people who had observed silence and fast during the month of July, were invited to be present at Meherazad before 7 o'clock on the morning of August 1st to witness Baba step out of the seclusion. They were asked to arrive there without having had their breakfast or tea. Each and all were forbidden to fold hands, bow to Baba or utter any word or even shout "Jai." When exactly at 7 A.M., Baba came out of the cabin-enclosure, he appeared to be the very picture of freshness, radiance and health as if instead of 40 days' privations, he had just returned from a holiday trip.

* Translated from a Hindi couplet.

The following Prayer-in-Message was composed in advance according to a dictation from Baba to be read on the occasion.

"May God, whom the Muslims call Allah, whom the Zoroastrians call Ahurmazd, whom the Hindus call Ishwar Paramatman and whom many others call by many other names, may He whose union the lovers seek in self-annihilation, whom the seers see as the only Reality, and whom the knowers know as their own real Self, may this Supreme Conscious Being, this conscious Soul of souls, who eternally manifests as Avatar and Perfect Masters, may He through His all merciful act bestow on us His grace, and may He solve our difficulties by the end of this year, and may He decide everything for us by the end of this year, and may He, according to Baba's Circular of 1949, finish everything by the end of this year, to enable Baba to break his silence in the beginning of the next year, to speak the one and the last word of all embracing Divinity."

The same persons who had read the scriptural passages on the eve of the seclusion, namely, Donkin, Kalemama, Kaikobad and Khaak then read the same and its translations into Marathi, Gujarati and Urdu respectively.

When the reading of the last translation was over, at a signal from Baba, all those present there ended their individual silence with Amen, Aamin and Tathastu.

Baba then distributed *rava* (sweet) to one and all present; and with which the general fast of the devotees and disciples was also brought to an end.

Later, during the discussions at Meherabad, Baba said, "The work I have done here at Meherazad, I have not done in any part of the globe. . . ."

The immediate external outcome of this great internal work of Baba being his New Life, the writers can do nothing better than reproduce below two more verses from the "Song of the New Life" emphasizing the enjoyment of suffering:

Khiyalon men uljhan hai baqī na bandhan,
 Hai nakhwat na ghussā na kuchh kām kanchan,
 Hai mazhab se rishta na kuchh fikr-e-tan man,
 Sawar ek kashti men shaikh-o-Brahman.
 Na apne liye koyi chhota bara hai,
 Murid aur murshid na maula raha hai,
 Akhuwat ka baham jo rishta jura hai,
 Hamen dard-o-gham me maza a raha hai.

"No confusion in the mind, now, nor any ties left;
 Pride, anger, lust and greed we know not.
 We have no religion nor care for physical and mental fads.
 The Sheikh and the Brahmin—typifying all castes and creeds
 —are now sailing in the same boat.
 There is no small or great now, for us all;
 The questions of disciple, Master or God-hood no longer
 arise;
 Brotherliness or fellow-feeling is the link that exists,
 And this contributes to our present enjoyment of suffering."

MAN AND MASTERS

It is indeed difficult for man to appreciate fully all that the great spiritual Masters say and do. In fact, without granting that there is a definite plan behind all life capable of a distinct fulfilment, many things that Masters have said and done so far are as much a bundle of contradictions and anomalies as is the history of mankind to date, when man is still engaged today in a life and death struggle between beautiful ideals to be achieved on one hand and dangerously ugly situations to be avoided on the other. According to Baba, the realization of God is the One plan that every individual has equal right to achieve and for everyone does possess equal opportunities to achieve it.

The real significance of the work of Masters does not necessarily consist in founding organized religions. For example, the world on the whole respects Jesus the Christ if for nothing else than as the Master of more than three hundred millions of Christians who are supposed to be his true followers today. If a total is made of the average number of all those who have lived and died believing in the Cross during these one thousand nine hundred and forty-nine years, it would turn into a "Sky full of stars" to gaze at and pick many real jewels from amongst them like St. Francis of Assisi. According to Baba, the greatness of Jesus and the greatest achievement of Jesus, for those concerned, lies in the tremendous force of spirituality that he let loose in the universe during his lifetime; in bringing a few fellow-beings to his own level of perfection; in giving divine illumination to many and a mighty big push towards Truth, not only to mankind but to each and every living creature of his time. Therefore, that which the world looks upon as the mission of his life, namely, Christianity, is in fact but the remnant "buttermilk" that Christ left over for posterity after distributing as much "butter" and as much "milk" as could be digested by contemporary humanity.

That in fact, applies to all true Masters who are ever present at all times in the world either manifested as Perfect Masters, Prophets or Avatars according to existing exigencies, or who remain incognito except to the few whom they raise to their own levels of perfection and hiddenly carry out the rest of their activities and workings in the interest of the creation as a whole.

The good fortune of man in being a man is equally beset with his misfortune in being extremely self-centered in every field of life. For all the splendours of the civilizations that man has raised from time immemorial, be it in India or China, Greece or Rome, Persia or Egypt, these have been brought down like a house of cards for want of a straight and honest sublimation of his selfish instincts.

One of the results of such collective selfishness is that names of great MEN who succeed in breaking through selfishness to selffulness are contrary to their own intentions, desires, aims and objects, also dragged back into the mire of greater selfishness of the greater numbers.

It is wrong to believe that men like Rama, Krishna, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus and Mohommed whose one mission was to declare

unequivocally the inviolable unity of all life and unimpeachable brotherhood of all mankind, cared more for the so-called Hindus, Zoroastrians, Buddhists, Christians and Muslims than humanity as a whole.

Granting that compared to what they gave to those, who above all other considerations, followed them sincerely and faithfully, very little fell to the lot of others: it was not because they could not or did not want to give equally. When it rains, the water is showered equally upon rocks and pebbles and over the ups and downs of all soil. The bounty of rain cannot be questioned if particular spots receive and retain more or less quantities of water. Excepting those, who have completely blinded themselves with their selfish prejudices of one kind or another, any man can very easily find out that all the great Masters were more concerned with people gone astray, people commonly looked upon as infidels, people whom we call bad and sinners than those like the pious smugs who preponderate today over every fold of human life.

The faith and belief in a Master and for the Master's teachings has its own value, but more harm than benefit results when that faith and belief, on the one hand is made use of as free leave and license to find fault with and abuse others, and on the other hand, to condone one's own acts of omission and commission against the very teachings that one believes in, in the spirit of a spoilt child of a Master without actually living a life befitting the child of that Master.

At the time he worked with a Mast of the fifth plane named Ali Shah, who is also known as Bapji (fully described in William Donkin's jewel of a book "The Wayfarers"), in the heart of the C. P. jungles near Raipur in 1945, Baba also underwent a lonely seclusion for about one week in a little hut specially put up on the summit of the Angiras Rishi mountain and around which huge fires had to be kept burning all night to keep away wild life in abundance all round the hut. When Baba emerged out of what was evidently the climax of that sitting, Adi was the first to come across him there and then. He says, he was shocked to see Baba's face at the time as it appeared to be so weary, drawn and full of anguish as he had never seen before. Before he could reconcile himself with that unprecedented appearance of Baba, Adi at the same time got another shock when quite spontaneously Baba remarked that a gigantic disaster would over-

whelm the world which would wipe out three-quarters of mankind.

Agar asman-e-musibat bhi tute,
Sadāqat kā hathon se dāman na chhute,
Chaman yas-o-hirman ne harchand lute,
Tawakkul se inmen lage bel bute.

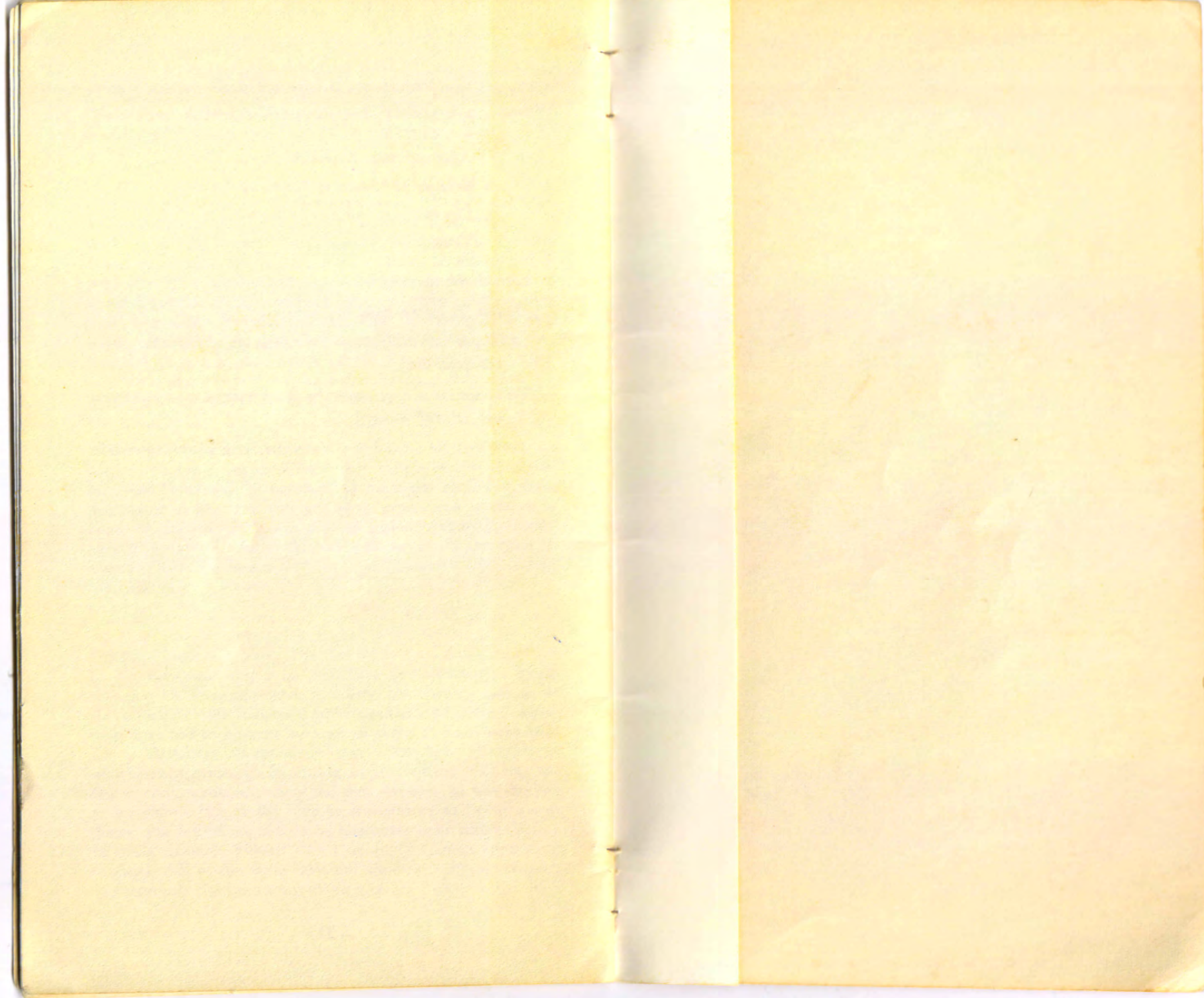
"Even if the heavens fall,

Do not let go the hand of *Truth*.

Let *despair* and *disappointment* ravage and destroy the garden
(of your life),

You beautify it once again, by the seedlings of *contentment*
and *self-sufficiency*."

—The Song of the New Life.



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